

Summarised inspection findings

St Andrew's Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

12 November 2024

Key contextual information

St Andrew's Primary School Nursery Class is located in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire. The nursery consists of a playroom located within the school building and a separate playroom in the annexe building. There is free flow access to the outdoors from the annexe building. Children between the age of two years old to those not yet attending primary school are registered. The nursery class is registered for 60 children per session, with no more than 15 children aged two years. There are currently 50 children on the nursery roll. Children receive 1140 hours of funded childcare through a variety of full day and half day patterns of attendance. The nursery class is open for 49 weeks of the year, five days a week, from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class, however the early years team from the local authority also have a strategic management role. The early years senior practitioner has responsibility for the daily management of the setting. There are three lead practitioners and eight early years practitioners. All practitioners work across both playrooms as required.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Senior leaders and practitioners established a shared vision for the nursery in 2022. Practitioners promote and embed the values of kind, included, teamwork and enjoyment well through their interactions with all children, parents and each other. Practitioners review the values with parents to ensure they remain meaningful and relevant. Children are aware of the values. Children receive a certificate when they demonstrate the values in the nursery. This helps children recognise how they are enacting the values and encourages them to continue to demonstrate these values. This approach works well and supports the calm, caring and inclusive ethos. As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should further develop the nursery values using child friendly language to support better children's understanding.
- Senior leaders are beginning to develop effective leadership at all levels through a distributed leadership approach to improvement. They encourage all practitioners to develop their personal and professional interests and lead improvements across the nursery. Practitioners enjoy the positive ethos of continuous learning and improvement. Practitioners are beginning to reflect on their practice to lead to improvement. children benefit from the increasing knowledge and understanding that practitioners have about child development. Senior leaders and practitioners should continue to build on this positivity, link learning to their identified priorities and enhance further all practitioner's skills and confidence.
- The headteacher is a supportive and experienced leader for the nursery. She supports the senior practitioner well through, for example, weekly meetings. Practitioners use national guidance to support their self-evaluation process. As a result, practitioners have identified and planned a number of relevant improvement priorities for the nursery. Staff consulted parents about improvement priorities by asking for their views in questionnaires. Senior leaders are at

the early stages of implementing appropriate processes to monitor these improvements. Senior leaders should continue to monitor and develop these processes to ensure they are highly effective, clear and robust. This will support senior leaders to evaluate the impact of changes more effectively on outcomes for children.

- Senior leaders guide and manage the pace of change; however, this could be driven at a quicker pace to take forward improvements. Currently it is not always clear who has the strategic lead for improvements in the nursery. Senior leaders and the local authority should address the issues around their roles and responsibilities to ensure a clear structure of leadership. This would support all aspects of improvement and lead to better outcomes for children.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Across the setting practitioners have positive, nurturing relationships with children and families. All children feel valued, safe and secure, resulting in a calm, settled and purposeful ethos within the setting. Most children spend sustained periods of time engaged in their play and most children play well together with their peers. All practitioners know children very well and talk confidently about what children can do and their next steps in learning.
- All practitioners respond appropriately to the needs of children and most extend learning with the use of skilled questioning. Most practitioners are skilled in recognising when to intervene to support children. A few practitioners use their knowledge of the child and their professional expertise effectively to deepen the learning and ensure appropriate challenge for children. All practitioners should be supported through professional learning opportunities to develop this good practice more consistently across the nursery.
- Children enjoy and benefit from free-flow access to the outdoor garden, where they develop their physical and independence skills. Children have been learning how to care for plants and they grow sunflowers and vegetables. Children then use the vegetables to make their snack or lunch. Practitioners work together resourcefully to develop the outdoor space to ensure children can be curious and creative in their play. For example, children use crates to make obstacle courses which help to develop their balancing skills.
- Children learn well through experiencing a range of digital technologies, for example, smartboard, torches, cameras and desktop computers. Practitioners use online learning journals very effectively to record observations of children across different curriculum areas. In a majority of examples, practitioners identify clearly the skills and learning children develop through their experiences and interactions with others.
- Practitioners have developed approaches to planning well to ensure an appropriate balance of child-led experiences and intentional activities. Practitioners track children's experiences and outcomes to enable them to plan intentional activities which ensure breadth and balance of the curriculum. Senior leaders should continue to support practitioners to record significant observations and identify next steps in learning. This will help practitioners to measure children's progress over time.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children experience a curriculum based on play and driven by national guidance. All practitioners use their thorough knowledge of the local area to enhance learning for children. This contributes well to the children's real and rich experiences. For example, children's visits to the fish factory.
- Practitioners use local authority progression frameworks successfully for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These support planning and evaluating learning in these key areas well. Practitioners use the online learning journal platform to support planning and progression through the early level for the other curricular areas.
- Practitioners have updated their approaches to planning to take account of essential drivers including, wellbeing, early communication, numeracy and mathematics. All practitioners should now develop a shared understanding of early level pedagogy. This will ensure that all experiences are inclusive and take account of children's learning dispositions and needs.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners are warm and welcoming and have developed strong, positive relationships with families. Practitioners share relevant information when they speak with parents at drop-off and pick-up times. A few parents come into the playroom at these times. Practitioners should continue to encourage parents to come into the nursery at these times and during sessions.
- Parents engage well with a range of opportunities to be involved with the nursery and learn with their children. Parents enjoy stay and play sessions, Easter egg hunts, Bookbug sessions, sponsored walks and trips to the beach. These experiences have a positive impact on children's engagement and enjoyment.
- Practitioners share information daily in a variety of ways to ensure parents are well informed about the nursery. Practitioners use an online learning platform regularly to share children's learning and experiences between nursery and home. Practitioners welcome feedback and comments from parents through this, and other channels.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Practitioners have created a warm, nurturing ethos across both playrooms. Practitioners and children are respectful, kind and considerate of one another. All practitioners role model positive experiences and are proud of the children. Almost all children are generous and thoughtful with their peers and support each other to achieve success. Most children are highly motivated and engaged in talking about their feelings and emotions through their play experiences during the day.
- Most children are aware of the wellbeing indicators because of the colourful characters used to depict each indicator. Children confidently talk about the characters, such as Active Aamir and what this character means to them in the correct context. Children take characters such as 'Included Isabella' home and include them in experiences to help them feel included. Children understand how to keep themselves safe and how to act in a responsible way. All practitioners support children to take responsibility for their play and learning through a wide range of experiences out with the nursery. All children receive stickers when they have demonstrated an indicator. This helps children to develop well their understanding of the wellbeing indicators.
- Most children support their own regulation ably and have developed strategies to do this well. Almost all children successfully role model good behaviour to each other and are respectful to their peers. Most children are kind to one another and give praise to others when they are successful in their learning and skills.
- All practitioners comply with their statutory duties and are aware of their roles and responsibilities to meet children's needs. Practitioners ensure meaningful care plans are in place, which they review regularly to support children to make progress. Staff make appropriate referrals to other agencies which helps children who require additional support be supported well. Practitioners work effectively in collaboration with external agencies, such as local health services. Practitioners should keep under review the approach of removing a group of children from the main playroom for targeted support in the main building. This is to ensure that all children are supported to make progress in the most inclusive manner.
- Practitioners are at the early stages of supporting children develop an understanding of their rights. Children are aware of their right to play, to be safe and to learn. Practitioners should continue to explore how to embed this into their practice.

3.2 Securing children's progress

good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Most children make good progress in their early language and communication. Almost all children listen well to adults and follow instructions. Children talk confidently to adults and to each other during their play. They approach unfamiliar adults within the setting and excitedly share their interests and learning. Children have access to a range of books, including non-fiction texts. With the support of practitioners, children read these books independently. Children are developing their pre-writing skills and mark-make very well both indoor and outdoor environments.
- Most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Most children count to 10 and beyond and are at the early stages of counting objects. Most children enjoy using loose parts to measure volume as they pour water in the water tray. Children use digital resources confidently to help them to recognise numbers. Younger children are beginning to learn routines of the nursery day. A few children are developing their understanding of measurement as they measure and record the height of their peers. Practitioners use the local environment well to support numeracy and mathematics. For example, children enjoy number recognition walks and using money in the shop to buy ingredients to bake with.
- As a result of the nurturing ethos throughout the setting, almost all children make good progress in health and wellbeing. A majority of children talk easily about their feelings, supported by a range of appropriate resources. Children learn about mini beasts and have recently explored the life cycle of a butterfly. Almost all children talk about healthy foods as they make choices at snack and lunchtimes. All children experience leadership roles and support their friends kindly through being the 'snack' helper' or 'safety officer'. Younger children are learning to eat snack and lunch independently. Most children run, jump, balance, ride bikes and fly kites successfully. They demonstrate these skills well in the nursery, and also through visits to the local beach and park.
- Practitioners recognise, capture and celebrate children's achievements from outwith the nursery effectively. These are recorded through online journals and on an 'Achievements Tree'. This helps children share their successes, feel valued and be interested in other children in the nursery.
- Practitioners use a thorough approach to tracking children's progress. This helps practitioners monitor individual and groups of children's progress. Practitioners track children's progress through for example, planned learning experiences, observations and floor books. The

headteacher and early years senior practitioner meet formally three times per year to discuss children's progress and identify any additional supports or interventions that may be required. Practitioners are developing their confidence in their professional judgements about children's progress.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced nurturing, responsive care from staff that knew them well as individuals. Staff were responsive to children's requests and cues. Comfort and cuddles were given freely when requested by children. Children were happy and settled while in the service. This supported children to feel secure and loved.

Children's care was supported by effective individual personal planning. These contained relevant information about their likes, dislikes, and individual supports. Staff spoke in great detail about children's individual care and had worked with families to develop these plans. These were shared with the staff team who used this information to provide meaningful experiences for children. As a result, children received tailored, individualised care.

Children benefitted from relaxed, calm, social mealtimes. Their independence was supported as they were involved in tidying up after mealtimes, pouring their own milk and preparing food. For example, on the day of inspection some children walked to the local shop to get ingredients to make a cake for snack. Staff sat with children at the table and engaged in meaningful conversations with them, making this a positive social experience. As a result, children were developing a positive relationship with food and mealtimes.

Most children's emotional wellbeing was supported through effective strategies. Staff enabled children to recognise their own emotions through the use of a focus story and meaningful discussions. Some children did not have the choice of where they wanted to play as they were taken to another room in the nursery. This meant that their emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging was not well supported. We shared this with the manager of the service who took action to ensure children had a choice of where they wanted to play.

Appropriate policies and procedures were mostly in place to support the safe administration of medication and management of allergies. Some medication forms were not clear around the correct dosage. We shared this with the manager who took appropriate action to ensure all forms contained the appropriate information. The service agreed to further review their audit process to ensure appropriate information is stored correctly and is clear. This would further ensure children's medical needs are met.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun as they engaged in meaningful play which was supporting their learning and development. There were a range of play-based learning opportunities within the nursery. For example, free flow play was mostly available to children between outside and inside with a variety of resources. Children enjoyed their time with staff as they sang songs together, laughed, read stories and had fun. This meant children were engaged in their play and felt secure.

Staff engaged in meaningful conversations with children. These skilled interactions extended children's learning and enhanced their vocabulary. Staff went with the pace of children, ensuring they had enough time to respond to questions and were actively listened to. This supported children to feel valued.

Children mostly benefitted from free flow play throughout the session. At times, their play was interrupted, for example when most children sat down and brushed their teeth together. This meant that children waited for an extended period. We suggested the service continue to build on the free flow play observed during the rest of the inspection. This would further ensure children were supported to lead their own learning.

Staff celebrated children's achievements and shared their learning regularly with parents through electronic journals. Children were not always able to access these throughout the session. This reduced opportunities for them to reflect on their experiences and have ownership of their learning.

A good balance of responsive and intentional planning supported children to be highly engaged in their play. The setting had worked hard to develop their approach to responsive planning, for example on the day of inspection, children had shown an interest in flying kites in the wind. Staff extended this learning skilfully. There was evidence that this was impacting positively on experiences for children. We encouraged the service to continue to develop this approach to ensure it is embedded in practice.

Children had regular opportunities to explore their local community through walks to the local shops, visiting a local fish factory and trips to play parks. This showed children were developing a sense of belonging in the local community.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a bright, well-ventilated and welcoming environment. They had access to a mostly homely environment where they were welcomed into the setting. Some areas were not set up as homely nurturing spaces. For example, in the main school building nursery classroom there were limited areas for children to relax and rest. The service should ensure that children consistently benefit from environments that are homely and nurturing.

A wide range of resources and experiences were available to children throughout the session. Loose parts were effectively used to support children's developing curiosity and problem solving. For example, the use of real bricks outside and real fruit in the home corner. As a result, children's creative thinking was enhanced.

Children experienced an environment that was well furnished, clean, and secure. Resources for children provided appropriate developmental challenge and encouraged independence, for example children could mix their own paint and explore interesting materials which sparked their curiosity and sense of exploration. This resulted in quality experiences for children.

The environment and equipment was safe, secure and well-maintained. Staff effectively used risk assessments to identify potential hazards and implement preventative measures, for example outings and individual risk assessments. This promoted children, families and staff safety and wellbeing.

Information about children was kept in a secure manner. Where information was stored electronically, there were passwords and systems in place to protect this information. Sensitive information was only shared with those who needed the information to meet children's needs. This meant, protection of children's information complied with relevant best practice. Staff implemented infection prevention and control routines to keep children healthy and safe. Hand washing was promoted throughout the visit, for example, regularly washing their hands

before snack. The walls in the toilets in the main building of the setting required attention to ensure that these were easily cleaned. This increased the risk of infection to children. We shared this with the manager who agreed to take action to ensure this was addressed.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

A strong ethos and shared values among the staff team put children and relationships at the heart of the service. The team were committed to delivering high quality experiences for children and families. There was a shared vision amongst the staff team which valued kindness, inclusion, teamwork and enjoyment. This showed children were respected and valued.

Staff knew the service well and were developing their confidence in leadership roles. An improvement plan was in place which focused on promoting positive outcomes for children through quality care, play and learning experiences. A recent focus on improving children's progress in numeracy was having a positive impact on children's experiences in the setting.

Staff did not always record why changes were prioritised or what impact they had on children's outcomes. There was scope to further develop this approach to ensure that improvements are evaluated and there is a clear rationale. This meant that it was not always clear that improvements were meaningful and led to continuous improvement.

Self-evaluation processes were in place and showed involvement from families and children. These could be developed further to ensure that they represent a true reflection of the service. For example, some key strengths and areas for improvement highlighted in the inspection were not recognised by the service.

The management team were approachable and committed to improving outcomes for children. At times, there was confusion about responsibility and roles of the nursery leadership. The leadership team agreed to review this to ensure roles are clearly defined. This would ensure a consistent approach and ensure that all staff were confident in the quality of care, play and learning that they provide.

Most quality assurance systems were effective. There was scope to further develop these to ensure they support sustained quality care for children. For example, some inconsistencies in the recording of medication and the reporting of incidents were not identified by management. We suggested the service further consider these areas to ensure that children consistently experience quality care and support.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff had positive working relationships with each other, creating a warm and solution focussed ethos as a team. Regular meetings and support from senior staff promoted shared reflection on practice and the service. This meant that staff felt valued to grow professionally and provided children with a happy and supportive environment.

Children were supported by a staff team who worked well together to support all the children in the nursery. They communicated effectively to ensure information and appropriate strategies were in place for children. Staff supported each other throughout the day when giving individual support to some children. Staff were proactive and took initiative to ensure that children consistently

experienced positive, quality interactions. This provided opportunities for children to build relationships with all staff members.

Children's needs were met consistently because the right number of staff were available at all times. Staff were proactive in recognising any gaps and supervised children while also spending quality time with them. Staff followed children's lead, for example when more children chose to go outside, or wanted to play in a different room. They worked flexibly to supervise children in their play and offered a range of experiences safely. Transitions were mostly well planned throughout the day to ensure children experienced continuity of care. As a result, children remained engaged in their play.

Children benefitted from a skilled and knowledgeable staff team. An induction process was in place for new staff to discuss their own role, policies and procedures. New staff members worked with a buddy as a mentor to support them. We suggested the service continue to develop their induction plans to ensure that they are in line with best practice guidance. This would further ensure new staff benefit from a robust induction process.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and one area for improvement. From this inspection, the previous area for improvement has been met.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.