

Summarised inspection findings

Cumbræ Primary School Nursery Class

North Ayrshire Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Cumrae Nursery Class is part of Cumrae Primary School and is managed by its headteacher. The nursery class is housed in a spacious detached building at the rear of the school. The open-plan playroom provides direct access to a small outdoor area. The nursery is registered for 20 children, aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. Children access their entitlement to 1140 hours by attending from 9am to 3pm each day during school term time. The headteacher of the primary school has overall leadership of the nursery class. She delegates responsibility of the day to day running of the nursery to a senior early years practitioner, an early years practitioner and an early years assistant. An early years lead practitioner from North Ayrshire Council provides further support for the nursery.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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

- The headteacher's strategic leadership supports the nursery well in integrating with the school and ensuring consistency of approach. The school has successfully developed values of teamwork, respect, attainment, inclusion and nurture. These values could be expressed in more child-friendly and age-appropriate ways for very young children. However, importantly, all staff display the values in their day-to-day work with children, their families and the wider community.
- Practitioners demonstrate a professional approach to their role as leaders in early learning and childcare. They undertake additional professional learning and qualifications willingly to enhance their knowledge and skills. There is scope to link staff leadership roles more directly to the improvement plan, and to explore opportunities for children to undertake appropriate leadership roles. The headteacher has recently made use of a helpful range of audits to evaluate the nursery environment. Practitioners are aware of the need to keep their organisation of nursery spaces and resources under review to ensure that all children's needs are met fully.
- The headteacher and practitioners identify key priorities as part of the whole school's effective approach to improvement planning. A detailed quality assurance calendar supports staff to structure their self-evaluation activities, ensuring that all areas are addressed over time. Practitioners make effective use of national quality indicators and care standards to evaluate the overall quality of provision. They use this information well to improve practice in the nursery. Practitioners are reflective professionals who are committed to continuous improvement. They have a growing understanding of the nursery's strengths and development needs.
- The headteacher visits the nursery regularly to observe playroom practice. She provides helpful oral and written feedback to support the nursery's improvement. Practitioners have visited several other early years settings to learn from their good practice. For example, they

have observed a range of approaches to assessing and tracking children's learning. Practitioners are becoming more skilled and confident in analysing the impact of their work on outcomes for children. As one of their improvements, staff recently adapted their approaches to planning children's learning to make their plans more child centred.

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

- Practitioners have formed very positive relationships with children and families, helping children to feel happy and settled at nursery. Practitioners plan and organise play spaces in ways which support children to play freely, explore and investigate. Staff provide some rich and stimulating learning spaces. Currently the range and variety of these spaces is too limited to challenge children sufficiently or sustain their engagement. A few children play well alongside their friends and display creativity and imagination indoors and outdoors. They enjoy new learning experiences and are eager to share their activities with staff and each other.
- Practitioners show a high level of skill and professional knowledge when they play alongside children. Where staff practice is best, they use open-ended questions and introduce new ideas to extend children's learning and increase the level of challenge. They plan the playroom layout to ensure a variety of experiences which cover most of the early level curriculum areas. Outdoor spaces are equipped with a range of materials which encourage children to explore, be active and use all their senses.
- Staff know children very well as individuals and as learners. They observe children at play and note their responses to activities. They record detailed evaluative comments on children's achievements, retaining valuable photographic evidence. They share key information with parents in an online platform and include it in each child's 'scrap book'. Practitioners develop learning journals for each child. These clearly show children's progress and identify appropriate next steps in their learning. Practitioners use their detailed knowledge of children to plan activities which take good account of each child's interests and stages of development. They make very good use of 'social stories' to provide specific support for those few children who require additional support for learning.
- Practitioners follow a long-term yearly plan which is highly flexible and responsive to children's ideas. Staff have organised Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes into manageable sets, to ensure comprehensive coverage of all key areas over time. Staff are skilled at using children's ideas and interests to plan interesting learning contexts. For example, they recently responded to children's interest in Scotland and Burn's Day to develop age-appropriate activities including highland dancing, drumming and a visit from a bagpiper.
- The headteacher and senior practitioner meet regularly to discuss each child's progress, including those who require support with learning. Their focused tracking discussions ensure that children are well supported to make good progress. Practitioners have correctly identified the need to date children's achievements so that they are able to track progress over time for groups and individuals.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- The nursery team use the national advice, provided in Curriculum for Excellence and Realising the Ambition: Being Me, well to support children's learning. The curriculum is child centred and takes significant account of children's wellbeing, their interests and the local island context. Practitioners should continue to develop a clear rationale for the curriculum, based on their shared vision for the nursery.
- Practitioners have a sound understanding of play pedagogy and of their role in supporting progression in children's learning. They plan and evaluate learning across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Planning pathways in these key areas promote learning in a progressive coherent way. For example, children are supported systematically from early mark making to emergent writing. Practitioners should develop a more literacy-rich environment which will further support learning across these pathways.
- Staff ensure that transitions from home to nursery and from nursery into P1 are well managed. Ongoing collaboration between nursery practitioners and early level teachers will further support a shared understanding of early years pedagogy. This will support continuity and progression in learning for children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnerships are a strength of the nursery. Practitioners have established strong and productive links with families and with a range of community partners. ‘Stay and play’ sessions provide opportunities for parents to engage in play activities with their children and share their learning. Parents greatly appreciate the very regular information on their children shared with them through an online platform.
- The nursery communicates effectively with parents through an informative noticeboard, regular newsletters and daily conversations at drop-off and collection times. Practitioners seek parents’ views on a range of issues and respond well to their ideas and suggestions. Parents are able to meet regularly with staff to discuss their child’s progress and learning targets.
- Partnerships with the community allow children to take part in a wide range of activities including gardening, outdoor learning and events at the local church and cathedral. Parents support the clothes ‘swap shop’, part of the nursery’s commendable sustainability policy to recycle clothes and prevent them going to landfill.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The setting 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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 warm, supportive and nurturing relationships throughout the nursery. All practitioners demonstrate high levels of care and a sound understanding of the needs of young children. Staff provide very good role models for children, for example discussing with them how to relate to others with kindness. As a result, most children play well together and show consideration for their friends. If children are upset, practitioners intervene very calmly and sensitively to support them. This kind and consistent approach is helping children to recognise and control their emotions well and to talk about how they are feeling.
- Practitioners demonstrate an increasing focus on helping children to understand how to experience positive feelings of wellbeing. They do not yet use national wellbeing indicators systematically to support the life and work of the nursery. Children would benefit from regular emotional check-ins and strategies to help them manage negative feelings. Practitioners manage transitions sensitively throughout the day to ensure that children feel safe and secure. They have a shared understanding of children's rights, treating them with respect. Children are learning how to make healthy food choices. They understand the importance of handwashing and regular toothbrushing. Practitioners join children for lunch to create a pleasant social experience.
- All practitioners are clear about their statutory duties and understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe and well. They work very effectively with families and a range of agencies to develop individual plans to support children's health, care and wellbeing needs. Children's care plans are developed in consultation with parents and reviewed regularly.
- The inclusive ethos evident in the nursery is firmly based on a culture of tolerance and respect. Practitioners plan activities carefully to ensure that all children and families can fully participate. They use their knowledge of children's socio-economic circumstances to address potential barriers to learning. Practitioners complement this information with data on children's attainment to plan targeted interventions for groups or individuals. Staff's high level of support ensures that most children are achieving their potential. Staff value diversity, and they are beginning to show a growing awareness of the importance of celebrating this more proactively. For example, they could use a greater variety of books and resources to enhance children's understanding of race, religion, beliefs and disability.

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 are making good progress in communication and early language. A majority listen well to adults and to each other. They are keen to talk to adults and other children about their play activities. A few approach staff to ask questions and describe their discoveries. Children are learning new vocabulary when playing outdoors, exploring loose parts and sensory natural materials. Children enjoy stories and a few talk about authors and illustrators. A majority talk about their favourite stories and rhymes, and a few sequence events in a story accurately. Children need more opportunities for mark making and early writing, both indoors and outdoors.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Most sort objects by colour and size. A majority count to 10 and beyond. A few use measuring tapes to calculate the heights of different sized dinosaurs. A few measure out ingredients to make play dough, showing understanding of the concepts of 'more than' and 'less than'. A majority match shapes using jigsaws and puzzles on the interactive table. Children use their knowledge of repeat patterns to create simple designs with stones and beads. Their understanding would be further enhanced by hearing mathematical stories and having more opportunities to write numbers.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Practitioners manage daily transitions very effectively to ensure that children feel safe and secure. Children make healthy food choices at snack time and have an early understanding of healthy lifestyles. They take part in a toothbrushing programme and know which foods may damage their teeth. Children need more experiences to help them become increasingly independent, for example, when making playdough using visual instructions. Children enjoy climbing and balancing, and practitioners support them to engage safely in risky play.
- Children are making good progress with learning in early science, for example as they participate in planting and growing. Most can identify wild animals and farm animals, and several can name different dinosaurs. Staff have developed plans to track and celebrate children's wider achievements at home and at nursery.
- The nursery team take positive steps to ensure equity for all children. They are fully aware of children's socio-economic circumstances and take appropriate, sensitive steps to address this.

They have identified gaps in language acquisition for a few children and are beginning to address this through additional support. Children who require additional support with their learning have individual plans, developed with advice from specialist agencies. Practitioners should make more use of visual clues and symbols to support inclusive practice.

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.