

Summarised inspection findings

South Parks Primary School and Nursery Class

Fife Council

18 December 2018

Key contextual information

South Parks Nursery Class is accommodated in a wing of South Parks Primary School in Glenrothes. It is registered to accommodate 60 children at any one time, to include no more than 20 children aged two years. At the time of inspection, there were 66 children on the roll including 15 two years old. The youngest children have their own playroom, known as Little Bear Cubs, and outdoor learning space. The staff team is now established following a number of changes.

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

- There is a strong sense of all practitioners and the management team aiming to do the very best for children and their families. The vision, values and aims, which are shared with the wider school community, underpin these efforts. These were created a few years ago and are currently under review to ensure their continued relevance. As this progresses care should be taken to ensure that the language used remains accessible and meaningful to young children.
- The depute headteacher has responsibility for developing and monitoring the work of the nursery class. This is further complemented by support from visiting staff including a nursery teacher, early years development officer and a principal teacher. Recent changes to visiting staff and within the nursery practitioner team have resulted in the creation of a new and now stable team. Together, they are well placed to progress established plans to take forward the management and leadership and continued development of the class. In order to do this successfully clear remits need to be established and shared across the team with a strong focus on leadership of learning.
- A relevant improvement plan is in place, which contains appropriate, measurable priorities within simple and focused action plans. All practitioners are involved in the delivery of these improvements and share the plan with parents. There is scope for parents, children and partners to play an increased role in the creation and delivery of improvement priorities in a meaningful way. This will help ensure everyone's views are reflected further through the improvement process.
- All practitioners have a distributed leadership remit. These include mentoring Modern Apprentices, leading parenting groups, implementation of mindfulness experiences, and operational aspects such as overseeing medication. Remits are carefully considered to promote building on existing strengths and interests. Targeted opportunities for career long professional learning support and enable practitioners to develop necessary skills. Practitioners are enthusiastic about their roles and welcome being empowered to play a role in taking forward the improvement agenda. They report the management team support them well within a climate of respect and trust. Together as a team, practitioners are reflective of, and keen to

develop and improve their practice. We discussed the value of being increasingly outward looking to learn from current thinking and best practice beyond South Parks Nursery Class.

- Processes to support self-evaluation continue to develop, and going forward should have a clear focus on the quality of learning and teaching. A positive start has been made to using the framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' This is beginning to support reflection, evaluate practice and identify next steps for development.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- Children aged two to three years benefit from sensitive caring relationships with practitioners who give them the comfort and security they need. Practitioners engage positively with children, giving appropriate emotional support when required. Children benefit from opportunities to free-flow inside to outside. Open-ended, loose parts play materials offer interesting play opportunities. The environment for learning could reflect more appropriately the learning needs of the younger children, including how they learn. Greater use of natural materials, everyday play materials and sensory experiences would support children to be increasingly curious and investigative. Practitioners should consider the richness of opportunities to invite curiosity and excitement within core provision to support learning interests to develop over time.
- Children aged three to five years demonstrate ownership of, and confidence within the learning environment, including the freedom to learn outdoors. Here they show more sustained focus in their play. Children are motivated and have the freedom to explore the environment and make choices about where they want to play. A few children are not yet maintaining their interest in the experiences on offer. Practitioners need to identify these individuals more consistently to ensure all children are supported fully to engage in, and benefit fully from their learning. A positive start has been made to the development of the indoor environment including the incorporation of real materials. The environment for learning does not yet offer the level of challenge, which some learners require to support them to revisit, and build upon previous learning. Further consideration should be given to the layout of the playroom to suggest greater connection between aspects of learning for children. This would also support areas lending themselves to higher quality play. There is scope for additional opportunities to be created for children to develop their skills of independence.
- Practitioners are accessible and available for children. Their interactions are warm and demonstrate sensitive knowledge of the individual needs of the child. In the best examples, practitioners are observed to draw children towards them consistently to support learning. At times, there are missed opportunities to extend children's learning. Given the favourable current practitioner ratio within the playrooms, small groups of children could be given the opportunity to develop meaningful learning projects over time. This could add considerable depth and challenge to children's learning. Most practitioners encourage children to be kind to each other and support the development of turn taking and skills of independence. The use of visual symbols and signing are positive features within the environment. More explicit modelling of language by practitioners would encourage children to use talk within their play. There is scope to develop further practitioners' skills in using questioning to support children to deepen and extend their learning.

- Practitioners talk confidently about children as individuals but not yet fully as learners. They support children to develop interests, which are recorded and displayed on learning walls. These are at an early stage of development. Further consideration should be given to ensure practitioners reflect the learning interests of a wider group of children. This should include a balance of opportunity for child-initiated exploration alongside more adult-led experiences.
- Children are encouraged to access digital technology to find information to support their learning. Children are observed to be confident in navigating the interactive whiteboard, including using drawing software to create maps to extend their imaginative play. Staff support other children to explore 'talking tins' to record their voice.
- Practitioners make regular observations of children at play, which are contained within personal learning journals. Observations now need to be more clearly focused on the significant learning of individuals and support the identification of next steps in learning. This will also support the streamlining of planning and assessment. There is scope for children to have increased ownership of their journals to support conversations about learning, and in turn develop an awareness of themselves as learners. The progress children make in their learning needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that the very best progress in learning is made. Approaches used in the school and to review the progress of the younger children could be developed and utilised for all children. These should be rigorous to ensure a robust overview of children's progress is achieved.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum for children aged two to three years, and three to five years is based on play. At this time, this translates as being focused on activities and resources rather than what children need to learn. As planned, practitioners now need to deepen their understanding of their role in developing children's early literacy and numeracy skills. The use of progression pathways, alongside an increase in the use of real-life experiences would support this. Revisiting and taking account of national guidance in practice would deepen understanding of their role in building progressively on children's skills.
- Children of all ages benefit from opportunities to learn outdoors. For children aged three to five years this includes weekly visits to local woodland. This enables children to socialise with each other and develop their physical skills within a natural environment. Children are observed to be developing skills of investigation, inquiry and creativity.
- A few children engage in schematic play. Practitioners should continue to develop their own knowledge to enable them to be effective in understanding and provoking children's learning.
- Greater opportunity for collaboration across the environments for learning would enable practitioners to work towards a shared understanding of pedagogy. Consideration should be given to how this can be developed further across the early level. This would increase confidence of their role within learning and teaching. It would be helpful for practitioners to take time to consider their curriculum rationale to support learners across developmental stages, reflecting high aspirations and expectations for all children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Very positive relationships are evident between practitioners and families. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their child's early learning experiences. This includes stay and play sessions, joining weekly visits to local woodland, attending a range of parenting programmes, and contributing to learning journey folders. Plans are in place, as part of improvement priorities to extend this further, for example through increased use of take home resources. Parents could also be encouraged to be more involved in ongoing developments such as to the outdoor learning environment.
- Parents of children aged two years participate in detailed reviews of all aspects of their child's care and learning. This successful and rigorous approach could be explored for all children to support the securing of positive outcomes for all.

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

- Relationships are identified correctly as a foundation to support children to experience positive wellbeing and readiness to learn. As a result, very caring, nurturing and respectful relationships are evident throughout the nursery. Children and practitioners present as being happy and settled within an inclusive ethos that has wellbeing at its heart. Practitioners clearly respect children and families. There is scope for practitioners to explore, in a deeper way, their shared image of the child. This should have an emphasis on increasing opportunities for children to engage meaningfully in decisions that affect them, and having leadership roles within the well-established nursery community.
- Overall, behaviour is positive with praise and encouragement used appropriately to support children to develop positive relationships with each other. This is successfully modelled by interactions between practitioners. Where children need additional support to help them show consideration for each other, practitioners use agreed strategies. These now need to focus more on the restorative aspects already in use to reflect fully the nurturing ethos of the setting. Establishing and recording shared expectations and values with children may support this further.
- Practitioners have a developing understanding of the wellbeing indicators. For example, they undertake extensive review of the progress and needs of the youngest children under the headings of safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Through real-life and meaningful experiences older children could be made more aware of all the indicators. This should build on the positive examples of focusing on safety during visits to local woodland and in the garden. Over time, and as children's understanding develops, there is potential to introduce children to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- There are appropriate arrangements in place to comply with statutory requirements. We discussed with the management team how the range of information and data available could be used to even greater effect to secure positive outcomes for children. All children have appropriate personal plans that provide information on children's care and health needs. This information is regularly updated in consultation with parents to ensure needs are consistently met. Practitioners are aware of their statutory duties in relation to keeping children safe.
- Practitioners have extensive knowledge of children, their families and their individual circumstances. Children who require additional support to help them learn are well supported and included in all aspects of nursery life. When interventions are made, it would be useful for these to be recorded consistently to ensure that success and progress can be measured over time. Where required, practitioners undertake professional learning to meet individual needs. Positive links with a range of professionals support expert advice being sought and acted upon at an early stage. Partner professionals who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires

reported being made to feel very welcome in the nursery, with clear lines of responsibility and communication within respectful relationships evident.

- Practitioners actively promote inclusion through their practice and interactions with children. They treat children, parents and each other equally and with a high level of respect. Children have the opportunity to learn about diversity and equality through celebrating a few cultural and religious festivals. There is scope to introduce children to a wider range of diversity as citizens of 21st Century Scotland.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

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

- As a result of their nursery experience, children are making satisfactory progress in their learning. All children enjoy exploring their playrooms, however learning and teaching opportunities do not yet enable children to make the best possible progress.
- In the Little Bear Cubs, a few children confidently name a range of wild animals. A few children, aged three to five years who have a shared first language, are observed to find each other within the playroom and share communication. Discussions about personal experiences are stimulated through accessing books about, for example visiting the doctor. A few children particularly enjoy sharing a book with a familiar adult. Further consideration could be given to the mark-making materials available for younger children to explore.
- A few children aged three to five years can talk confidently about their learning. Other children make their needs known using gesture and some vocabulary. British Sign Language (BSL) 'signs of the week' are identified and practised by children, and support communication within the environment. Most children follow simple instructions to undertake nursery routines including washing snack dishes and using visual symbols to follow simple sequence to make play dough. There are missed opportunities to develop and reinforce literacy and numeracy skills through routines. There are materials to support children's exploration of early writing across indoors and outdoors. Children now need to be encouraged to explore mark-making more fully in their play. A few older children talk freely to adults, initiate conversations with other children and visitors, and are motivated to revisit their personal learning journals. Practitioners now need to consider available data more closely and translate what this means for children's progress. This includes action to develop a language rich environment, which offers supported opportunities to explore phonological awareness through stories, songs and rhymes within smaller groups.
- A few children aged three to five years are observed to count within ten during the course of play whilst a few others can extend beyond ten. Evidence within children's personal learning journals suggests that opportunities have been available for children to explore other aspects of number and mathematics including awareness of the clock, size, shape and measure. Practitioners now need to build on their practice to enable children to apply and deepen their early numeracy and mathematics skills across learning.

- Children develop their gross motor skills well within the outdoor area. They develop their awareness of managing risk through undertaking 'Garden Inspector' duties. Most children are able to talk about aspects of a healthy lifestyle, for example good choices at snack and oral hygiene.
- Children's achievements are sensitively celebrated on the Superheroes wall. A positive start has been made on gathering achievements of children across home and nursery.
- There is a supportive and inclusive ethos within the setting. Practitioners describe targeted interventions, which have been shaped in response to individual needs. A few children would benefit from further support to enable them to make choices in their learning and build friendships with their peers. A clear focus on supporting all children to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to continue to become motivated lifelong learners should now be developed more fully.

Choice of QI : 2.5 Family learning

- Engaging families in learning
- Early intervention and prevention
- Quality of family learning programmes

- The role parents play in their child's learning is recognised and respected by practitioners. Very positive, supportive and nurturing relationships are well established between practitioners, including the family support worker, and families. The inclusive ethos ensures everyone is made to feel welcome and part of the wider school community in a way that suits the needs and wishes of individuals. Families can become involved in a range of ways through universal and more targeted support, which meets individual needs. Practitioners have a sound understanding of the context in which families live and the challenges they may encounter as they raise their young children. Parents we spoke to are appreciative of, and shared the benefits attending various groups have brought them. This includes reducing social isolation and the stresses of raising a family and a feeling of confidence and empowerment. Parents are valued and play a key role in planning the content of programmes. This helps ensure that individual needs are met through a bespoke and responsive approach.
- Practitioners are fully aware, and take very good account of the individual circumstances of families. They are responsive to changing needs, particularly through the successful key worker approach that allows trusting and meaningful relationships to be established. The detailed review process for the youngest children supports the identification and review of needs and identification of intended outcomes. We discussed with the management team how this could be extended to include children aged three and four years.
- To support families to develop their parenting skills and, in turn, better support their children, interventions are offered and provided. Examples include a focus on literacy learning through Book Bug and Rhyme Time sessions. Parents we spoke to as part of the inspection reported feeling very well supported by practitioners and the programmes on offer in the nursery. The impact of family learning on the progress children make in their learning over time now needs to be connected and evaluated. This will better inform the delivery of future interventions.
- Commendably, a few of the groups are also available to those whose children do not attend South Parks Primary School and Nursery Class. This includes Giggly Bears, which provides useful opportunities for families to interact and play together. Within improvement priorities, the need to provide more take home resources is identified. This will help encourage positive attitudes to play and learning at home, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Building on the many opportunities for family learning there is now potential to develop further the programme of family learning. Practitioners could consider ways to focus on parents developing their own skills, for example through certificated courses. This would support the development of a culture of lifelong learning supported by the school that raises aspirations and promotes a sense of achievement.

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.