

Summarised inspection findings

Uphall Primary School and Nursery Class

West Lothian Council

14 May 2019

Key contextual information

Uphall nursery class occupies two classrooms within the main school building with access to a self-contained outdoor area. Children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school attend. The nursery is registered for 50 children to attend at any one time. Current staffing allows 40 children to attend in the morning and 30 to attend in the afternoon sessions. At the time of inspection, there were 59 children on the roll.

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 commitment to continued improvement in the nursery class. The team is ably led by an early years officer who demonstrates a relentless enthusiasm to improving outcomes for children and families. Practitioners value her support, guidance, and welcome and respect the operational support given. She is supported further by the depute head teacher who has delegated management responsibility. Together, their drive to improve the quality of children's experiences is evident. Having taken over the management remit of the class in 2018 the depute head teacher undertakes ongoing monitoring of aspects of the class. Moving forward, it will be important this has a clear focus on the progress children make in their learning, alongside a continued focus on other important aspects. During the inspection, the senior leadership team and practitioners were very receptive to professional dialogue. The capacity for continued development is evident and the team are very well placed to deliver ongoing improvements.
- Building on a refresh of the school vision, values and aims, those to be adopted by the nursery class are currently being developed. Consultation has taken place with stakeholders, including children and families, about what is important to them. As the vision, values and aims consolidate, it will be important to ensure they are suitably aspirational and accessible to children. Within the refreshed vision, values and aims consideration should be made to building on the 'little voices' approach to empower children in the leadership of their nursery.
- An appropriate action plan is in place that details specific improvement priorities. These have been identified through input from the local authority and ongoing self-evaluation activities and link to whole school priorities. Impact from priorities has resulted in improved experiences for children, particularly in outdoor learning. To support plans for the development of a shared pedagogy across the early level consideration could be made to identifying this as a shared improvement priority. This would allow the maximising of skills and knowledge of the whole team working across the early level at Uphall.
- All practitioners have individual responsibilities for aspects of the nursery including the development of health and wellbeing, parental engagement and outdoor learning. These capitalise on the skills, interests and talents of practitioners and share the responsibility for the

process of change. Professional learning and research supports a few practitioners to deepen their knowledge of early years pedagogy. They demonstrate pride in their achievements. Learning has been shared more widely with practitioners in other local authorities. Professional learning is having a positive impact on approaches implemented, for example an increase in the use of natural and open-ended materials. Practitioners are keen to undertake increased professional reading and research to develop their skills and understanding, which reflects their commitment to continuous improvement. The implementation of a robust approach to professional review and development could support the ongoing development of practitioners.

- A positive start has been made to using the national framework, How good is our early learning and childcare? to underpin self-evaluation activities. Use of challenge questions, focused audits and dialogue help practitioners to evaluate the quality of their practice and identify areas for development. Examples include how children develop literacy and numeracy through engaging with the environment and the ongoing development of the outdoor area. A planned programme of visits to other settings within the cluster is established. Early signs are that these are supporting practitioners to benchmark their practice, identify areas for further improvement and share ideas and thinking. To be even more outward looking increased use could be made of the National Improvement Hub and visits to settings in nearby local authorities.

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

- The ethos of the setting is welcoming and supportive. Children benefit from caring and nurturing relationships provided by practitioners. As a result, children are settled in the nursery and present as confident and engaged learners. The learning environment provides a good range of purposeful and interesting learning opportunities, both indoors and outdoors. This includes a good range of natural open-ended materials, which support the development of children's skills in creativity, curiosity and inquiry effectively. Children make choices about their play and engage well as they follow their own interests. They are developing their independence well, as they make choices about their play and happily follow nursery daily routines.
- Most children sustain interest for prolonged periods of time in their chosen activities and are supported well by practitioners who respond sensitively to children's needs. Children have appropriate time and space to follow their own interests, and share their views and thoughts as they play and learn. They interact well with each other and with adults. Children benefit from an appropriate balance of child-initiated and adult-initiated experiences, planned to target specific learning. During child-initiated and adult-initiated experiences, practitioners use effective commentary and some appropriate questioning techniques to build and extend children's thinking. Children benefit from well-judged praise and feedback.
- Children have access to digital technologies. There is scope for practitioners to develop further how digital technologies are used to support children's learning.
- Practitioners use electronic learning journals to document children's learning and each child has an individual journal. Each child's journal contains photographs and observations of their significant learning and provides the opportunity for both children and parents to reflect and comment on learning. Next steps are identified for all children. There is scope for these to be developed further to consistently build on progress across the key aspects of learning. Overall, children require greater opportunities to reflect and comment on their personal learning. We discussed how this could be achieved. Improved opportunities would enable children to develop the vocabulary of learning more effectively, whilst enhancing their understanding of themselves as capable and competent learners.
- Floorbooks based on topics of interest are used to gather information about and document children's learning. The child's voice is evident within the floorbooks and include identified possible lines of development to explore with children. There is scope for practitioners to consult more effectively with children to understand more fully what they already know and understand. This will support practitioners to ensure greater depth and challenge in learning for all children.

- Procedures for tracking and monitoring the progress children make in their learning have recently been reviewed and revised. The newly devised tracking and monitoring system focuses on key aspects of children's learning linked to national benchmarks. The implementation of this new system is at any early stage. Management and practitioners require time to develop and embed the approach more fully. This should also include the development of an approach to moderation. Developing moderation within and out with the setting will support practitioners to more accurately and effectively assess children's progress and plan for their future learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum for children is firmly based on play and follows national guidance, Curriculum for Excellence. There is scope for the setting to embed particular elements of curriculum design more meaningfully. An emphasis is required on progression, depth and challenge. The setting would benefit from practitioners and stakeholders working together to refresh and develop further the curriculum rationale. This should fully reflect the changing values of the setting, and unique needs of children and the local community.
- There is scope to develop further the implementation of developmental pathways in the key aspects of early literacy and language, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. This would support the identification of progressive next steps in learning for all children.
- Good use has been made of the national practice guidance, Building the Ambition. As a result, the setting supports the development of children's skills in creativity, curiosity and inquiry effectively. Good use is made of natural and real-life resources.
- Transition for home to nursery is well managed. A few children have a split placement with other local settings. We discussed with practitioners developing links with settings to ensure continuity and progression in learning for children. As they move on to school, children benefit from a pre-planned transition programme. A helpful transition report based on Curriculum for Excellence shares information about learning and progress. There is scope to strengthen collaborative working with colleagues in primary one. This will develop and ensure consistency for children across the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents who responded to inspection questionnaires are satisfied with the work of the nursery class. They are encouraged to be part of their child's nursery experiences. This includes stay and play sessions, sharing in the Big Bedtime read initiative and supporting outings such as walks in the community. Learning in nursery is shared with families through attractive displays and access to learning journals. Planned programmes offer parents and families opportunities to learn together with their children with a particular focus, for example literacy. This is run successfully by the early years officer and is well attended. Parents are invited to share achievements from outwith nursery that are displayed on the 'Wow Wall'. There is potential to develop further home learning materials across the curriculum to support and strengthen the link, focused on learning, between home and nursery.
- Practitioners recognise that established links with the local community could be built on further to enhance and enrich learning in real-life and meaningful contexts. We discussed how children could contribute to the organisation of this to help them exercise responsibility and initiative.

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 recognise that relationships are of paramount importance to children's development. As a result, they have created a very welcoming and nurturing environment and have warm and responsive relationships with children. The promotion of wellbeing underpins the work of the class and a mutual respect and trust is evident between children, practitioners and families. Almost all children are relaxed and settled, and present as feeling safe and secure.
- Overall, children are well-behaved, confident and happy. They play well together, take turns, and share appropriately. Practitioners, who interact in a way that promotes respect and a feeling of wellbeing, provide positive role models for children. The whole school rules of 'safe', 'ready' and 'responsible' are used well to support and reinforce positive behaviour in an age appropriate manner. Practitioners are sensitive and responsive to the needs of individuals and offer comfort and support when needed. They use thoughtful approaches to support children to negotiate and problem-solve in play situations. This contributes to the strong sense of community and shared expectations.
- The national wellbeing indicators from Getting it right for every child are actively promoted in nursery practice. Children are developing an understanding of the eight indicators and are beginning to relate them to their experiences in the nursery and at home. Vocabulary related to the indicators are integral to nursery routines and conversations. Children can describe how they can keep healthy through good choices at snack, regular fresh air and exercise and hygiene routines. Snack time provides opportunities to explore a range of foods, safe use of tools and to take on responsibilities. A positive start has been made to identifying rights with children, for example, the right to play, and this should be continued. We discussed with practitioners the potential for more challenging outdoor play, for example through more regular, planned visits to local woodland. This will provide opportunities to learn about and manage risk in a safe way.
- Children are involved in making some decisions that affect them. This includes planning what they would like to learn about, resources they would like to use and what they might have for snack. There is scope for children's involvement in decision-making and leadership to be increased. This should build on the established consultative approach, 'little voices' to provide children with a more active role in decision making.
- Overall, statutory duties are complied with. A range of policies and procedures are in place that support the care and welfare of the children. We talked to senior leaders about the requirements of care planning and how their use could be developed to support positive outcomes for children further. Practitioners are confident about their responsibility and actions to take in order to keep children safe.

- Practitioners know children well as individuals and have responsibility for a key group of children. Children, who have potential barriers to their learning, are readily identified and supported well. Where required, additional plans for children are developed in partnership with parents and if appropriate, other professionals. Practitioners treat children and their families with respect within the inclusive ethos.
- As planned, practitioners should monitor how effectively they promote diversity across the setting. This will allow the richness of the nursery community to be celebrated and used as a context for meaningful learning. Plans are in place to explore gender equality in the setting. As a result of this, practitioners should be confident that all children have equal access and there are no artificial barriers to learning.

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

- Overall, children are making good progress in their learning. In early language, they are becoming increasingly confident in conversing with practitioners and each other. Most children are beginning to share their thoughts and thinking readily. Across the setting children benefit from participation in programmes to promote vocabulary building. Most children are developing their skills in listening and attention well. They listen attentively and enjoy stories in small group sessions. Children's mark making skills are developing well as they explore a wide range of writing tools in the playroom and outdoors, A few children are beginning to write their name. Most children are able to identify their name as they self-select at registration and snack time. A few children spend extended periods creating their own storybooks including props, which they confidently share with others.
- Children are making good progress in early numeracy and mathematics with the environment providing an interesting and stimulating range of learning opportunities. Most children can identify big and small and can identify two-dimensional shapes. Children build with blocks for extended periods. As a result, they can count confidently from zero to ten and back and explore measurement through height comparison. Children readily engage in problem solving activities and concentrate well to complete puzzles that are more complex. They would benefit from increased opportunities to use money in real-life and pretend situations. There is scope to explore simple data handling, for example, tally marks and simple bar charts more regularly.
- In health and wellbeing, children are making good progress. They benefit from a free flow access to the well-resourced, stimulating outdoor area. Children's gross motor skills are developing well as they use a wide selection of loose parts outdoors. Their fine motor skills are also developing well as they learn to weave and sew using a range of real life objects and materials. All children are caring, considerate and respectful towards each other. A few children successfully lead their own play, as they self-select board games and play co-operatively in group situations, independently sharing and taking turns.
- Practitioners know children and understand children very well as individuals. However, there is scope for them to develop a greater understanding of children's significant learning in the key aspects of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Children's achievement from home are recognised and displayed. As planned, practitioners should continue to promote this approach with parents and carers, in order to celebrate children's individual achievements successfully.

- The setting has an inclusive ethos. Practitioners successfully identify potential barriers to learning for individual children and take appropriate steps to ensure positive outcomes for children and families.

Choice of QI: 2.4 Personalised support

- Universal support
- Role of practitioners and leaders
- Identification of learning needs and targeted support
- Removal of barriers to learning

- Practitioners are committed to providing a nurturing and caring environment for children. They are knowledgeable and responsive to children's individual needs, interests and wellbeing. The positive relationships between families and practitioners provide a strong foundation for providing personalised support.
- The well-developed learning environment enables children to access a wide range of resources and experiences appropriate to their interests and developmental stage. Children can choose to play indoors and out. The introduction of open-ended loose parts and natural materials supports children to explore their learning and develop their curiosity and creativity. Further development of loose parts play will enable children to experience increased opportunities for risk and challenge.
- Establishing what children already know and what they want to learn about next will help ensure that children's prior knowledge and skills are recognised and built upon. This will support increased personalisation and depth to children's learning. Next steps in learning are identified as a result of observations. These now need to have a sharper focus on the individual learning and be progressive over time. Practitioners should now consider how to involve children in describing and talking about their own learning targets. This will enable the children to begin to understand themselves as learners. As tracking systems embed, there is scope for evaluation and analysis of information and data gathered on children's progress to be more robust. This will help ensure that the correct interventions are in place and the very best outcomes are achieved.
- Personal planning should be in place for all children with more detailed individual plans. These should build on the positive relationships already established, knowledge of individual families' circumstances and use of the wellbeing indicators. Increased use of a personal planning approach will support the identification of where targeted interventions could have most impact and allow maximum use of available information.
- Children's additional support needs are identified through careful observation and discussion. Parents are involved from an early stage and practitioners nurture these partnerships to minimise barriers to learning. Positive relationships with other professionals help develop and deliver strategies to support individual children. Plans established for individual children now need to be measured robustly to ensure that interventions put in place are consistently effective.

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.