

Summarised inspection findings

Alva Primary School Nursery Class

Clackmannanshire Council

14 March 2023

Key contextual information

Alva Nursery Class is situated within Alva Primary School and serves the community of Alva and the surrounding villages. The nursery is registered for 74 children at any one time. At the time of the inspection, 66 children were on the roll. Children attend the nursery from the age of two until they begin primary school. Children can access 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC). Almost all children attend for full days during term time.

Whilst the headteacher has overall responsibility, the nursery remit has been delegated to the deputy headteacher. The senior ELC educator is responsible for the day-to-day running of the nursery. She is supported by a team of ELC practitioners.

Whilst the nursery has not been affected adversely by COVID-19 outbreaks, within the past year there has been significant staff absence.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the nursery 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 nursery and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The senior ELC educator and practitioners work well together and support each other both professionally and personally. As a team, they strive to do their very best to enable children to have a positive ELC experience. Practitioners value the support and leadership of the senior ELC educator.
- All practitioners within the nursery know children, families and their community well. As identified within the improvement plan, a review of the current vision and values involving all stakeholders is now required. It will be important to reflect the context and aspirations of the ELC community. Practitioners should seek ways to share the vision and values with children in a developmentally appropriate way. This could support children's awareness and understanding of how the nursery's vision and values impacts them and others as individuals.
- Practitioners continue to build their knowledge and develop skills through professional learning and assistance from local authority colleagues. They have recently welcomed leadership roles in areas such as early literacy and numeracy, health and wellbeing and working with parents. As a result, improvements are beginning to impact positively on children's learning. Practitioners now need to embed their leadership roles to ensure they contribute successfully to improvements and delivery of high quality ELC. The senior ELC educator and practitioners should make increased use of national guidance to support improvement further. This could help them to deepen their knowledge and gain confidence to support all children more effectively.

- To ensure continuous improvements, senior leaders within the school need to provide consistent and focused strategic guidance and direction for all who work in the nursery. This support needs to include monitoring of learning and teaching. It will be important for senior leaders to plan and protect time for this.
- All practitioners within the nursery need strategic leadership to help them develop robust and systematic self-evaluation processes. They know self-evaluation is an important area of improvement. All practitioners need to be able to reflect critically on their practice in order to make sound judgements that will lead to important improvements. Support from senior leaders within the school should guide practitioners to make these improvements at an appropriate pace and in a measured way. In addition, all practitioners within the ELC would benefit from looking outwards to deepen their understanding of high quality ELC.
- Very recently, with support from the local authority, a number of changes have taken place, particularly in relation to the nursery environment. Practitioners should develop a collaborative approach to change to enable them to gain ownership of improvements.

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

- Most children appear confident and secure in the nursery. Children have positive relationships and practitioners encourage them to develop independence through play experiences and routines. The very recently enhanced learning environment offers children a range of learning opportunities, including natural materials and loose parts. Practitioners now need to embed these changes into practice fully. Most children engage well in their play indoors and out. At transition points, for example around lunchtime and the end of the day, children can become disengaged. Practitioners should continue to review and adapt these key transition points to ensure levels of engagement improve.
- Children aged two to five years old play together throughout the nursery. Open-ended materials, for example the new sand area, encourage children to experiment and explore at their own developmental level. Practitioners should continue to ensure they meet the needs of children under three through ongoing review of resources, experiences and routines.
- Across the age groups, children benefit from practitioners' warm and supportive interactions. At times, the youngest children can find it a challenge to make choices and engage in learning experiences. Overall, practitioners tune in to children, listen effectively and encourage communication sensitively. In their interactions, practitioners should continue to integrate support and challenge for children to build early communication, literacy, numeracy and maths skills.
- Practitioners use floorbooks to evidence instances of high-quality learning experiences and respect for children's voices. They talk confidently about examples of responding to observed children's interests. For example, they developed a ramp as a response to children experimenting with forces. The team now need to develop consistency of practice in recording responsive planning.
- The quality of practitioners' observations can be inconsistent, and these do not always identify the skills children are developing. They would benefit from further guidance on the planning cycle to support planning for children's learning more effectively. This should include professional learning on effective use of observations. Practitioners should continue to engage with national guidance to aid professional reflection and improve support for children as leaders of their own learning. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to reflect on and share their learning, for example, by using digital technology. The youngest children would benefit from an increased focus on specific planning to meet their needs.

- Relevant plans are in place for children who require additional support with their learning. These plans identify strategies to enable children to access all nursery experiences. It will be important for practitioners to monitor and review these plans regularly to ensure consistency of approaches for individual children. This will assist them in determining how well children are progressing in relation to the identified strategies.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Recent improvements to the learning environment enable practitioners to provide a wider range of stimulating play experiences across the curriculum. There is a shared understanding that play is the basis of the ELC curriculum. They should continue to explore the curriculum principles including personalisation and depth when considering and providing learning opportunities for children.
- Practitioners should continue to develop their interactions, environment and experiences, taking into account national guidance. This should include essential aspects for learning to support wellbeing, communication and early literacy and maths. With a mixed group of two to five year olds, practitioners should ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all children. This includes supporting the youngest children and offering increased challenge as they develop and learn. Practitioners should continue to identify skills as part of their documentation of observations, and link these to planned experiences. This will help individual children to progress further in their learning.
- Practitioners support children and families well as they transition into the nursery from home. Arrangements are flexible to suit individual children and families' needs. Practitioners provide a range of experiences that help children make a smooth transition as they move into school. This includes buddies, visits to the school and a picnic in the park with the P1 teacher. Practitioners and P1 teachers meet to discuss individual children and the progress they have made in the nursery.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents and carers are welcomed into the nursery. Gradually, since the pandemic, parents can engage in small group sessions to support their child's learning. They particularly enjoy story sessions where children and families can join together.
- Practitioners provide parents and carers with up to date with nursery information and events through an online platform. Parents and carers engage well with this. They also can view and engage with their child's online journal. Practitioners should continue to seek ways to encourage parents and carers to contribute to their child's learning journal. Meetings throughout the year enable practitioners to share children's progress with parents and carers.
- Since the pandemic, practitioners recognise there is scope to increase opportunities for children to engage with a wider range of community partners. Practitioners continue to encourage children to share their thoughts and ideas. For example, children decide on the snack menu and make changes to improve the quality of their learning environment.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

This indicator reflects on the nursery'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

- Children benefit from positive, nurturing relationships with practitioners. Most children are comfortable to approach practitioners to express their needs verbally or through gestures. At welcome times, children have the opportunity to share how they feel. They are beginning to develop the appropriate language to express their feelings and emotions.
- Children develop their independence skills well as they prepare a healthy snack and serve themselves. Almost all children have lunch within the nursery. Practitioners have recently changed the mealtime routine, which allows children to choose when to come for lunch within a specific time period. The majority of children cope well with this change. Practitioners should continue to monitor and evaluate mealtimes to ensure the youngest children receive sufficient support at this time. In addition, they could offer all children increased opportunities for independence by, for example, encouraging children to serve themselves. This could give practitioners more time to sit with children, engage in conversation, and provide support as required.
- Practitioners have recently introduced leadership roles for children. This includes snack and recycling leaders. Children are becoming familiar with their roles and are proud to share what their responsibilities are. Children's leadership roles should now become part of everyday practice.
- Through experiences and routines, practitioners use the language of a few of the national wellbeing indicators such as safe and healthy. Children are becoming aware of their meaning through relevant experiences. They share what helps them to be healthy and what they need to do to keep themselves and others safe. Practitioners should continue with their work to support children to explore the full range of wellbeing indicators.
- Practitioners work closely with a range of professional partners to provide targeted support for individual children. Partners offer advice and guidance to enable practitioners to help children to develop and learn through universal and targeted approaches. Professional partners would welcome the opportunity to be involved more regularly to deliver well-planned and progressive training for staff. This could ensure a consistent approach to meeting children's individual needs.
- All practitioners are clear about their statutory duties relevant to early learning and childcare. They know their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe and planning to support children's health, care and wellbeing needs.
- Practitioners could provide a wider range of experiences and resources to engage children in exploring, celebrating and valuing diversity. This should help children to develop further an awareness of the world in which they live.

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

- Practitioners are committed to improving outcomes for children and as a result, children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Children benefit from warm relationships with adults and appear happy in the nursery. They talk about keeping healthy through eating well and keeping active. Most children are developing gross motor skills well through opportunities for physical play indoors and out, and through visits to the school gym hall twice a week.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in developing communication and literacy skills. The majority of children are eager to communicate with their friends and adults, and willingly share thoughts and ideas. Children engage in sharing stories with adults throughout the nursery and talk about their mark making at the drawing area. They would benefit from increased opportunities to see themselves as writers, using their skills to capture their own stories. In addition, all children would benefit from an increased focus on rhymes and songs in daily interactions. As identified by practitioners, a few children would benefit from focused support to develop early communication and language skills.
- In early numeracy and mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress. They use numerals and count for a purpose at snack time and through games. A few children are keen to share their interest in larger numbers and number sequences. The majority of children use appropriate mathematical language as they play. Children would benefit from opportunities to develop their skills further in problem solving and exploring the concepts of shape, size and position as they play.
- Children can be curious and creative in a wide variety of spaces and experiences indoors and out. They design and make using a variety of materials and resources. Children use open-ended and natural materials such as sand and clay well to experiment and explore.
- Practitioners use an achievement tree and children's individual learning journals to highlight achievements from outside the nursery. They should continue to encourage parents to share these achievements to enable children to recognise and celebrate success. Practitioners should track these achievements to demonstrate the wider range of children's experiences and the skills they develop.
- Keyworkers and senior leaders meet on a termly basis to discuss individual children's progress and possible barriers to learning. They identify children needing further help or challenge in their learning. The ambition is for practitioners to provide targeted support in small groups. Pressure on staffing this year has affected practitioners' ability to put this initiative in place.

- Practitioners should continue to monitor and review the developmental needs of the youngest children who have an entitlement to access ELC in their nursery. They need to take account of the full range of developmental stages for all children to ensure they continue to make the best possible progress in their development and learning.

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.