

Summarised inspection findings

Valley Primary School and Nursery Class

Fife Council

26 March 2019

Key contextual information

Valley Primary School Nursery Class is situated in Kirkcaldy, Fife and offers a choice of sessions and hours. At the time of inspection, there were 87 children on the roll. The nursery comprises two separate buildings within the school grounds. One building accommodates children aged two to three years and the other children aged from three years to those not yet attending school.

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 school and nursery have a shared vision, values and aims. These were reviewed and refreshed recently, taking account of all stakeholders' views. The vision, 'Valley Values You' is evident across the nursery. Practitioners, children and parents continue to embed the vision, values and aims. Moving forward, there is a need to continue to ensure these are relevant, meaningful and appropriate to the age and stage of children.
- A new model of delivery for early learning and childcare has been introduced in the setting. As a result, there have been changes in the staffing structure since the start of the academic year. This includes the introduction of an early years lead officer and peripatetic teacher. The practitioner team have worked well together to embrace the changes in a positive manner. They engage in daily informal dialogue to identify what they feel is working well and what could be improved. The team benefit from continued support from the local authority early years team. The depute head of the school continues to oversee and manage the nursery team.
- All practitioners demonstrate an enthusiastic and professional commitment to their role, both collectively and as individuals. Practitioners are reflective in their practice and strive to meet the needs of children and families in their community. All practitioners embrace professional learning, with a few studying for additional qualifications. This is having a positive impact on the setting. Planned in-service training sessions around appropriate priorities such as numeracy and improving observations are timely and well judged. The team should continue to explore and agree consistent, shared expectations about high quality early learning.
- There is an improvement plan across the school and nursery. Priorities identified take account of national, regional and local priorities and the local context. Moving forward it will be important to take full account of the needs of the nursery context, ensuring priorities are relevant and appropriate. A positive start to distributing leadership opportunities across the team is supporting practitioners in their professional development. There is potential to increase opportunities for all practitioners to develop their own skills in taking forward identified priorities for improvement. Ownership of the improvement plan would help support this development.
- There is a self-evaluation system in place, which captures a wide range of information across the nursery. The nursery use national guidance, 'How good is our early learning and

childcare?’ and ‘Building the Ambition’ well to support this process. All practitioners engage in self-evaluation for improvement and should continue to monitor the impact of changes implemented. Planned improvements should continue to be specific, clear and measurable and ensure an appropriate pace of change in order to make a difference for children and families.

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

- In the playroom for children aged two to three years relationships with children and families are respectful and positive. Children are supported to settle in, with time and consideration given to their level of development. Practitioners are very aware of the need to be responsive to children's care needs throughout the sessions. Observations of children's play contribute to the planning process. There is a good balance of adult-initiated learning and following children's interests.
- The environment for younger children is caring and promotes independence and self-help skills. Planning considers observations of development and longer-term goals under the headings of 'Respect', 'Responsibility', 'Rights' and 'Responsive'. There are systems in place for practitioners to respond spontaneously to children's emerging interests. Personal learning journeys (PLJs) contain relevant information and observations of children's learning.
- The children in the three to five playrooms are settled, happy and enjoy their time at nursery. Children are busy, engaged and stimulated through well considered activities. Children move freely between rooms and the outdoors being open naturally allows them the opportunity to explore different environments.
- Quality early years pedagogy and practice is valued and children are learning through appropriate play experiences. Children have time to explore, repeat, investigate and consolidate their learning through play. Interactions between practitioners and children are warm and nurturing. Practitioners use effective questioning techniques, using open-ended questions to support children's thinking and problem solving.
- Technologies are used within the nursery to enhance learning. An interactive board offers opportunities to learn through fun interactive literacy and numeracy games. Children are observed being able to access this independently or with help from an adult. A listening station is well used by children to enjoy music.
- Planning for children's interests is being supported by the development of learning walls. Children's questions are recorded on a mind map, to be answered as they participate in researching their interests. Possible lines of development are planned to take these questions forward. Elements of this learning are visible within a floorbook and on displays within the room. As planned, practitioners should ensure they capture evidence of a learning project progressing from beginning to end.
- Practitioners need to encourage children to have a stronger voice and role in shaping the learning walls, planning for learning and identifying their own next steps. While there are examples of child-led learning, more consideration needs to be given to the depth, breadth and

challenge in learning. The evaluation of the impact projects have had on children's learning would support learning to be more visible.

- Observations of individual children are kept within their personal learning journeys. In the best examples, progress in learning is evident. Further training is planned to enable all practitioners to deepen their understanding of writing quality observations. This will improve assessment information of children's individual learning.
- Lead practitioners oversee curriculum planning. Fortnightly meetings have been introduced to allow practitioners opportunities to discuss learning opportunities and plan activities to take learning forward. Responsive planning is encouraged through noting short-term interests. Practitioners track coverage across experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence over the year. We discussed with practitioners the need to consider how processes could be streamlined to ensure that planning, tracking and monitoring demonstrate the progress children make in their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners across the setting have implemented national guidance including Curriculum for Excellence, 'Pre-Birth to Three' and 'Building the Ambition'. A curriculum rationale based on their knowledge of the community including children and families in the process now needs to be developed.
- The learning walls in the playroom for children aged two to three years highlights schemas. Consideration should be given to resourcing schemas through loose parts within the playroom to extend children's patterns of developmental play. Children have access to outdoors where they can access a mud kitchen, large physical equipment and other activities.
- Displays are used effectively to inform parents of children's interests and other information. An achievement board celebrates children's achievements within the home, wider in their community and at nursery. Another display highlights children learning about skills for life and work.
- Transitions are well supported across the child's journey from home into school. The lead practitioner, who works with all age groups of children, provides a useful support for transition. Transition processes are started early to allow knowledge of the child and family to be built up and for the child to feel comfortable in a new environment. Transitions to school are planned through a programme of visits and sharing of information supports continued learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnership with parents is valued, with relationships between the setting and parents very positive. Parents are involved through initial visits to the setting, regular 'stay and share' sessions and an open door policy. Home visits are carried out for children starting the playroom for children aged two to three years. Parents are encouraged to engage in the life of the nursery through book bug sessions, planned programmes and local outings.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about their experience at Valley nursery. Overall, parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were happy with the nursery provision, with a few looking to discuss further their child's learning and progress. A few parents also noted that they would like to be kept informed about parents groups.
- Parents have daily dialogue with practitioners and informal and formal opportunities to discuss their child's learning. They can contribute to their child's personal learning journey and share successes and achievements with practitioners. There is a lending library where children and parents are encouraged to choose a book and leave a comment on the chosen book. Newsletters and social media provide regular updates on the life of the nursery.

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

- The ethos and culture across the nursery is nurturing and respectful. Interactions are warm and caring, as a result, children are enabled to feel settled, safe and secure. Practitioners recognise the importance of relationships in supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing. Children's behaviour is appropriate to their age and stage of development. Where necessary, individuals are supported sensitively to develop the necessary skills to show consideration for their peers.
- A positive start to introduce children's rights has been made through an initiative called, "Wee Voices" across all age groups. Children are encouraged to think about their rights with their families and their thoughts are recorded for everyone to hear. Children's voices are captured and their opinions taken into account through consultations and voting systems. Practitioners have ideas to build on this approach and extend this learning further.
- The principles of Getting it right for every child and the use of national wellbeing indicators are evident in practice and in children's personal learning journeys. A shared understanding of what it means to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included continues to be developed across the setting. As discussed, there is scope to develop this further with all children and parents.
- Children are happy and confident both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor learning supports children to be healthy and active as they have fun with their peers. They take risks on the new climbing frame, climb the grass hill and explore loose parts. This supports them to develop confidence and resilience and impacts positively on their sense of wellbeing.
- Children are supported to make choices within their environment, and be as independent as possible. They take responsibility for helping to order food for healthy snack, choose menus, set the table and prepare food for their friends. They are developing their personal hygiene skills. Opportunities exist for children to take a leadership role, for example, snack helper. We have asked practitioners to continue to build in opportunities for children to develop leadership and responsibility.
- Overall, statutory duties are complied with, in line with current guidance. There is an understanding of what is required of practitioners and management in their requirement to fulfil statutory duties to secure positive outcomes for children. Individual needs of children are responded to in a sensitive and caring manner. As discussed, there is a need to ensure all relevant information relating to children is collated and shared in an appropriate and manageable way.
- Inclusion and equality is promoted throughout the work of the setting, with all children and families treated with respect. Practitioners treat children fairly and take account of their individual likes and dislikes. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos with children being

nurtured and encouraged to reach their full potential. There are effective strategies in place to improve progress for all children, with a clear focus on those facing challenges in their 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

- Practitioners working with children aged two to three years have a clear focus on observing and tracking children's developmental milestones. Individual plans are in place to take forward areas of development. Children have access to a range of resources that promote early numeracy and literacy both indoors and out. Children are supported by practitioners to understand and learn new vocabulary. A few children are at a sensory stage in their learning and benefit from trying out new experiences.
- Children aged three to five years are making good progress in communication and early language. Most children are observed to be confident when speaking to adults, they listen well and follow instructions. Most children recognise letters in their names and the sounds they make. A few children are observed to sound out their whole name. Children engage with their friends using the props to sing their favourite songs independently. Children enjoy counting songs and rhymes during large group time and singing along to music during free play.
- Children are observed to have a strong interest in writing. Writing is promoted throughout most areas of the nursery. Most children are observed writing at the desk area where they could use different tools to make marks. Practitioners make themselves available to read stories and information books are used to extend knowledge of topics. Children have opportunities to access books independently and to take books home.
- Overall children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are able to count beyond ten, with most demonstrating skills within ten. Children are observed using number purposefully to count how many bricks they need to build homes for animals. They use clocks within the playroom to role-play time.
- Children enjoy pouring and filling at the water play and are able to comment on bottles being full and empty. They are also able to accurately count how many jugs are required to fill a bottle. Children with English as an additional language are able to show their understanding of number by using their fingers to show quantities. Younger children are more confident counting on and back during well-known nursery rhymes. Practitioners should continue to embed numeracy across the curriculum.
- Children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They have established good friendships and are confident in accessing all areas of the setting. Children are learning about making healthy choices through conversations around meal times and snacks. They are developing their gross motor skills through energetic physical play outdoors and weekly visits

to the school gym hall. Children have opportunities to participate in weekly outings to the local woodland, yoga and local walks in their community.

- Through inspection activities, personal learning journeys, floorbooks, learning walls and in discussion with children, they are observed to be making good progress across their learning. Learning pathways for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are beginning to show progress children are making across the early level. As planned, practitioners now need to ensure quality observations demonstrate evidence of children's progress over time.
- Children with additional support needs including children with English as an additional language are included in every aspect of the nursery. Lead practitioners identify children who require extra support with their communication and language skills. Progress is tracked through a well-developed system of observation and assessment.

Choice of QI: 2.5 Family Learning

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

- Positive and supportive relationships with families have been developed. Practitioners work hard together to ensure families feel welcome and valued in the life of the setting. Home visits support the youngest children prior to starting the setting and are offered as a means of ongoing targeted support. Practitioners are aware of, and respond promptly to, changes in family circumstances. When required, support to maximise children's attendance, support learning in the home and reduce levels of isolation, stress and anxiety for adults and children is offered.
- Practitioners strive to form respectful and positive relationships with all families. There is a strong recognition of the crucial role of parents in supporting their child's learning, development and emotional wellbeing. An increasing number of parents attend carefully planned sessions that respond to their interests and children's needs, for example 'Bookbug', baby massage and other programmes. The lending library offers the opportunity for children and parents to engage in story reading at home.
- A programme of family learning opportunities is well attended by local families. Strategies to reduce barriers to participation and promote opportunities for engagement are developed. This includes 'Bookbug' being delivered in Polish. Everyone in the setting celebrates the achievement and success of individuals and groups. We discussed ways in which this could be celebrated further, for example certificates of achievement for parents. Practitioners are proactive in signposting parents to relevant groups and partner agencies.

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.