

# Summarised inspection findings

**Heathryburn Primary School Nursery Class**

Aberdeen City Council

28 November 2023

## Key contextual information

Heathryburn Primary School Nursery Class is based in the Northfield area of Aberdeen. It is registered for 47 children, with a maximum of 40 children attending per session. Children attend from three years until school starting age. The current nursery roll is 34 children attending in the morning and 13 children attending in the afternoon session. Children access five morning or five afternoon sessions during term time. Parents can access additional hours to make up their child's hours to 1140 hours from 8am to 6pm.

The practitioner team consists of one senior early years practitioner plus one acting senior early years practitioner, four full-time equivalent Early Years Practitioners and one full-time support worker. The team are supported by a locality lead as required. The nursery is led by a deputy headteacher who has responsibility for the service. She has recently taken over this remit after a staffing change. Over the last few months, there have been significant changes in staffing and leadership of the nursery, with many staff on temporary contracts.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

unsatisfactory

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

- Overall, there are major weaknesses in the leadership of the nursery. As a result, planning for change is not supporting positive outcomes for children. The headteacher and senior leaders, with support from the local authority, need to provide clear leadership and direction to the work of the nursery. As a matter of urgency, they should ensure children receive their entitlement to a broad range of learning experiences. These experiences must reflect the curriculum design principles and the four contexts for learning. Senior leaders should establish robust monitoring and effective self-evaluation to improve the quality of experiences and outcomes for children. In addition, senior leaders and practitioners should develop approaches to plan, track and record children's progress across the early level. This information should be used to inform daily experiences in the playroom and outdoors which challenge and support children effectively.
- The nursery adopts the vision, values and aims of the school. The headteacher and practitioners should work together to establish a shared vision for the setting that reflects the aspirations of children, parents and practitioners. All stakeholders need to have increasing ownership of the nursery and support children to develop their understanding of the nursery's purpose.
- The nursery improvement priorities were identified from a recent Care Inspectorate visit. The local authority have supported practitioners to make changes over the last few months. This had led to a few improvements to the learning environment, the quality of adult and child interactions and planning of the curriculum. However, the pace of change is too slow. The headteacher and senior leaders now need to work with staff to significantly increase the pace of change. The headteacher, senior leaders and practitioners need to ensure changes made

have an impact on improving children's outcomes on an ongoing basis. Practitioners have undertaken a few opportunities for career-long professional learning (CLPL) this session. The headteacher should work with practitioners to support them to demonstrate the impact of CLPL on practitioner's practice and children's experiences.

- Practitioners are aware of the national self-evaluation framework, How good is our early learning and childcare? (HGIOELC). They are not yet using this framework to review the work of the nursery. Practitioners correctly identify the need to involve parents and children more in evaluating and improving the provision. The headteacher and senior leaders need to monitor the work of the nursery on a regular basis to support staff to make improvements. They should meet with staff regularly to plan and discuss progress to ensure outcomes for children improve. They should also provide practitioners and children with opportunities to develop their leadership skills. This will help to support improvements in the nursery.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

unsatisfactory

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

- There are major weaknesses in the quality of learning experiences for children. As a result, children's successes and achievements are diminished. Too many children are not engaged in learning for extended periods of time and move around the playroom without purpose. Practitioners do not use assessment to support children and to make informed decisions about their next steps. In addition, children do not benefit from a planned curriculum and experiences that support their learning.
- Most practitioners are caring and welcome children into the nursery environment. Most children settle quickly. A few children require more support with stay and play sessions and further strategies to distract them and to help them settle. Overall, children feel confident in the familiar surroundings during their play. They enjoy their time at nursery. However, they require more challenge and support in their learning.
- Practitioners should continue to build on children's interest to maximise learning opportunities in the playroom and outdoor area. Senior leaders should support practitioners to continue to review and develop the environment. They should ensure learning opportunities encourage children to develop their curiosity, enquiry, and creative skills. Practitioners should continue to work with senior leaders and use the national guidance 'Realising the Ambition: Being me' to support improvements. In doing this, they should develop a shared understanding of a quality learning environment. Senior leaders, and the local authority, should support practitioners to develop their use of the language of learning. This will help practitioners to recognise themselves as learners. Practitioners should now work with teachers in P1 to ensure all children experience quality learning through play across the early level.
- Most children need more targeted support from practitioners to enable them to engage fully in their play throughout the session. The headteacher should work with the nursery team to ensure there is a consistent and effective use of visual symbols and signs to support children's communication and understanding. Practitioners record observations of children in their online journal. Senior leaders and practitioners recognise that these need to be improved. They are not yet capturing children's significant learning. The headteacher, senior leaders and practitioners cannot yet demonstrate the progress that children are making in the nursery.
- Practitioners have recently adopted a new way to plan learning. They record how they respond to individual children's interests in learning. They should now build on this to ensure they plan learning which offers appropriate pace and challenge for all children. They should consider how they plan learning which takes account of children who require additional support and additional challenge. Practitioners need to improve the support they offer children who require additional support with their learning.

- Children's progress is not yet tracked or monitored. As a result, practitioners are unable to make confident judgements about children's progress and learning achievements. The headteacher, senior leaders and practitioners need to develop an overview of children's individual progress. This should lead to improved outcomes for children and ensure continuity and progression within and across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- There is an urgent need for the headteacher, senior leaders and practitioners to review the curriculum offer. They need to ensure all children receive their entitlement to a broad general curriculum. Practitioners should reflect on the design principles and the four contexts for learning. This will help them to plan for increasing depth and challenge in children's learning.
- Practitioners need to take responsibility for developing children's early literacy and numeracy skills appropriate to individual needs. They should consider alternative pathways for those children with additional support needs. Across the nursery, there is a need to improve the range of high-quality resources available to support practitioners to deliver the curriculum.
- Children benefit from an environment which is well lit and airy, with access to the outdoors and a range of play contexts indoors. Across the nursery, resources are too limited and play areas do not reflect a broad curriculum. As a result, children do not show sustained engagement in their play. Children are allowed to direct their own learning for large parts of the day, often with little interaction from adults. This results in disengagement and disagreements between children. Practitioners should review the pace and balance of the nursery session to be more responsive to children's needs. They should provide quiet areas for children to relax and sleep when required as a matter of urgency.
- Practitioners should continue to develop and explore the learning experiences that exist within the local community. They should ensure that these opportunities help children to develop an awareness of the world in which they live, including beyond the local area.
- Practitioners should now collaborate together with teachers in P1 to ensure they plan progression across the early level. Teachers and practitioners need to continue to develop a shared pedagogy across the early level. This should promote progression and continuity in children's learning.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have positive relationships with parents. They spend time with parents on entry to the nursery. They share information on children's achievements and wellbeing. This provides parents with reassurance, particularly while their child is settling into the playroom. Practitioners should meet with parents more regularly to update children's personal plans.
- Parents have access to learning journals, which provide them with limited information about children's experiences in the setting. These need to be developed further to provide more information to parents on their child's progress in learning.
- A family learning worker makes positive links to support families. They have previously worked with practitioners to deliver parent learning programmes. There is potential to significantly increase the ways that families can engage with learning within the setting.

## 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

weak

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

- There are important weaknesses in approaches to children's wellbeing, which impacts on their ability to achieve success.
- Most children are happy and enjoy taking part within the setting. Children's induction into the nursery allows practitioners the opportunity to get to know children and their families better. This supports children to develop a feeling of being welcome and secure in their environment. A few children who find it difficult to settle in the nursery, require bespoke arrangements and better planning to support them in this transition.
- A majority of children are beginning to develop appropriate social and emotional skills through play. They are forming friendships within the nursery. Practitioners, at the beginning of the term, reinforce rules for playing safe and sharing. Practitioners are beginning to use a story about feelings to help children identify their emotions. A few children can link the colour character to their emotions. This is helping a few children to identify how they are feeling and talk about how to make themselves happier. Practitioners are at an early stage in helping children understand what it means to be healthy and safe.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and practitioners now need to develop better approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring children's learning in health and wellbeing. They should review the health and wellbeing curriculum to develop children's understanding and awareness of their own wellbeing more fully.
- Senior leaders should now work with practitioners to develop their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in meeting statutory duties. All children have a personal plan. Senior leaders need to ensure these are reviewed and updated regularly. This will support effective planning for individual children's care and learning.
- Practitioners correctly recognise children who may experience barriers to their learning. A few children with significant medical needs are well cared for. Senior leaders should ensure clear targets are set for all children with additional support needs. Parents and partners should be fully involved in setting these targets. Senior leaders and practitioners should ensure they work with parents and partners to clearly identify and record interventions used to support these children. Senior leaders and practitioners review and evaluate interventions and targets regularly to ensure children make appropriate progress in learning over time.
- There is scope for children and families to feel more included through multi-language signage and celebrations of the range of cultures and languages. A few children who speak Polish are supported well by a practitioner who speaks Polish. Senior leaders should support practitioners with strategies to meet the needs of children who have English as an additional language.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

unsatisfactory

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

- There are significant weaknesses in securing children's progress that need to be addressed urgently. Practitioners are not yet gathering information regarding children's progress, including those with additional support needs. They need to ensure children get sufficient opportunities to develop numeracy, communication and language skills appropriate to their needs.
- Most children are happy to play in the setting. However, they are not yet making sufficient progress in communication and early language skills. A few children enjoy looking at books and listen well to stories. All children need to develop their skills in listening and retelling stories more frequently. Most children need to develop skills to listen more attentively and engage more purposefully with practitioners during play. A few children can recognise their printed names or their allocated animal symbol with their name. A majority of children use pencils and markers at the writing table. A few children are keen to explore letters and are beginning to experiment with mark making. Practitioners should increase their use of rhyme, song and story to engage and motivate children to develop vocabulary and communication skills. They should consider how to support and develop early language skills through a literacy rich environment. There should be more books, attractively displayed in the library and playroom. There should be signs and labels across the nursery in large print and at children's levels. This will develop children's understanding of words and letters. Senior leaders should support practitioners to develop strategies to extend the vocabulary of children with communication difficulties.
- Senior leaders need to support practitioners to develop children's early numeracy and mathematics. A few children are developing counting skills, and a few explore measure in their play. There are too many missed opportunities to promote numeracy and mathematical thinking in routines and activities. Practitioners should support children to develop their understanding of money, shape, measure and information handling through all aspects of play.
- In health and wellbeing, a few children develop their fine motor skills when using modelling dough and in the few opportunities they are provided to mark make. They develop friendships which help them with their learning. Most children are making progress in their gross motor skills through energetic play outdoors including the use of bikes and scooters. These are currently limited to 'Wheellie Wednesday'. Children need to develop gross motor skills more frequently across the week through large physical play. They learn about healthy choices through participation in selecting and preparing simple snacks. Practitioners should ensure that children learn about caring for their teeth and participate in regular daily tooth brushing.

- Parents are encouraged to share information about children's achievements beyond the setting. This is captured through informal discussion and in children's personal plans. These plans are not updated regularly enough. Children's achievements should be displayed and celebrated further in the nursery. Practitioners should work with parents to ensure they are valued partners in securing children's progress and building on their achievements.
- Children's personal plans, milestone trackers and online journals do not demonstrate clearly progress children are making in their learning over time. Practitioners need to gather a wide range of assessment information about children's learning and achievements. This will help to identify appropriate intervention strategies. These interventions need to be measured to help demonstrate the progress children are making. Practitioners need to consistently build on what children already know and have achieved to ensure they make the best possible progress.
- Senior leaders and staff know parents and families well. They are supportive of families at times of difficulty in their lives. They now need to have a clearer focus on identifying the gap in attainment for children who have barriers to learning or those adversely affected by their circumstances. Practitioners need to develop clear interventions to show how they are closing the attainment gap and increasing the progress of identified children.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Some staff had built positive relationships with children and provided important comfort at times such as, arriving and settling into the nursery or personal one to one health routines. However, this was not consistent for all children who would have benefit from support.

Overall, children's wellbeing needs were not being met. Personal plans were used to gather key information about each child including their preferences and needs. However, this information was not used effectively and as a result, most children had no plans or strategies in place that would support them to be cared for in a way that was meaningful and important to them. Personal plans were not well maintained and it was, at times, unclear if regular reviews had taken place as dates and signatures were missing. Staff practice was inconsistent in supporting children with additional support needs. As a result, most children were not supported as well as they should have been (see requirement 1).

Following the last inspection some improvements had been made to mealtime experiences for children. Snacks and mealtimes were mostly relaxed and unhurried, and for most children provided a positive and sociable experience. Children were encouraged to develop life skills through opportunities, such as selecting their own fruit and pouring their own milk or water. This also helped to promote choice for children. Staff were aware of the need to sit with children while they ate, however at times staff did leave the table to attend to tasks which meant that children were not always supervised closely. This may cause risk to children if staff are unable to respond immediately should an emergency such as choking occur. Staff were not always responsive to the needs of the children as there were a few children turned away for lunch as it was not their group that had been called. As a result, these children showed signs of being upset and or hungry. The mealtime experience should be reviewed to ensure that the individual needs of children can be met at all times. (see area for improvement 1)

Where medication was required, records were not being regularly reviewed with parents in line with guidance. We raised this during our visit and this was addressed by the service during the inspection. The service needs to ensure that policies and protocols for staff give clear guidance on how to proceed if incorrect doses of medicine are given or if a child refuses to take medicine (see area for improvement 2).

The routines and schedules for the planned day did not always consider the needs of the children. Rest times for children were limited and staff had not considered the need for rest and quiet times throughout the day. A few children took themselves to use the sofas to sit or lie on and one child fell asleep. Although beds and blankets were available, staff did not put these to good use for the children.

**Care Inspectorate grade: weak**

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children had too few opportunities to be supported in their learning and development needs. Staff skills and levels of interactions with children meant that there was not an effective approach for all children to learn at a pace that was personalised and meaningful to them. This meant that there were consistently missed opportunities to support children's creativity and choices through their play (see requirement 2).

Children were happy to socialise with friends and enjoyed the freedom of choosing what space to play in. The outdoor area was accessible throughout most of the day and children made good use

of it. Children enjoyed playing together in a range of activities including digging in the mud area, looking at bees on the flowers, water play, playdough, train tracks and painting. However, most staff interactions during these play activities lacked structure and challenge and resulted in missed opportunities to build on children's interests and learning (see requirement 2).

There were too few opportunities available for children to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Children lacked encouragement either through staff interactions or through resources within the play areas to explore these skills (see requirement 2).

Staff did not always recognise the children's right to play. During the days we visited, children asked to play outdoors on bikes and were consistently told that bikes were only allowed on 'wheely Wednesdays.' This restricted children's right to play, did not promote their interests and likes and did not support children to develop their physical skills.

There were limited opportunities in place to evaluate children's progress and achievements. Observations did not consistently hold enough information to fully support all children in identifying their interests and learning needs. Staff did not use information effectively to enable them to plan for children's next steps, individual needs and support where required. As a result children were not supported to reach their potential and develop lifelong learning skills (see requirement 2).

**Care Inspectorate grade: weak**

## **2.2 Children experience high quality facilities**

Overall, the indoor and outdoor spaces did not demonstrate the children's stages of development and current interests. The setting did not offer children a rich range of stimulating play resources to support their learning and development (see area for improvement).

Some improvements had been made to the environment that helped work towards creating a homely, comfortable and well-furnished environment. However, this still needed to be a key area of improvement to ensure a high standard. Some soft furnishings, such as rugs and sofas had been added which a few children enjoyed sitting and relaxing on. Staff had arranged the playroom to consider messy play areas and softer quieter play areas for children. We discussed some more examples for homely touches that could be used to further develop the space (see area for improvement 3).

Staff had been given responsibilities for designated play areas to develop. In many areas however, resources continued to be lacking and restricted opportunities for children's play. Throughout the day, activities were not consistently replenished and maintained in an attractive way to invite children to play. For example, the sand often had too many plastic toys left in the tray, which limited children's freedom to dig and explore, paint was not always refreshed and available for children attending later in the afternoon, real life utensils and resources were limited in the house area and a limited amount of construction materials meant that children could not explore fully (see area for improvement 3).

Some improvements had been made to the outdoor play space for children. Flower beds had been added and bee friendly planting helped encourage wildlife. Some children were involved in den making and enjoyed being under cover, however this was not consistent across the days we visited (see area for improvement 3).

We raised some areas of concern with the manager who then worked with staff to rectify these during our visit. Some examples of these included children having difficulty accessing the toilets through heavy doors, children not being well supervised to wash hands throughout non meal times, easy access for staff to personal protective equipment (PPE), such as aprons and gloves.

Practice was in place to address these areas at the time of feedback. Leadership now need to ensure that staff adhere to agreed practice and expectations to support children.

Suitable arrangements were in place for the monitoring and maintenance of the setting, where staff worked closely with the janitor who was visible within the service. Many children knew who he was, and enjoyed saying hello to him.

## Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

### 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

A new manager had very recently been in post and was keen to improve outcomes for children. They had shared with the staff the key areas of practice for improvement. The leadership team now needs to build on this collegiate approach to ensure that everyone involved in the nursery feels confident and supported to make well-informed and sustainable changes to their practice (see area for improvement 4).

A set of visions, values and aims was in place for the whole school setting that had previously been developed in consultation with families. Staff shared that children new to the service would be introduced to the values characters as part of everyday conversations as they settled into the nursery.

An action plan for improvement had been developed based on areas for improvement outlined at the last Care Inspectorate inspection. Some of the actions had been completed. For example, staff had attended training on quality interactions with children, quality assurance visits had been completed and staff had been supported to revise the layout of the nursery environment. However, these actions had not yet resulted in good quality experiences for children. Further sustained modelling and support is required in key areas highlighted within this report in order to improve outcomes for children (see area for improvement 4).

Self-evaluation for improvement continued to be in early stages of development and was not yet resulting in sustained improvements. Staff had been meeting regularly to evaluate some areas of practice and all staff said that they found these meetings beneficial to their professional development. Some staff shared that they did not feel that their ideas for improvements were taken onboard. Leaders should ensure that feedback from staff is responded to and acted upon appropriately so that all staff remain motivated and confident to participate in the improvement agenda (see area for improvement 4).

Staff were not always aware of and did not actively work with the guidance document 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged children.' This is a key document that supports settings to evaluate their own performance and understand what is expected in high quality learning and provision.

Families were not yet meaningfully involved in nursery improvement initiatives, although most staff felt that relationships with families were strong. A very recent parent survey was in place however, senior staff were not involved in its development and did not know how to access and monitor the results. The service should continue to develop ways of involving families in improvement work using existing, successful events, such as parent evenings and stay and play sessions to build on (see area for improvement 4).

A quality assurance calendar was in place to support the future monitoring of practice regularly. This included audits of information gathered about each child as well as audits of practice and approaches in the nursery. The leadership team should ensure that the calendar enables them to identify inconsistencies in practices and approaches so that they can effectively plan for

improvement. The leaders should also ensure that high-quality learning through play is at the heart of improvement planning (see area for improvement 4).

## Care Inspectorate grade: weak

### 4.3 Staff deployment

Arrangements for long term planned absences were in place to provide some consistency and familiar faces for children. Temporary positions had been filled and whenever possible familiar relief staff members were used to cover shorter term vacancies. This helped support children be cared for by staff they could become familiar with and who could get to know them well.

The service had the appropriate number of staff members on duty throughout the day to meet the minimum expectations, often exceeding this at times, such as afternoons when the number of children attending was lower. Staff employed had a variety of qualification levels and experience in childcare. However, effective use was not always made of the differing skills and experience of staff to benefit the care of children.

There were at times a lack of effective deployment of staff throughout the day. This meant that the best use of staff experience and knowledge of children was not always used. For example, there were a few occasions when only relief staff members were supervising groups of children. Deployment at these times did not ensure that the mix of staff included those who knew children well (see area for improvement 5).

Most staff spoke positively about how they had worked to come together as a staff team and build positive relationships. However some staff told us they don't always feel listened too and others told us about difficulties to manage everyone's ideas. This meant for example, there was limited progress in previously identified areas for improvement (see area for improvement 5).

Arrangements for arrival and departure times were planned to have an allocated member of staff on duty. Staff were allocated the role of welcoming children and parents into the setting, and on most occasions this was done well with staff working together to support any children who required extra care and attention.

Approaches to staff rotas and children's routines were often task orientated and did not focus on the needs and choices of children. For example, children could not choose when to have lunch or when to use wheeled toys outside, there were limited opportunities for rest times and group activities for children, afternoon meal times were planned around staff shifts. As a result, experiences for children did not always promote quality care (see area for improvement 5).

Staff were respectful towards one another. Communication and team working between staff was at times limited. At times, staff worked well together to share information or hand over experiences for children throughout the day, however this was not consistent. This led to gaps in interactions across the day and poor overall outcomes for children (see area for improvement 5).

Staff were not effectively mentored and there were limited role models within the team to further support them in their practice. Limited role modelling from senior staff meant that there was a lack of understanding of high quality care and learning and expectations that staff should follow (see area for improvement 5).

## Care Inspectorate grade: weak

## 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.