

# Summarised inspection findings

**Strathmore Primary School Pre-School Class**

Angus Council

14 November 2023

## Key contextual information

Strathmore Primary School Pre-School Class is situated within Strathmore Primary School. The nursery offers early learning and childcare for 1140 hours from 9.00am – 3.00pm during the school term time. The setting is registered for 32 children at any one time. At the time of inspection, the roll was 28 children. Currently, children aged three years to those not at school attend the setting. All children stay for lunch. From October, a small group of children aged two years will be welcomed into the nursery.

The nursery environment includes two large indoor areas, along with direct access to an extensive outdoor area. Children also have regular access to the gym hall within the school.

Since January 2023 there have been significant changes to staff and leadership teams. Almost half of the early years practitioners are new to the setting. A new principal teacher has just been appointed and will work across early level. A new nursery lead will start shortly.

### 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's senior leadership team supports the nursery class to integrate fully with the school. The setting shares the same vision, values and aims with the school. These were reviewed last session. The staff team reflect those values well. Children respond well to the praise they receive when they demonstrate the nursery values.
- There have been recent changes to the nursery leadership and staff teams. A new principal teacher has recently been appointed and has responsibility for the early level. She is looking forward to developing further approaches to progression and continuity of learning across the early level. The senior early years practitioner provides very good support to the staff team and is highly respected by all staff and parents. She is a positive role model for staff and is very receptive to advice and guidance. She demonstrates a high commitment to improving outcomes for children and their families. There is a keen sense of teamwork across the staff team. Practitioners new to the setting report that they have been well supported and welcomed warmly to the nursery. As a result of the sensitive and effective leadership of the senior early years practitioner, the newly established staff work and support each other very well.
- All members of the team are proud of the setting's welcoming and nurturing ethos. This session, new and established team members have taken on leadership roles to ensure continuous improvement across the setting. They are very much looking forward to developing their own areas of interest. Helpfully, leadership roles are closely aligned to the nursery's improvement plan targets. Practitioners value and benefit from regular professional learning. This is helping to improve practice and recent training has had a significant impact on promoting stronger relationships with parents and establishing positive approaches to nurture.

- The setting has developed approaches to identifying the strengths and areas requiring improvement. There is a need for senior leaders and practitioners to use national guidance more effectively to monitor the work of the setting. There is also great scope to involve children more in helping to identify what is working well and what needs to improve. The setting has established effective ways to capture and take forward parents' views and ideas.

## 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

- Children benefit from the strong, nurturing relationships they have with the staff team. This results in children feeling valued, safe and secure. Almost all children engage actively in a wide range of experiences across different areas of learning both indoors and outdoors. They are happy and relaxed as they play independently. They confidently make choices from the available resources across the learning environment. Most children lead their learning well. For example, they explore volume in the water tray and as they construct their own small models. A few children require more adult direction to support them to sustain their play.
- Most practitioners use questioning well to support and extend children's learning. A few practitioners use commentary effectively as they scaffold learning of the youngest children. Children enjoy large periods of uninterrupted play. Senior leaders should continue to develop practitioners' understanding of the role of the adult and promote an appropriate balance between child- and adult-led learning.
- Practitioners use digital technologies well to support learning. Children use the interactive whiteboard independently to access educational programmes. They use tablets to utilise matrix bar codes linked to stories. 'Talking pens' are available to support children who have English as an additional language. Children are developing an understanding of programmable toys as part of learning experiences to promote numeracy.
- Practitioners plan for learning in response to children's learning needs and interests. They should continue to ensure that experiences provide all children with support and challenge. Practitioners use floorbooks and online journals to capture children's learning experiences. These provide children with opportunities to talk about and reflect on their learning. There is scope to explore different ways of enabling children to review prior learning. As children learn, practitioners observe and record observations in online learning journals. Practitioners should continue to develop and refine their observations with a clear focus on children's learning and the specific skills they are developing. This will support practitioners to identify clear and meaningful targets across the curriculum for individual children.
- Practitioners use local authority overviews to record individual children's progress towards developmental milestones and progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They have also begun to use Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) overviews to track children's, particularly those requiring additional support, learning across the curriculum. Practitioners meet regularly to share information about children's progress and identify areas where children need more support or challenge in their learning. Senior leaders should continue to support practitioners to identify significant learning for individual children. This will help practitioners to develop more focused learning targets.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a curriculum that is play-based and has a focus on developing children's skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners should continue to develop their curriculum planning in line with CfE to take account of children's interests. This will help to ensure children are accessing broad, balanced and relevant experiences.
- Practitioners have a very good understanding of the benefits of learning outdoors. Children benefit from a wide range of learning experiences in the nursery grounds. Regular visits to the community enrich children's experiences further.
- As children begin nursery, practitioners offer very good support to families through well-established transition arrangements. Children quickly become confident and settle in the nursery environment. Practitioners and staff working across the early level are working together to support continuity and progression and ensure successful transitions. Practitioners and teachers provide good support to children as they move from nursery into P1. Practitioners and school staff are keen to continue to develop further approaches to joint working throughout the year.

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

- Partnerships with parents are a strength within the setting. Parents speak very positively about the setting and the staff team. They report that practitioners are approachable and provide very valuable and sensitive support to them and their children.
- Parents have opportunities to play with their children as part of 'stay and play' sessions. Parents value the regular communication they receive about their children's progress. Practitioners communicate very well with parents at both the start and the end of the session. They take time to listen and support individual parents. They share information about activities that children will be involved in through display boards and online learning journals.

## 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

- Positive relationships are a key strength of the setting. Practitioners are kind and caring as they interact with children. They know children well as individuals and can talk about their particular interests and needs. As a result, children are settled, happy and keen to come into nursery each day. Most children appear confident and keen to engage with adults and each other. Practitioners support well children who are new to the setting to help them become familiar with nursery routines. As a result, the youngest children already appear happy and secure in the nursery. Children routinely seek out familiar adults if they are worried or upset.
- Children are kind and caring with each other. Older children demonstrate great care and consideration to younger children. Children benefit from outdoor play throughout their nursery session. Positively, children are able to access the well-resourced outdoor area as soon as they arrive in the morning. In the outdoors, they respond well to the opportunities they have to be active and take risks.
- Most children can describe how they keep safe in the outdoor area. They can explain why it is important to wear helmets when using bikes and scooters. They are learning about making healthy food choices as they plan and prepare snack. Children demonstrate well-established hand washing routines and can explain the importance of these.
- Children are learning to articulate their emotions. Each morning they use a 'monster colour chart' to indicate how they are feeling. Practitioners use this 'daily check-in' to support children who may be feeling sad or angry. As a result, a calm and harmonious ethos is evident across the setting.
- Children demonstrate well-developed independent skills as they prepare for snack and undertake personal hygiene routines. Children remain in their own playroom for lunch. Practitioners sit with children at lunch and promote positive social interactions. They should now consider how they can increase the pace of lunches to reduce the time a few children have to wait before they eat.
- The staff team are aware of the wellbeing indicators and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They should now ensure that children have an awareness and greater understanding of their rights and the wellbeing indicators.
- As children start in nursery, practitioners support parents to complete 'My World' records which take good account of the wellbeing indicators and children's particular care and health needs. Practitioners review children's personal care plans regularly. A few children have individual educational programmes in place which are helping them to make progress. The senior early years practitioner is proactive in engaging with different professional agencies to support



children, for example, speech and language therapists and the health visitor. Practitioners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to statutory duties.

- There is an inclusive ethos in the setting. Practitioners value children as individuals and include them in all aspects of the setting. They should continue to explore ways to celebrate diversity to reflect the wider world in the 21st Century.

### 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

- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is good. Practitioners are supporting children to develop their understanding of their own feelings and those of others. They support children well to regulate their emotions. As a result, almost all children can engage well in their learning. Staff encourage children to make healthy snacks and to develop very good hygiene skills. All children are developing their oral health skills well as they engage in tooth brushing daily. Children access outdoors daily and have time and space to develop their gross motor skills well as they run, climb, balance and ride on scooters and bicycles. It would be helpful for older children to have access to more challenging bicycles.
- Children are making good progress in communication and early language. Most children use a wide vocabulary and converse easily with practitioners and each other. They confidently express their views and follow simple instructions. Children freely access a range of books indoors and outdoors. Practitioners should now extend further opportunities for children to explore and enjoy rhymes and songs. Children have opportunities to participate in mark making and there are some examples of children developing emergent writing. Practitioners should now consider how to increase the opportunities children have to mark make for a specific purpose, for example, signing in at the start of the session.
- Children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They are developing their numeracy skills as they count in routines, spontaneous play or when sorting loose parts. Children would now benefit from more opportunities to count forwards and backwards, recognise and write number, and count items to and beyond 10 in their play and planned experiences. Children are developing their understanding of simple two-dimensional shapes. They use the language of measure, full and empty, to describe volume in their play. Practitioners provide real-life experiences for children to develop numeracy and mathematical skills, for example, in making playdough or in baking activities.
- Most children, including those requiring additional support, are making good progress across almost all aspects of their learning over time. Practitioners know children very well as individuals, and increasingly as learners. They recognise that the use of newly introduced approaches to tracking learning will help evidence the progress children make more clearly. This will also support them to plan for future learning that consistently builds on what children already know.
- Staff recognise, celebrate and track children's wider achievement in a range of ways, including through online learning journals, the recognition board and achievement wall. Families share

some achievements from home. Practitioners should continue to find creative ways to encourage families to share and record children's achievement in a number of different areas.

- Practitioners demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of promoting equity. They know families very well and have a sound knowledge of factors that help build a picture of the whole child. They have a good understanding of the social and economic challenges facing families. As a result, they are able to provide timely and sensitive support to children and families when necessary. The senior early years practitioner is proactive in signposting parents to relevant local services and agencies.
- Staff provide individual, bespoke support for identified children in order to accelerate their progress. This takes different forms including targeted group work. They also make effective use of support from partners such as speech and language therapy. Practitioners should continue to develop how they use all available information and data to support children's learning and ensure equity.

## 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.