

Summarised inspection findings

Meiklemill Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

4 February 2020

Key contextual information

The nursery provides early learning and childcare for children from three years of age. There were 38 children on the roll at the time of the inspection. The nursery is located in the school hall. This is a short-term, temporary arrangement, facilitating building work to enhance early learning and childcare (ELC) provision in the school. Practitioners have worked hard to create attractive learning spaces for children in the meantime. Children have access to a range of outdoor learning spaces including the school playground, nursery garden, an enclosed courtyard, and local woodland. They also have access to additional spaces in the school building. The nursery team now includes a senior practitioner, a newly established role, appointed in April 2019.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

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

- Values of trust and respect underpin the work of the nursery. Positive relationships and effective work with parents and carers, and a range of partners are evident in daily practice. Practitioners have identified the need to revisit the vision and aims of the nursery to reflect recent and ongoing change and development. This will ensure future improvement continues to take account of the needs and aspirations of children, families and the wider community.
- Practitioners treat each other with respect and value the range of skills their colleagues bring to the nursery. Their positive approach to change has helped to ensure minimal disruption to children's experiences during the temporary relocation of the nursery. Senior leaders now need to ensure the development of greater clarity around key roles within the nursery. This will enhance teamwork and help to ensure the success of planned expansion of provision for children and families.
- Professional learning, including collaborative work with the local authority principal teacher and settings in the area, supports improvement across the nursery. The nursery team recognises that there is scope to develop this further. More focused application of professional learning will enable practitioners to embed planned improvements consistently well. The development of clear curriculum leadership roles across the team will support an increased pace of improvement.
- The nursery improvement plan includes an appropriate focus on literacy, numeracy and outdoor learning. Practitioners are continuing to develop approaches to self-evaluation, including some use of challenge questions. The nursery should now develop approaches to enable children to play as full a part as possible in shaping continuous improvements.
- Overall, the management of monitoring and self-evaluation needs to improve further. A more systematic focus on how well the work and life of the nursery supports children's learning should now be established. This will ensure that senior leaders and practitioners are able to identify what is working well and where further improvement needs to be made.

- Senior leaders should ensure that all practitioners are involved in evaluating how well environments, experiences and interactions support key aspects of children’s early learning.

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

- Almost all children are happy and settled. They enjoy their time in the nursery and are learning to make choices and share their play. Children are encouraged to develop independence in caring for themselves and getting ready for outdoor experiences.
- Practitioners are keen to ensure children are involved in making decisions in nursery. The development of more responsive approaches to planning is helping provide increased opportunities for children's interests and ideas to shape their experiences. Children are keen to take on roles as helpers and have a few opportunities to do so. There is still much scope to extend opportunities for children to develop their early leadership skills further. This will help children to think of themselves as responsible and effective contributors in the nursery and wider school community.
- Most children engage well in play experiences. They enjoy taking photographs and playing with remote control toys. Overall, there is scope to extend ways for children to use digital tools to extend their learning. Younger children need access to a wider range of sensory and natural materials to sustain their interest in learning activities. Practitioners' interactions with children are kind and caring. They are not yet consistently effective in challenging and extending children's thinking and understanding. Practitioners have recently developed the Meiklemill taxonomy which could now be adapted to support them to develop children's development of higher order thinking. Overall, it would be helpful for the team to continue to build their shared understanding of how children learn through play across the early level to plan appropriately for progression in learning.
- Children enjoy increasing access to outdoor experiences. They greatly enjoy digging and play in the messy mud kitchen. Outdoor experiences are helping children develop motor skills, cooperation in play and creativity well. Experiences beyond the setting, walks to local shops, and woodland experiences, encourage children to learn about their community and the natural world. Practitioners should continue to develop imaginative and creative ways for children to learn.
- Practitioners record observations of children's engagement in play in individual online learning journals. The nursery team recognises the need to continue to develop further their use of observation as part of an effective cycle of assessment and planning. This will enable them to understand how children are learning, and to build on prior learning more effectively.
- Practitioners capture information about children's experiences well using floor books They involve children and families in planning and recognising achievements using 'my target' booklets. Practitioners need to continue to develop these and similar approaches to support children to develop language to talk about, evaluate and plan their learning.

- The nursery should continue to improve approaches to monitoring and tracking children's progress and achievements to ensure improvements in children's learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Children learn through play in the nursery. Practitioners use Curriculum for Excellence to plan a range of learning experiences for children across the curriculum. A focus on early literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing is evident in planning. Practitioners should now engage more fully with the principles of curriculum design to explore ways to increase breadth, challenge, and depth in learning for all children.
- Practitioners make increasing use of outdoor spaces including natural spaces in the local community to promote curiosity and creativity. They should, as planned, continue to build this aspect of practice.
- Visitors to the nursery help enrich children's experiences. Practitioners should build on this and encourage children to become aware of links between skills they are learning in the nursery and the world of work.
- Transitions into nursery are flexible and take good account of individual needs. Arrangements for transitions to primary ensure children feel confident and familiar with their new learning context. Practitioners and teaching colleagues across the early level now need to work together more closely. This will enable them to develop further shared approaches to learning and teaching to ensure progression in children's learning..

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families—parental engagement

- Parents are welcome in the nursery. They contribute to supporting a range of opportunities for children's learning, including visits in the community and sharing their skills with children and practitioners.
- Practitioners share children's learning journeys with parents in conversations, planned meetings and informative displays. Parents value the information about children's learning shared via online learning journals. Practitioners should now improve opportunities for parents to access individual learning journals. There is scope to involve parents more fully in recognising learning and planning next steps in learning.
- The nursery has a range approaches support children and families to learn together. Existing opportunities include Stay and Play sessions, Book Bugs, story packs, and a range of transitions packs. As planned, the nursery should take forward plans to enhance family learning.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The setting 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Practitioners have a shared understanding of the importance of positive relationships in supporting children's learning. They demonstrate kindness and consideration in their interactions and ensure that children feel welcomed and valued. As a result, there is a calm and caring environment in the nursery. Children are happy, settled and helped to feel at home.
- The principles and values of Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) underpin approaches and practice in the nursery. Practitioners know children and families well. They make good use of formal and informal communication to ensure that they have the information they need to meet the care and support needs of all children. Practitioners quickly identify any potential barriers to wellbeing and employ a range of partnerships to provide well-judged and effective support when needed.
- Practitioners encourage children to be considerate of others and provide good models in their approaches which are consistently positive and flexible. Most children are developing friendships appropriate to their stage and learning to cooperate with others in their play. Older children demonstrate kindness and provide caring support to younger ones who are new to the nursery.
- Practitioners are developing a shared understanding of the national wellbeing indicators. They work together to plan a range of experiences to enable children to be safe, healthy, active, included and nurtured. Outdoor experiences play an important and increasing role in supporting children's wellbeing. Practitioners have also made a positive start to extending children's and families' understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They now need to explore the indicators further with children through a range of engaging experiences in and beyond the nursery.
- Practitioners understand their role in safeguarding children. They keep informed about developments in early learning and childcare to fulfil their statutory duties.
- Practitioners treat all children and their families with fairness and respect. They are aware of their responsibilities in promoting equality and diversity. They take effective action to ensure all children and families feel welcome and are able to participate fully in the life of the nursery.
- Practitioners encourage children to develop an early awareness of diversity through opportunities to learn about a range of different traditions and celebrations. As a result, children are learning about how they can play a positive role in making the nursery an inclusive place for all.

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

- Overall, most children should be making better progress in their learning.
- There is significant scope to improve further the range and quality of opportunities for children to develop and apply key skills, including early literacy and numeracy.
- Children are developing their communication skills well through, for example, singing and sharing stories. They are learning to use simple signing to accompany favourite songs. There is a positive focus on developing fine motor skills to facilitate their progress in mark making. Most children enjoy drawing and are beginning to experiment with a range of different mark making tools. Practitioners scribe for children and encourage them to add their name to floor books. A lending library and story packs support children's love of books at home. Children are learning about words and signs in the environment and beginning to follow simple recipes.
- Children are becoming more confident in using a range of digital tools including table and touch screen computers.
- The majority of children are developing counting skills appropriately through a range of experiences. They are exploring some mathematical concepts through construction play and activities with loose parts and outdoors. Practitioners should now support children to develop a broader range of numeracy and mathematical skills through problem solving and creative play.
- Children demonstrate their developing fine motor skills as they experiment with a range of mark making and cutting tools. They are learning about risk and keeping themselves safe during outdoor play and on expeditions beyond the nursery. Practitioners should continue to extend opportunities for adventurous and challenging physical play to enable children to further develop their fine and gross motor skills Children are beginning to become aware of healthy choices through snack time experiences.
- Practitioners celebrate children's achievements in the nursery through praise, displays and children's individual 'My target' booklets. They recognise that they now need to make more use of information about children's home achievements in planning learning in nursery. This will help make learning more personalised and challenging for children.
- Children are well behaved. There is scope for them to have more responsibility in the nursery and to play a stronger role in the life of the school through, for example, an increased focus on

the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to help them to make progress in their understanding of wellbeing.

- There is a positive, supportive and inclusive ethos in the nursery. Practitioners have a sound understanding of the different social and cultural backgrounds of children and families. They ensure children and families are well supported throughout their time in nursery through timely intervention and support.

Choice of QI : 1.2 Leadership of learning

- Professional engagement and collegiate working
- Impact of career long learning (CLPL)
- Children leading learning.

- An ethos of professional engagement and collegiate working is evident in the setting. Positive relationships and a shared commitment to improvement underpins collaborative working within the nursery team. There is scope to make increased use of high quality professional dialogue and feedback to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The development of clear leadership roles across the team will support further improvement to practice.
- Professional learning, including collaborative work with the local authority principal teacher, and settings in the area, supports improvement across the nursery. The nursery team recognises that there is scope to develop this further. More focused application of professional learning will enable practitioners to embed planned improvements consistently well.
- Interactions between practitioners and children are consistently positive and supportive. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop their use of question and comment to extend children's learning. Increasingly responsive approaches to planning ensures that children's interests and ideas help shape-learning experiences. Children make choices and are beginning to engage in planning and evaluation of their own learning through 'My targets' and conversations around floor books. The nursery team should now build existing practice to continue to develop opportunities for children to lead their own learning in creative and challenging directions.

1. Quality of care and support

Children and their families were warmly welcomed into the nursery, enabling day to day communication. As a result, positive relationships were established, and staff knew children well as individuals. Working in partnership with parents' staff helped children to quickly settle in the nursery. Visits and communication with nursery settings for younger children supported transitions well. As a result, almost all children were very happy and confident in the setting, particularly around their key workers. Children needing more emotional support and comfort were nurtured with one to one attention.

Staff planned support for children's individual needs using the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators. Joint working with other agencies ensured children had the right support. We discussed with the senior management team how improvements to the sharing of information in chronologies could better contribute to children's safety and protection.

Children were developing their learning through a varied range of play activities planned around their interests. Children engaged and concentrated well most of the time. Closer observation and assessment of the children's progress and learning styles would help staff to provide children with more depth and challenge in the curriculum and help children to learn more.

Children were involved in choosing and shopping for their snacks prompting discussion about healthy choices. Children helped to prepare snacks and were developing their independence in snack routines. Snacks served were suitably healthy and included fruit and vegetables. Children made good use of water stations which enabled them to drink fresh water at any time and stay hydrated.

Children were physically active outdoors daily and could often make this choice for themselves. They were active with bikes and built obstacle courses with loose parts. Children were able to follow their own interests in the nursery garden; digging in the mud for potatoes and cooking in their mud kitchen. They used natural materials to compare weights on scales and to construct. In the courtyard children had grown strawberries, herbs and flowers. Children enjoyed visits to local woodland to explore a more natural environment and walks into the nearby town along the river; helping them to get to know their community.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of staffing

The staff team were appropriately qualified and registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). A positive mix of skills and experience across the team provided consistency and reassurance to families and new ideas to the team. Relationships were friendly contributing to a positive atmosphere for the children and teamwork to ensure the smooth running of the session. The new roles and responsibilities of the lead and senior practitioners need time to develop and provide more cohesive leadership to the team.

Children experienced caring, warm and responsive support from staff. Staff were focussed on communicating at the children's level and encouraged conversational language and peer friendships. Staff supported children's play and introduced basic number concepts. They helped children to follow their interests and reinforced positive behaviour and achievements. Story-telling skills, singing with puppets and interaction in group games held children's attention promoting

learning. As a result of staff training children were being included by the developing use of Makaton. Staff now needed to further develop their interaction skills to support children to reflect and think more deeply about what they are learning.

Staff took responsibility for their own training and personal development and were supported in this by their manager. All had completed core training elements that contributed to keeping children safe and well. Staff had attended a variety of training courses and had a good awareness of best practice guidance. As a result, improvements had been made to the outdoor area; including loose parts play providing more opportunities for children to explore and investigate. Staff had an awareness of equality, diversity and children's rights; however, they need to promote these more with the children. Training had helped staff improve how they write observations. Focusing more clearly on observing significant learning will help staff better assess children's progress. Curriculum planning had been refreshed to take better account of the child's voice. Staff now need to develop their understanding of how to use assessment information to plan for progression in children's learning; this training was planned. As a team they needed to develop a shared understanding of their aims and approaches through professional dialogue

Care Inspectorate grade: good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and four recommendations. These four recommendations have been met. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements or recommendations.

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.