

Summarised inspection findings

**Bothwell Montessori Nursery School (early
learning and childcare standalone setting)**

South Lanarkshire Council

SEED No: 8526613

02 May 2017

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 clear vision, values and aims developed during an extensive consultation with children, practitioners and parents underpins the work of the setting. Practitioners plan to build on this work further by consulting with visiting professionals on the vision, values and aims. All practitioners are highly committed to delivering a high quality service that meets the needs of children and families.
- The principal and manager together provide strong leadership that supports the effective delivery of the vision, values and aims. They have managed the direction and pace of change very well to ensure that it delivers the shared vision that is relevant to the context of the setting. Throughout the setting there is a culture of reflection and collegiate professional learning. Practitioners are committed to improving their practice, supporting each other and using national guidance to help them reflect on their professional learning needs.
- All practitioners have leadership responsibilities for aspects of the setting including leading and being involved in improvement plan priorities. This has had a positive impact on the setting. Examples of this are the literacy and numeracy champions who have ensured that literature and numeracy areas are prominent in the setting. These opportunities are fostered by the management team who actively encourage practitioners to take on leadership roles. The principal and manager work proactively alongside practitioners to offer support and challenge. Practitioners are offered a range of professional learning opportunities and are actively encouraged to pursue additional qualifications. Management also encourage practitioners to be outward looking by visiting other establishments both within and outwith the authority. This helps them to identify and share good practice. Self-evaluation of the setting involves practitioners, children and parents. It is robust and systematic using a wide range of evidence. Practitioners are involved in a mentoring project which encourages continuous improvement. Through discussion new initiatives are agreed collectively and then closely evaluated for impact. The self-evaluation process supports the leadership of change with collegiate decisions driving improvement.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences 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 is a respectful ethos and culture in the setting, based on a strong commitment to children's rights, where all children are treated and valued as individuals. This is resulting in children feeling happy, safe and secure and allows them to be increasingly successful and confident in their learning. Almost all toddlers and young children are motivated and show a high level of engagement in their learning. This is particularly evident in the Montessori sessions where they are developing a wide range of skills, including independence in their learning. Practitioners use praise throughout their interactions and recognise children's achievements. This helps to build their self-esteem and confidence in their learning. Toddlers and young children explore the indoor and outdoor learning environments confidently. They engage well with the full range of learning activities on offer and make responsible choices about how and what they would like to learn. We have asked practitioners to review again the balance and structure of the day to ensure that children are fully engaged at all times. At times toddlers and young children are spending too much time waiting for activities to begin.
- Practitioners have a sound understanding of child development. Questioning and commentary is used skilfully to support, extend and sustain children's thinking. This could now be developed to ensure a more consistent approach across the team. Toddlers and young children are consulted in planning for their own learning through the use of talking and thinking floorbooks. Practitioners should ensure that planning takes into account prior learning, particularly for older children, who may already have previous knowledge of planned activities in the setting. For example, learning about dinosaurs. The use of digital technologies is appropriate with practitioners utilising available resources to support and extend learning well.
- Practitioners know the toddlers and young children very well as learners. They make very good use of observations to inform planning. Progress documented in electronic learning profiles and the Montessori tracking records provide a robust assessment of their learning. The Montessori tracking records are linked to the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to ensure that young children are experiencing a wide range of learning opportunities within the Montessori dedicated sessions. Parents contribute well to the electronic learning profiles. The setting should continue with their plans to encourage children to contribute to the profiles as well. Assessment information is used to support effective transition for children as they move on to primary school. As discussed, practitioners should continue to improve the effective transition from the setting to school through joint curricular learning. This could promote continuous learning from the setting to the school.

- Progress of individuals is tracked robustly across the curriculum to ensure all make maximum progress. All practitioners are aware of the needs of individuals, including those with additional support needs, and take highly effective action to ensure these are met. These actions are evaluated continually through the tracking of the curriculum and close communication between practitioners, children and parents.

2.2 Curriculum: theme 3 learning and development pathways

- The setting's curriculum is based on the Montessori framework and is aligned with Curriculum for Excellence. The framework specifies learning outcomes and the knowledge and skills to be learned. Each of the Montessori areas of learning has been linked to the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. The knowledge and skills learned in the dedicated Montessori time are built upon throughout the day, for example, during topic time. Additional curricular activities are offered such as French, yoga, dance and digital technology which enhance the curriculum.
- The curriculum frameworks in place for toddlers and young children are well matched to almost all children's needs. Learning is firmly based around responding to children's individual interests. They link effectively with families in order to ensure that toddlers and young children make the very best progress.
- Transitions to school are carefully planned, tailored to meet children's individual needs and are extremely flexible. There are frequent transition trips and visits to the relevant primary schools.

2.7 Partnerships: theme 3 Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- The setting has strong links with parents, extended families and the local community. The toddlers and children, for example, attend the Woodlands kindergarten, Brighter Bothwell events, dentist, library and community garden. This positively impacts on children's learning. They also receive visits from a wide range of people to learn about different roles and responsibilities.
- Partnerships with local charities support children to learn about the needs of others and the wider community. As planned, practitioners should continue to evaluate and develop their range of partnerships to support children's learning and experiences and their experience of the world of work.
- Parents are fully informed about their child's progress and are very engaged in their children's learning. This has been reinforced by the use of the electronic learning journals which allows parents to view and comment on their child's learning at any time.

2.1: Safeguarding

- The setting submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant practitioners 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

very 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.

- There are very strong caring relationships in the setting and the wellbeing of children is paramount. Practitioners know each child well and are attuned to their needs. They have a good understanding of the importance of nurture, bonding and wellbeing of young children. They speak and listen to children in an inclusive way which helps them to feel valued and included.
- Practitioners have a very good shared understanding of wellbeing which supports families social and emotional wellbeing. They now need to continue to support parents, toddlers and young children to develop an awareness of what it means to safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included. This will complement the setting's positive work with children about the Rights of the Child. Practitioners provide very positive role models to children. There is a warm, welcoming ethos in the setting and toddlers and children are well-behaved, kind and caring in their interactions to one another appropriate to their stage of development.
- Practitioners use well the wellbeing indicators to inform regular planning for children. Where children have additional support needs there is robust planning using the local authority staged intervention process. These plans are effectively monitored and reviewed to ensure each child makes appropriate progress and has access to the support they need. Practitioners are proactive in seeking appropriate help at an early stage from other agencies for children with additional support needs. There is strong partnership working with other agencies to support children within the setting. Practitioners have used information and guidance from other professionals to better meet the needs of all children, particularly in language and communication. They have attended appropriate training and have visited other establishments to ensure that children's needs are very well met. Children and toddlers use effectively their 'Listening Bear' and 'Feelings Tree' to communicate their feelings. Practitioners are keen to further develop their skills by attending nurture training.
- Practitioners actively engage and comply with statutory duties. They make very good use of national guidance, to both share learning across the team and improve the setting. Inclusion and equality is promoted throughout the work of the setting. Practitioners have a clear understanding of the families that attend the setting and how this influences the work they do. They strive to include the extended family in the life of the setting. Parents are encouraged to share festivals and celebrations. Practitioners should continue to explore how they can engage children and practitioners in continuing to learn more about equality and diversity in a way that is age and stage appropriate.

3.2 Securing children's progress

very 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.

- A strong focus on health and wellbeing across the setting is resulting in toddlers and young children making very good progress in developing a good range of skills and understanding. Children risk-assess their play and both toddlers and children understand how to keep safe while playing in the outdoor play area and in the woods. Practitioners encourage toddlers and children to express their feelings. They will often use the 'Listening Bear' and 'Feelings Tree' to help the children and toddlers to relate different feelings to their personal experiences. Almost all toddlers and children understand the importance of exercise and healthy eating in keeping strong and helping their body to grow. This is supported by preparing and enjoying healthy snacks. Almost all toddlers and children are learning to be independent appropriate to their developmental stage. This independence is reinforced during the designated Montessori time where this is fostered.
- In early language and communication almost all children across the setting are making very good progress. The toddlers enjoy positive interactions and relationships with practitioners who care for them. They spend time looking at stage appropriate books, singing and chatting with adults. Listening skills are developing well through small group work where almost all toddlers and children listen well and are able to recall what they have heard. Children are confident communicators and almost all enjoy opportunities for extended conversations with practitioners and their peers. In the Montessori dedicated time toddlers and children explore mark-making. Most can write their name and recognise their name in print. Toddlers and children are involved in the book bug initiative and frequently take books home to review. Practitioners have recently introduced a monitoring system for literacy and language to ensure that both toddlers and children are making strong progress in these areas. This is linked to national benchmarking.
- In numeracy and mathematics, toddlers and children are making very good progress. Throughout the Montessori dedicated time, topic work and free time they are learning about counting, shape and measurement. A few children are confident in their use of larger numbers. Toddlers and children are learning that numbers represent quantities through their activities. Through daily routines, toddlers and children use their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts.

- Toddlers and children are learning about sustainability as they work towards their Eco Schools Programme awards. They are finding out about ways to improve their environment. An Eco Schools Scotland Green Flag was achieved last year. Practitioners led an effective programme on social studies involving parents and grandparents outlining their childhood and comparing it to the children in the setting. The setting is closely involved with the local community and toddlers and children make frequent visits to local community establishments to increase their knowledge of the local area.
- Within the setting, toddlers and children make very good progress across all aspects of learning and development. They benefit from a wide range of high quality experiences over time. Practitioners make sound professional judgements about children's progress and how well toddlers and children are learning and developing. This is communicated well to parents who also provide relevant information about their child's progress at home. Toddlers and children's personal achievements are displayed in the electronic journals and on the setting's walls. Practitioners should continue to look for opportunities to track and build on individual children's achievements more consistently.

Setting's choice of QI: 1.1 Self- evaluation for self-improvement

- Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
 - Evidence-based improvement
 - Ensuring impact of success for children and families
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- The setting has embedded self-evaluation principles in all areas of work very effectively. Practitioners are continually reflecting on their practice daily to ensure that they are providing a high quality service to the children and their families. Self-evaluation is carried out collaboratively with parents and children using a wide range of methods. Questionnaires for children have pictorial options to help them fully access the self-evaluation questions. Practitioners have looked outwith the setting and visited other establishments. As planned, staff implemented and evaluated some of the ideas learned from these visits. Practitioners are keen to try out different approaches to engage parents and children more in the self-evaluation of the setting. As planned, they are keen to encourage parents to spend time in the setting to gather their views. Parents were involved in an audit of the curriculum. The outcome of this audit was used to improve practice.
 - All practitioners have sound knowledge of national self-evaluation frameworks. *How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?* has been used to audit practice to ensure it is effective. Challenge questions from this documentation have been used for discussion of best practice. Self-evaluation practices have led to both improvement in the setting and improved outcomes for children. Practitioners participate in Mentoring to Support the Workplace which assesses adult and child interactions.
 - Practitioners use a range of self-evaluation tools. They have also used *Building the Ambition* effectively as an audit tool. There is a culture of improvement in the setting which is led by the principal and manager to ensure that a high quality service, which is continually moving forward, is provided. As a result, children are making very good progress with their development and learning.

1 Quality of care and support

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

- We found staff had extremely positive relationships with the children and families and very good understanding of children's needs and how best to support them.
- The service has worked hard to further develop family involvement in the life of the service, for example, through inviting grandparents to visit the children and share experiences. As a result of its success they planned to continue to encourage more parental and family involvement.
- Staff worked in collaboration with the children, parents and other professionals to ensure that effective strategies were in place to support children's individual needs. Staff were well informed and confident accessing additional support from professionals when needed.
- Dedicated Montessori time provided children with a wide range of exercises to support and challenge their learning and development. The high staff to child ratio allowed staff to provide one-to-one support and to effectively monitor and track children's progress.
- The service worked closely with local schools creating positive links to support children's transition between the setting and primary one.
- We discussed with the management making changes to the daily routine, outdoor learning experiences and foods offered would support the services continuous development to provide high quality early learning and child care experiences.
- The service had recently made changes to the personal plans, we discussed the progress made and possible suggestions where further improvements could be made. This included reducing duplication of paperwork.
- We concluded that all staff worked hard to ensure that children attending the service received high quality early learning and childcare experiences.

2 Quality of environment

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

- We found the service had effective systems in place to ensure a secure entry/exit that only staff welcomed those entering or leaving the premises.
- We found the service had effective policies and procedures in place to ensure safety measures are followed including good infection control, risk assessments and management of medication.

- We found the premises to be clean, tidy and well maintained. The large playroom is designed to promote a Montessori approach to early learning and childcare. The playroom layout and design provided children with easy access to the wide range of resources and opportunities to self-select and choose where and what they wanted to play.
- The outdoor space is accessed directly from the playroom, allowing staff to support children's requests to play outside. The service had made positive changes to the outdoor space including the development of a mud kitchen and vegetable patches.

3 Quality of staffing

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

- We found the staff team to be welcoming, caring and professional. The service had a low turnover of staff and, as a result the majority of the staff had worked in the service for many years. As a result the staff work very well as a team, support each other's strengths and had a shared vision and commitment to provide a quality service.
- The staff were committed to continuous professional development. This included gaining further qualifications, attending training courses and keeping well informed of good practice guidance. The staff held regular meetings to discuss new learning, guidance and to agree how to implement into practice.
- All staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Where staff have conditions on their registration to gain qualifications they should continue as planned to meet these within the allocated timescales.
- We reviewed the services safer recruitment procedures and recruitment files. We found that the service had completed the appropriate safe recruitment checks, although the paperwork held did not clearly show this. We discussed the paperwork with the manager and recommended that they made improvements to the recording of information to ensure the authenticity of references received, and that all safety checks had been completed prior to staff commencing employment.
- Staff appraisals were completed providing staff the opportunity to share their views and to plan their continuous professional development. The service had started to review this process as part of their self-evaluation. We would agree this is an area that could be further developed to support staff's professional development and to review staff's impact on supporting the service's improvement plan priorities.

4 Quality of management and leadership

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

- The service had worked extremely hard since the last inspection to further develop how they evaluated the quality of the service provided. They had successfully implemented the *How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare?* framework to identify, monitor and

assess areas for continued development and impact of change. All staff had a role to play in the service's self-evaluation process, which promoted leadership and a shared vision. The service had successfully increased the quality of parental and child involvement in the self-evaluation process. The service's new vision statement and aims support the service's commitment to continuous self-evaluation, and increased partnership working.

- We concluded the service had a very good understanding of self-evaluation. As a result are well informed of the service strengths and areas for continued development. The service demonstrates a very strong commitment to providing high quality early learning and childcare.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and one recommendation.

Recommendation:

- The provider should ensure that recruitment records reflect the safer recruitment procedures followed. This includes the verification of references and safety checks having been completed prior to staff members commencing employment.
National Care Standards for early education and childcare up to the age of 16;
Standard 12 Confidence of staff.

Particular strengths of the setting

- Happy, safe, motivated and engaged children who make very good progress in their learning. This is supported by well-planned learning experiences.
- The very strong leadership of the principal and manager, together with the staff team, to ensure the very best outcomes for all children and families.
- Effective self-evaluation underpinned by strong collaboration between the staff team which leads to improved outcomes for children.
- Robust tracking of children's progress across the curriculum to ensure all children make maximum progress.
- The positive relationships between children, parents and the local community which are supporting children in their learning, wellbeing and development.

Agreed areas for improvement for the setting

- Continue to improve the effective transition from the setting to school through joint curricular learning. This could help promote continuity of learning from setting to school.
- Continue to evaluate the structure of the day to ensure children continue to receive high quality learning experiences at all times.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are confident that the setting has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. South Lanarkshire Council will inform parents/carers about the setting's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its settings.

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