

Summarised inspection findings

**St Thomas' Primary School
nursery class (primary school
nursery class)**

North Lanarkshire Council

SEED No: 8516227

23 January 2018

Key contextual information

St Thomas's nursery class is situated within the primary school.

The setting is registered to provide early learning and childcare (ELC) to a maximum of 55 at any one time, of whom no more than 15 are under 3 years of age. The setting provides ELC for children aged two years to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of inspection there were 68 children on the roll.

There are two playrooms within the setting. Each playroom has a garden area. There has been investment to provide good quality resources both in and outdoors.

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 vision, values and aims of the setting were recently reviewed to reflect the addition of provision for children aged two to three years. This was done in consultation and discussion with children, parents and practitioners and continues as new children and families join the setting. These vision and values shape the daily life and work of the setting. As a result, trusting and caring relationships and a strong commitment to nurturing the wellbeing of children and families is clearly evident throughout the setting. The views of parents are valued, listened to and acted on. This has led to improved family engagement in children's learning. Working with parents and children, practitioners should, as planned, now continue to develop the vision of the nursery to further embed high expectations and aspirations for learning.
- There is a culture of improvement in the setting. Practitioners are supported to take forward improvements and work well together to support developments. This has led to improvements over time including for example, the development of high quality outdoor experiences and the introduction of different approaches to supporting children's early number skills. Regular opportunities for professional dialogue and collegiate learning have a focus on current thinking and research about quality early learning and childcare. This is helping to develop further expertise and build capacity for improvement. The setting should now improve monitoring and evaluation and use this to robustly track improvements in learning and teaching.

- Practitioners reflect on their practice as part of the setting's commitment to continuous improvement. They are well supported by senior leaders in the school in beginning to use 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' more effectively to improve outcomes for children. This is helping practitioners to identify what they are doing well and where they might improve further. Overtime, this will lead to a more strategic approach to improvement in the nursery. As planned, on-going improvements in self-evaluation should now be used to drive forward identified streamlined priorities including use of evidence based interventions to help children progress in their learning.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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.

- Nurturing relationships between children, practitioners and families are a strong feature across the setting. Through this, children feel safe, secure and are enjoying their time in the setting. Practitioners are very aware of the needs of the children.
- Children aged 2 years are relaxed within their playroom. They benefit from sensitive, caring relationships with practitioners who give them the comfort they need. The flexible and responsive routines allow practitioners the opportunity to meet the individual needs of the children. The layout of the playroom supports children to participate in meaningful play developing their communication, curiosity and movement skills well. Practitioners plan activities based on sensory, discovery play with natural materials. Children make regular use of their separate outdoor area allowing them to explore the resources available to them. However, the range of resources does not always lead to meaningful play opportunities for children. Practitioners should now consider using the whole early learning environment to extend children's experiences.
- Children age 3-5 years are having fun in their learning. The indoor playroom is very interesting and provides children with opportunities to take part in purposeful, well-planned learning experiences. However, there is scope for children to be learning through more spontaneous child-led experiences. As part of this practitioners should raise their expectations and aspirations for learners.
- Children are particularly keen to play in the outdoor learning area and show sustained interest in their play. They demonstrate confidence and independence as they select the learning activities of their choice. While exploring, children are developing skills of investigation.
- Practitioners encourage children to be kind to each other and develop their sharing and turn taking skills. Their interactions with children are sensitive and warm to support children well in their learning. There are some good examples of practitioners using questions appropriately to extend children's level of understanding. Practitioners should build on these skills to develop further children's levels of concentration in play.
- Practitioners have a good knowledge of the importance of play. However, as discussed, they should now reflect on the timing and organisation of the session. The day plan could be adjusted to provide a more flexible and responsive approach to meet children needs.

- Practitioners are sensitive to the varying needs of children attending the setting and can talk about children as individuals but not yet as fully as learners. They observe children during free play and group led activities and use the information gathered to discuss children's individual needs and progress. Observations form the basis of children's personal learning journeys and describe their participation in learning activities. On a regular basis children are engaged in discussions with their families and practitioners about 'what I have learned' and 'what I will learn next'. These approaches could now be developed further, to support accurate judgements about where children are in their learning.
- Tracking and monitoring of children's learning is at an early stage of development. The depute head teacher together with the teacher have a vision for how this will be developed and implemented. They have plans in place for professional learning for practitioners. This will support a developing understanding of national benchmarks of progress and achievement to ensure a moderated approach to assessing children's learning.
- As planned practitioners should engage fully with a programme of professional development to increase their skills and confidence in recording their observations. This will support and inform the identification of clear, measurable next steps in learning and provide more robust evidence to support the tracking of progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- The frameworks in place are underpinned by nurturing relationships and knowledge of individual needs. Practitioners working with children aged 2 years use Building the Ambition and Pre-birth to Three guidance when planning children's learning. Practitioners working with children aged 3-5 years plan for children's learning taking some account of national and local guidance. Practitioners now need to re-visit the design principals of Curriculum for Excellence to support children in developing essential aspects of early learning including skills of creativity, curiosity, inquiry and resilience. This would support best outcomes for children.
- The curriculum rationale is based on a long term plan which incorporates seasonal aspects, festivals and learning contexts over the year. The programme is flexible enough to allow children the opportunity to re-visit and build on prior learning and interests. Practitioners are preparing to re-introduce floor book approaches to learning. This will increase opportunities for children to be fully involved in making decisions about their learning.
- Arrangements to meet the individual needs of each child and family are planned for when they are joining the setting. Children are invited to spend time with their parents in the playroom in order to build initial relationships with practitioners. As children move between the playrooms, transitions support them well.
- Practitioners and teaching staff take care to promote continuity in learning as children move on to primary school. They are beginning to share learning development opportunities with each other to ensure a shared pedagogy across the early level. This needs to have a clear focus on continuity and progression.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families - parental engagement

- Practitioners work well with children and families. They value the contribution families make to children's learning. Families are welcomed and encouraged to be involved in the setting. Parents and children have good opportunities to share learning experiences. As part of this, they are invited to Family Learning Days where they can join play and find out more about learning together. These are helping to increase parental understanding of the setting and develop positive relationships. Parents are involved in their child's learning in a few home link initiatives, for example, home book bags.
- Along with informal daily feedback, parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through attending frequent, planned meetings with practitioners. Parents have access to the individual 'Learning Journeys' which tells the story of the activities and experiences their child has had at the setting. Children are supported to add their comments, drawings and photographs to their journals regularly. Encouragement should also continue to be given to parents and carers to make valuable contributions over time to secure an even greater learning partnership between nursery and home.
- For children under 2 years it would be helpful to introduce daily communication diaries to inform parents about their child's day.
- The setting has developed working relationships with a range of health and professional partners. This has supported families to gain appropriate help and advice to overcome barriers to participation.

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. 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.

- Across the setting there is a respectful ethos which offers a high level of nurture. Children, families and practitioners are treated in a fair and just way which promotes equality and inclusion. Children are very polite, happy and well-mannered, with practitioners promoting positive behaviour. They have a growing sense of fairness and demonstrate this through sharing resources appropriately. Practitioners are aware of individual circumstances and treat children as individuals.
- Practitioners know their responsibilities in promoting children's health and wellbeing. They have a shared understanding of Getting it right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and ensure wellbeing indicators are consistently planned for and delivered in a targeted way. As a result, children are developing an understanding of the vocabulary and meaning of each of the indicators. Currently, they are eager to talk about being safe in aspects of their lives. Practitioners are keen to involve them meaningfully in developing this further. Commendably, practitioners devised a workshop programme to support parents and children to develop an awareness of what it means to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included. As this progresses, practitioners could make further use of the national assessment tool for wellbeing indicators when planning for children. This would support the sharing of an area of concern or reviewing children's development.
- A high level of sensitivity and care is shown by practitioners towards the children and their families. This includes how best to support those who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Practitioners are proactive in seeking appropriate help at an early stage from education support and health service professionals for children who may require additional support in their learning. They then ensure a personal plan with specific learning targets is created using local authority guidance. These are shared with parents and their views are taken into consideration. Very effective use is made of practitioner's bilingualism to support children who are bilingual.
- Children are becoming confident individuals. They should now be afforded opportunities to take on leadership roles within the setting and develop the ability to make choices and promote their ideas in making decisions that affect them.
- Practitioners are aware of and comply with statutory requirements and codes of practice that apply to early learning and childcare. They are responsive regarding wellbeing, equalities and inclusion. All practitioners are highly aware of their roles and responsibilities

in relation to child protection and safeguarding. Best practice guidance is followed at all times.

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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.

- Across the setting there is a strong focus on health and wellbeing. The emphasis on relationships is helping children to settle and develop friendships. The majority can communicate their needs and feelings according to their stage of development and are kind and caring towards each other. Children have a developing awareness of healthy eating and demonstrate independence during snack routines. They enjoy outdoor physical activity and are learning about sustainability through real-life planting and growing activities.
- Children aged two years are developing their communication and language skills well. They are building their vocabulary through effective conversations with practitioners. Frequent use of song helps children to develop an awareness of patterns of language and rhyme.
- Most children aged over three years are developing their early communication skills through caring and supportive interactions with practitioners. Most are developing their listening skills in conversations with adults and their friends. They enjoy listening to familiar stories and are encouraged to explore non-fiction books. Through supportive interactions by practitioners children are developing an age appropriate vocabulary. Most children are developing an interest in early writing and a few mark making opportunities are provided across the playroom.
- Children are developing numeracy skills as they play. Most count within 10 and recognise numbers in real life contexts such as snack. Children are exploring mathematical concepts through different play opportunities and while completing puzzles and games. They use the language of measure well when using the sand tray and water resources outside. Interventions by practitioners reinforce and introduce appropriate mathematical language as required. Practitioners should now work to further identify and plan for the development of individual children's mathematics and numeracy skills that provide sufficient challenge and pace in learning.
- The learning environments are very well resourced which enhance the planned activities in evidence. Practitioners should now consider a more balanced blend of child initiated and adult led experiences, enabling children to apply and develop their early literacy skills across wider aspects of their learning.

- The outdoor learning environment is contributing positively to children’s application of skills in new and real life contexts. Outdoors, children are confident in their play and exploration of the space and areas developed recently in partnership with parents and partner agencies. A continued development of the area facilitating free play to deliver literacy and numeracy skills would have the potential to positively impact on children’s outcomes.
- There is evidence in the children’s learning journeys of a range of learning and achievements. Children have planned opportunities to add to these with their key worker and sharing them at monthly meetings with parents and carers. The setting does not yet have an overview of children’s progress in early language, mathematics and health and wellbeing. Practitioners are at the early stages of developing a robust tracking process linked with observations to build on what children already know and have made progress in over time. The depute headteacher has identified this as an area for improvement and is aware it will support sound professional judgments about children’s progress.
- Practitioners have a good knowledge of the needs of individual children and families in the community as well as factors which may influence a child’s participation in learning.

Setting choice of QI: 2.5 Family Learning

- **Theme 1 Engaging families in learning**
- **Theme 2 Early intervention and prevention**
- **Theme 3 Quality of family learning programmes**

- Senior leaders have placed considerable importance in engaging with families and this is reflected in the school improvement plan. The early learning and childcare setting values the contribution of parents and families. Senior leaders have a vision for family learning in the early learning and childcare (ELC) setting and are aware of existing strengths and areas for improvement. They now need to continue to further develop the vision for family learning in the ELC and to evaluate the impact of interventions designed to enable parents to learn how to support their children's learning more effectively.
- The headteacher demonstrates a relentless commitment to ensuring that families receive support which meets their needs. The headteacher provided examples of positive impact of this support offered to families who have singular or multiple needs. The school works well with partners to respond to local community issues and needs identified at strategic locality groups.
- Families would now benefit from having regular opportunities to discuss their learning and development with staff. This might include setting appropriate targets for the family as a whole or individual learners, which are then reviewed and evaluated.
- Parents are supported well to actively and meaningfully engage in their children's learning and life at school. Digital platforms and social networking sites are used as an effective platform to share with parents the learning undertaken within the school. Responding to consultation with parents/carers, opportunities for parents to meet and discuss children's care and learning with key workers have been increased in frequency to monthly meetings throughout the year. Well attended Family Learning Days provide additional opportunities for parents/carers to learn alongside children. Parents report that these experiences are helping them to better understand how they can support their children's learning in early literacy and numeracy and health and wellbeing. The work on these days also contributes to increasing parental expectations of their children.
- Senior leaders and practitioners are alert to the needs and potential barriers to participation in family learning of individual parents/carers. They work in partnership with other services to sensitively support individual parents/carers to enable them to support their children's learning.
- Working with community learning and development (CLD) the nursery has in recent years provided opportunities for family learning about health and parenting. This has included programmes such as Little Chef, Big Chef, wellbeing through a bespoke GIRFEC programme and the Solihull approach for parents. These programmes have been very well received by parents. There are a small number of examples of engagement with resulting in parents engaging in study leading to qualifications.
- There is scope for senior leaders and partners to use available data, analysis and intelligence to inform their understanding of community and individual family needs. This

has the potential to ensure appropriate timely interventions so that families are matched into the right programmes that address identified needs.

- The school could now build on the positive relationships that have been established with families to begin to focus on the quality of family learning programmes. Participation in family learning courses should be monitored robustly to highlight trends to support effective early intervention strategies.
- Overall, there is now a need to develop a holistic understanding of what is meant by family learning. Developing and taking a shared approach from the nursery to the end of P7 is needed to ensure families are supported to secure better outcomes for children.

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.

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