

Summarised inspection findings

Dean Park Primary School Nursery Class

The City of Edinburgh Council

23 June 2020

Key contextual information

The nursery class at Dean Park Primary School is registered to provide Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for 60 children aged three to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of the inspection, there were 34 children attending the morning class and 29 children attending the afternoon class. There were also 16 children attending full days as part of the roll out of additional funded ELC hours. The nursery is housed in an annex building a short distance from the school. Children have daily free flow access to a well-resourced outdoor play area. The deputy headteacher has line management responsibility for the nursery class and is well supported by the nursery teacher and the early years officer.

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 setting is a valued part of the school community and its vision, values and aims reflect those of the school. In August 2018 staff, children and parents created a Dean Park Nursery Charter that sets out the vision, values and aims in developmentally appropriate language. This supports children well to know and understand what these mean. The shared vision of creating a learning environment where everyone has the opportunity to flourish is evident in the ethos and practice of the setting. Practitioners are aware of families' socio-economic circumstances. They implement programmes to support everyone to make appropriate progress in learning. This includes programmes to support language development and social skills.
- All practitioners have leadership roles relevant to their experience, skills and professional learning. These include implementing intervention programmes to support children's development, parental engagement and mentoring responsibilities. Senior leaders should support practitioners to monitor and evaluate the impact of leadership roles to ensure they are improving outcomes for children and their families.
- Children take part in leadership responsibilities such as snack helpers, risk assessors and lunchtime helpers. Practitioners should consider ways to extend this to develop further children's early leadership skills and their ability to make decisions that affect them.
- Most practitioners have undertaken additional training to develop their knowledge of the theory underpinning current practice. They are at the early stages of implementing changes as a result of professional learning. Practitioners and senior leaders should evaluate the impact of changes to ensure they secure desired outcomes for children.
- The leadership team and practitioners have identified appropriate priorities for improvement. The action plan details tasks to be undertaken and supports a shared responsibility for the implementation of priorities. They should make greater use of the national framework, 'How good is our learning and childcare?' (HGIOELC?) This will provide more accurate information on what is working well and what still needs to improve.

- The nursery teacher has been instrumental in developing cluster group ELC meetings. Practitioners understand well the local socio-economic context. The majority of practitioners attend some meetings and this supports them to moderate their own practice within a wider context through professional dialogue with colleagues from other settings.

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

- Practitioners make very good use of the various rooms within the setting to create a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. Most children are settled and confident. They engage purposefully with activities they have chosen and concentrate well. A few children require support from practitioners to sustain interest. Practitioners plan and organise the environment well to enable children to lead their play and independently access the resources they require. Practitioners provide interesting natural and real life resources to promote the development of children's creativity and curiosity both inside and outside. This is most evident where children spend time creatively exploring clay and paint to produce interesting models and paintings. At the tinker table, they are curious to explore the mechanisms of old computers and cameras.
- The session provides a good balance of extended uninterrupted time for learning through spontaneous free play and small group activities. Working in key groups helps children to make friends and to feel included. During free play, children play in pairs or small groups. A few prefer to play alone or need adult support to help them to join in. Children are learning important life skills through daily baking activities and helping with risk assessments. They make good use of the many cosy areas to read books and enjoy quiet times.
- Practitioners ensure a warm welcome for children and their families. They are caring and nurturing in their approach. As a result, children feel safe, secure and included. Practitioners interact sensitively with children as they play. Most use questions and discussion to extend children's thinking and learning. They use praise well to build children's self-esteem and confidence in learning. Overall, the balance of adult led activities and free play works well for all children. Practitioners gather children in key groups for conversations and to read stories. They should plan a wider range of group activities across the week to include a focus on learning experiences to support better children's next steps in learning.
- Children confidently use the tablet and interactive whiteboard to research interests. Practitioners should extend the use and range of digital technologies to enable children to develop skills further.
- The key worker system in place ensures practitioners know their group well as learners. They record observations of specific learning in their key children's Personal Learning Profiles (PLPs). They should extend this to record significant learning episodes for all children across the setting as they occur. Senior leaders should regularly monitor PLPs to develop consistently high quality observations across the team. PLPs are highly valued by children and parents. Practitioners meet regularly to discuss children's progress and achievements. They assess and track children's developmental milestones and use these to identify next steps in learning. Practitioners should develop this further to ensure next steps are clear and shared with

children in a developmentally appropriate way. This should enable children to reflect on their progress and achievements more meaningfully.

- Practitioners work with their key group to plan activities for the following week. They take account of children's ideas to resource their area of responsibility. Practitioners respond to children's interests as they arise naturally during play and incorporate them in responsive planning. This results in children leading their learning in both a planned and more spontaneous way. Practitioners should continue to develop approaches to planning to make learning more visible for children. In this way, children should be better able to reflect on prior learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners know children very well and offer them support and encouragement to lead their own learning. They track children's progress in developmental milestones. Over time, they need to develop systems to ensure they track children's progress across all areas of the curriculum. Practitioners ensure early literacy and numeracy experiences indoors and outdoors enable children to develop and apply skills in different contexts. They place a strong emphasis on expressive arts and children engage very well with music, singing, painting and model making.
- Practitioners are beginning to use the local community to enrich children's learning. They visit the shop to buy snack and the local woods to develop an appreciation of the natural world around them. Practitioners should increase further their use of the local environment to develop in more depth children's knowledge and understanding of the locality. Parents and extended family contribute to the curriculum. They share their talents and develop children's skills in singing, baking, science and arts and crafts.
- Transition arrangements are flexible and practitioners are sensitive to the differing needs of families to ensure a smooth transition into the setting. Practitioners ensure children and parents feel welcome and included. Almost all children who are new to the setting settle very quickly.
- Teachers, along with practitioners provide a range of pastoral experiences to support children and parents to become familiar with the school setting. They share information about children's progress including their PLPs. As planned, the setting and school should develop further approaches to sharing information on children's learning to support better continuity and progression across the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Senior leaders and practitioners recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents. The positive relationships make families feel welcome and encourage most families to play an active role in the life of the setting. Parents and grandparents regularly engage in stay and play sessions which enables them to have a better understanding of their child's learning. Practitioners share information about children's learning with parents in a range of ways. Parents have the opportunity to contribute to their child's tracker and share wider achievements and learning from home.
- The setting holds monthly 'Coffee and Conversation' sessions for parents. These sessions allow the parents to feed back their views and the setting to share information with parents. Practitioners should consider a more focused approach to gathering parents views. This should support them to contribute more effectively to the self evaluation process. Practitioners have plans to introduce family learning sessions next term to strengthen further the partnerships with parents.
- The setting has good links with community groups. For example Friends of Main Street involves children in learning to care for plants in the village and Balerno Children's Gala which helps children to develop their sense of community. Volunteers from the community and parents and carers, share their skills and knowledge to contribute to positive learning experiences for children. Practitioners also work closely in partnership with a range of other professionals to secure positive outcomes for children and families.

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

- Practitioners understand the impact of positive relationships to ensure wellbeing and place high importance in establishing these as soon as possible. As a result, the warm, nurturing relationships between, practitioners, children and families is a strong feature of practice. Practitioners consider each child as an individual and this supports children to feel included, engaged and involved in the life of the setting.
- Practitioners have created spaces where children can rest and relax. Children are learning about their emotions and the feelings of others through sharing a range of well-chosen storybooks. Practitioners are skilled in using restorative approaches to support children to deal with disputes and develop positive relationships. As a result, almost all children are developing friendships and demonstrate positive behaviour.
- Together the senior leaders and the practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding statutory requirements and their professional responsibility in fulfilling them. They regularly undertake professional learning to keep their knowledge and practice up to date.
- Practitioners demonstrate through their practice their understanding of children's rights and the wellbeing indicators. They support children to develop their understanding of how to keep safe and manage their own risks in the outdoor area. They provide high quality, nurturing snack and meal times. These are social experiences where children are encouraged to try new foods, develop good social skills and develop a good awareness of the importance of hygiene routines. Children have daily free flow access to a well-resourced outdoor area where they benefit from fresh air and exercise and develop physical skills. Practitioners use the language of the wellbeing indicators to recognise and celebrate children's wider achievements. For example recognising children's healthy choices, children who have been responsible, and children who have been active. This is developing children's awareness and understanding of the wellbeing indicators. The setting has collated the ways in which practice at Dean Park Nursery contributes to ensuring children's rights are met. Practitioners should use this information to develop children's awareness of their rights through meaningful and developmentally appropriate links with the wellbeing indicators.
- Practitioners recognise and value diversity. They celebrate a variety of religious and cultural celebrations across the year. Practitioners provide resources that reflect a variety of cultural backgrounds. The range of dual language books reflect the languages of bilingual children attending the setting. Practitioners should consider ways to challenge children's thinking about gender stereotypes more actively.

- All practitioners treat children and families with respect in a fair and just manner. They are sensitive to the circumstances of individual families and ways in which they can provide support. For example, the established thrift shop in the school where families can buy children's clothes and resources.
- Practitioners make good use of the developmental milestones tracker to identify barriers to learning. They meet regularly to discuss children's progress and put in place a range of interventions to provide support for identified children. This includes programmes to support children's spoken language and listening skills and programmes to support social skills. Practitioners should review how they evaluate the impact of targeted interventions on children's progress. This should support them better to evidence children achievements and progress against identified desired outcomes.

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

- Most children are making good progress in communication and early language. They are highly articulate and readily have conversations with adults and their peers. A few children benefit from focused support with their speech and language development. Most children listen well in small groups. Most children are developing a love of literature as they make good use of the wide selection of books available throughout the learning environment. They are beginning to understand the language and layout of books. All children are making marks with a majority beginning to write their name, letters, and words that are important to them. To provide challenge, practitioners should ensure they provide stimulating contexts to extend further children's interest and progress in early mark making.
- Most children are making good progress in mathematics and numeracy. They count, sequence and explore the value of numbers to 10 and beyond. A few children are developing their understanding of addition and subtraction as they play. Children are learning about the language of measure, weight and volume. They apply their skills when they regularly bake scones and muffins to share with their families. They are developing their awareness of time and know which month of the year in which they were born. Practitioners should develop further children's understanding of three-dimensional objects, money and sorting for more than one criteria. Most children are making very good progress with their health and wellbeing. They are aware of the importance of healthy eating when they eat fresh fruit and vegetables. Almost all children are developing good self-help skills when they dress themselves for outdoors. Children are making important friendships. They share ideas, help each other and are learning to negotiate. Most children are confident and self-assured. A few children are easily upset and require help to develop resilience. Most children are developing their balance as they learn to ride bikes. The majority confidently climb, jump and balance on the assault course.
- Overall most children are making good progress during their time in the setting. They are confident and independent in the environment. They understand and respond well to rules and routines. They are developing the skills to choose well and sustain interest. Most importantly, they are learning how to interact with others and the importance of positive relationships. Most children are on track to achieve their developmental milestones. These have a clear focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners should develop systems to enable them to track and support the progress of all children across all areas of the curriculum.
- Practitioners celebrate children's achievements from home and in the setting weekly during Flourish Friday. This gives children a sense of pride and recognition. Children are learning how

to be responsible citizens when they join with the school to help raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. They develop leadership skills when they contribute to planning, help with lunch and look after resources. They need more opportunities to take responsibility in the setting and as part of the school community.

- Practitioners know and understand the individual needs of children and their families. They are aware that children's socio-economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds can affect their learning and progress. Practitioners promote equity in a range of ways such as their open door policy for parents and in the family learning opportunities they provide.

1. Quality of care and support

The team's kind and compassionate approach enabled children to feel valued, loved and secure. They recognised the importance of nurturing, responsive attachment and interactions. Effective team working fostered a warm atmosphere.

Families experienced a well-planned introduction to the setting which resulted in trusting relationships being built at the earliest stage. The range of information gathered about children ensured staff were able to meet their needs and interests. We agreed with staff, that a true strength of their setting was the positive and respectful relationships they had built with children and families. Children had developed firm friendships as we saw them playing well together, being supported to resolve conflict and approach adults for reassurance when needed.

Effective family learning and engagement supported families to regularly and meaningfully engagement in their child's learning. Staff were aspirational and had an enabling attitude which supported children to achieve their potential. They used appropriate praise to recognise and celebrate achievement which helped raise children's self-esteem.

Staff worked proactively with children, families and other professionals. There was a clear understanding that interventions were needed to address inequalities in children's health, wellbeing and learning. Moving forward the setting should continue to record support strategies and monitor the impact of these to ensure outcomes were as positive as possible.

Staff knew children well and completed Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) for all. Whilst we read some meaningful observations, this was not consistent across the folders we sampled. The setting was aware that a monitoring system needed to be developed to ensure a more holistic, targeted approach to completing PLPs.

Medication systems met current best practice and ensured children's well-being and safety. Likewise, a clear system to meet children's dietary requirements and preferences ensured health needs were met.

Lunchtime provided a positive eating experience for children as they sat down together with staff and were able to chat to one another. Snacks were well presented, varied and healthy. This was an unhurried and relaxed experience as children could choose when to have snack. Children's independence was promoted through self-service, pouring their own drinks and clearing away their dishes.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

2. Quality of environment

Children benefited from a warm, homely and nurturing environment. There were safe, cosy spaces where children could rest or relax when they chose to. Staff took advantage of all spaces available and were reflective of how these were used to ensure a range of experiences were on offer. The layout facilitated free flow play, meaning children could move around the playrooms as they wished. As a result, we observed children having fun whilst being engrossed and motivated in their play.

Children had a role in shaping the environment and directing their play as staff gathered their views and ideas at key worker time and through responsive planning. Staff actively engaged with children and were skilled at extending learning and experiences chosen by them. This created a relaxed and responsive learning environment where the child's voice was heard.

Rich and stimulating experiences effectively supported children's development using a range of natural, open ended and real-life resources. Areas were attractively set up to provide provocations to stimulate children's ideas and imagination. Resulting in children actively involved in play and learning that was centred on their needs and interests. Loose parts play was available in all areas which promoted children's creativity, imagination and problem solving skills.

Staff recognised all children's right to outdoor play. This meant that from the moment they arrived at nursery they could choose to play indoors or out. We saw that children were confident in exploring their outdoor environment with staff who actively supported and encouraged them in their endeavours.

Positive approaches to the benefits of risky play underpinned effective outdoor learning experiences. Through mind maps, risk assessment and enabling language, children were able to safely engage in play and learn about risk. There was scope for children to be more involved in the preparation of snack for example cutting up fruit and vegetables.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

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.