

Summarised inspection findings

Duchal Nursery School

Inverclyde Council

24 September 2024

Key contextual information

Duchal Nursery School has been situated in the village of Kilmalcolm, Inverclyde since 1967. The nursery is a company and a registered charity, overseen by three directors who have legal responsibility for the nursery. The Parents Cooperative has a key role in supporting future developments. The current nursery building was purpose built in 2008 and consists of three adjoining playrooms and access to a nursery garden. In 2020, during the pandemic, the nursery entered partnership with Inverclyde Council to provide funded early learning and childcare (ELC).

The nursery operates during term-time and opens from 8.30 am to 2.30 pm for funded ELC placements. In addition, wrap-around care placements are available before 8.30 am and from 2.30 pm until 6 pm. The nursery is registered for 26 children at any one time. The current roll is 26. All children are aged three and over with 50% of children ready to make the transition to primary school. Staffing consists of a manager, depute manager and a team of five practitioners who have various patterns of employment. The nursery manager is included in the adult to child ratio for most of the week. The nursery has a very low turnover of staff.

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

- As a team, the manager and practitioners work very well together. They have regular staff meetings which encourages ongoing communication and planning. The manager and practitioners are supportive of one another both professionally and personally. They make effective use of each other's knowledge, expertise and skills to make positive changes in the nursery and offer children varied learning experiences.
- The team bring the current vision, values and aims to life through their positive and respectful relationships with each other, children and parents. The manager has prioritised a review and refresh of the setting's vision, values and aims. She recognises that these now need to reflect more accurately the unique context of the setting and aspirations of practitioners and all stakeholders.
- Practitioners engage in one-to-one discussions with the manager. This supports practitioners' wellbeing as well as their professional development. The manager and practitioners regularly engage with a range of national guidance documents to help them in their role. They should now have more of a focus on current thinking in ELC. This will help them with their planned improvements to develop further learning spaces and planning for children's learning.
- Each member of staff has a leadership role which reflects their experience and knowledge. This includes aspects of literacy, health and wellbeing and numeracy. As a result of these roles, children are demonstrating progress in their learning. For example, most older children are developing good phonological awareness skills. Building on this positive practice,

leadership roles for all practitioners could be aligned more effectively to key areas identified for improvement.

- The nursery team is reflective and strives to continually improve the quality of ELC provided for children and families. Senior leaders have worked successfully to make important improvements to aspects of the nursery provision. These positive developments include increased use of natural and open-ended resources to support children's play and creativity. The flow of the nursery day is also improving with fewer interruptions to enable children to engage in experiences for extended periods. The team may find it useful to look outwards to other settings to identify practice that will help them to make further improvements.
- The manager and practitioners engage in regular professional dialogue to discuss what is working well and what needs to change or improve further. They seek the views of parents and children to support them to identify areas of improvement. The management team evaluates aspects of the work of the setting using national quality indicators and challenge questions. With staff, they discuss the progress of the improvement plan. Moving forward, they should engage as a team in robust self-evaluation that enables practitioners to reflect critically on practice. Senior leaders would benefit from increased management time to support key areas for improvement identified.

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 have created an ethos and culture that demonstrates a commitment to children's rights. They are very good role models for children. Practitioners model respectful relationships with children and each other. As a result, children develop positive relationships with their peers. Children play well together and have developed friendships. Practitioners listen carefully to children and respect their views. Children recognise their thoughts and ideas are valued as a result of practitioners' positive responses to them.
- The team supports children well through relevant experiences and responsive planning. This helps children explore, investigate and use resources meaningfully. All children engage enthusiastically with nursery experiences. There is plenty of laughter as children play. Children are confident, independent and make choices about where they would like to play. They are particularly engaged when using open-ended resources to create obstacle courses outdoors. These resources support children's creativity very well. Children could benefit from more cosy indoor learning spaces with natural and real-life resources that will offer rich learning opportunities. This would help children to be curious and lead their own play more effectively.
- Practitioners interact positively with children, providing nurture and care which helps children feel safe and secure within the setting. They use open-ended questions naturally to support children's thinking and to deepen their learning. Increasingly, practitioners give children time and space to follow their ideas and interests. They make effective use of the technology available to extend children's interests and learning. Practitioners recognise children will benefit from increased opportunities to develop their skills through a wider range of digital technology.
- The team makes observations of children at play and they discuss these at staff meetings. They use observations of children to build their knowledge of children's interests and to support future planning. There should now be a clearer focus on significant learning for individual children and the skills they are developing. This will help practitioners identify clearer next steps for children. Practitioners record their observations within children's electronic journals. They share these regularly with parents, along with ideas to assist learning through play at home. It would be helpful for practitioners to streamline children's learning journals to demonstrate clearly the progress children make over time. They should increase the use of electronic journals with children to support them to talk about their achievements and learning.
- The manager and practitioners recognise that planning for children's learning should continue to be reviewed and adapted to have a greater focus on children's learning. The current process is a positive start in relation to planning for children's learning using the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence. The manager tracks children's learning through

learning journals. As planned, she should now implement the local authority system to track children's progress more effectively.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners take good account of children's interests and use this to plan experiences across the curriculum. The manager and practitioners promote and support important aspects of learning through a range of experiences indoors and outdoors. This includes music, early literacy and mindfulness. Practitioners may find it useful to track coverage of experiences and outcomes to identify where potential gaps in experiences may be present. This will also help future planning.
- Children's involvement in community experiences enrich the curriculum. They have weekly access to local woodland to extend learning outdoors. During visits to the 'mini forest,' children have fun exploring bark on trees and looking for mini beasts. Practitioners use parents, partners and community events well to provide children with a wider range of experiences. This supports children to achieve and learn across the curriculum. For example, children enjoy mystery readers, football skills, finding out about the jobs people do and parents sharing their talents and skills.
- Practitioners plan transitions well for children starting nursery. This is personalised to meet each child's and family's needs to ensure a smooth transition from home. The manager and practitioners have positive working relationships with local schools and use their facilities to offer for example, physical activity experiences. Children take part in a range of worthwhile experiences to help them transition to school successfully. Practitioners share relevant information with P1 teachers to support children's continuity in learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- The manager and practitioners have strong partnerships with parents. They encourage parents to be involved in a variety of ways and at different levels. The Parent Cooperative is supportive of the nursery team.
- Parents are actively involved in their child's learning through various experiences such as stay and play sessions, mystery readers and the lending library. Practitioners keep parents informed of their child's experiences and learning through informal chats, electronic learning journals and regular social media posts. Parents welcome this. They are very positive about the range of experiences their children have access to.
- Practitioners share helpful ideas for parents to encourage them to engage with and support their child's learning at home. This is encouraging parents to share their child's learning from outwith nursery. The manager of the nursery meets with parents twice per year to discuss children's progress. This gives parents the opportunity to hear about their child's nursery experience and progress.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the setting and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

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

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Practitioners place children and their wellbeing at the heart of everything they do. They view children as individuals with unique personalities, rights and needs. Children are beginning to be aware of their rights in a developmentally appropriate way. Practitioners support children well to build self-confidence. Children share their affirmations 'I am strong and 'I am brave' during yoga and mindfulness sessions. They are aware of different emotions and relate them to their own experiences. Children feel safe, respected and included in the setting as a result of the nurturing interactions with staff. Parents describe the nursery as feeling 'like a family'. Practitioners help children to resolve minor conflicts sensitively between each other in a respectful way. As a result, children show kindness to each other.
- Most children engage well in a range of experiences that support their emotional and physical wellbeing. They access the outdoor garden freely and spend a considerable amount of time in fresh air. Children talk confidently about being safe and demonstrate this during physical play and walks in the community. Practitioners help children to be aware of the benefits of eating healthy food and exercising. Children talk confidently about changes to their body after taking part in football sessions.
- Currently, children eat their lunches within one playroom and have a few opportunities to be independent. For example, children pour their water and clear away their food. As planned, practitioners should consider making use of two playrooms to reduce the noise level and promote a more social occasion where children are more independent.
- The manager and practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding and have undertaken further training. The manager would benefit from guidance from the local authority in relation to implementing planning for children with additional support needs. This will ensure the manager is clear about national and local expectations when she is required to implement staged intervention processes.
- The nursery team has created an inclusive setting where everyone is welcomed. The manager and practitioners know their families and community very well. They value and celebrate diversity and use helpful resources to support children to develop an awareness of special celebrations and festivals.

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

- In communication, early language and literacy, children make good progress. Most children are confident communicators. The majority of children have a wide range of vocabulary as a result of practitioners modelling unfamiliar words. Children ask relevant questions to gather information and deepen their learning. Children sing spontaneously as they play. The majority of children recognise their name independently. Most older children confidently recite rhymes, identify rhyming words and create their own rhymes. They tap out syllables of their name. The majority of children are beginning to form recognisable letters as they write their name and signs around the nursery.
- Children make good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Most children demonstrate good counting skills and use of number during play and routines. A few demonstrate early addition and subtraction when playing with natural materials. They show interest in larger numbers when exploring number stones. Most children explore time when they discuss the days of the week and seasons of the year. Children sort items using different criteria. They are ready for opportunities to gather different information and display it in a variety of ways. Practitioners should seek ways to offer children increased opportunities to explore shape and money through meaningful play experiences.
- In health and wellbeing, children make good progress. Most children demonstrate confidence and control as they navigate the obstacle course and climb apparatus. A few children ride wheeled toys and skilfully operate moving parts and change direction. Most children develop their fine motor skills well. For example, when children fold paper to make paper aeroplanes. Children know what is important to them in their nursery such as being kind, having good manners, looking after toys, sharing, and caring.
- The manager recognises the current system for tracking children's progress needs to be more robust. As planned, she should implement the local authority system to identify children's key skills in learning and the progress they make. This should help practitioners to identify children's progress over time more clearly and where they require additional challenge or support. The manager should make more effective use of data gathered on children, for example, their levels of engagement during nursery experiences. This, along with robust tracking, should assist practitioners to make sound judgements about how well children are progressing in their learning.

- Practitioners celebrate children's successes and achievements within nursery and from home meaningfully. They record these in learning journals and display them on the 'magic moments' display for children and parents to see. Practitioners promote community involvement and, as a result, children are becoming active and responsible citizens in their local community. This includes learning to care for their local woodland and local community.
- The manager and practitioners know their families and community very well. They take good account of children's differing needs and when required, provide additional focused support to reduce potential barriers to learning.

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.