

Summarised inspection findings

Cradlehall Primary School Nursery Class

The Highland Council

29 November 2022

Key contextual information

Cradlehall Nursery Class has one small playroom with controlled access from the school building to a small outdoor area. Children also have access to the school library and eco-garden. Children attend from the age of three until they start school. The current roll is 28. Almost all children attend the setting on a full day, term-time basis. The principal teacher (PT) leads and supports the work of the nursery team alongside substantial teaching commitments. In addition, on the week of inspection, the PT was covering the vacant position of deputy headteacher (DHT). Practitioners work together to cover short and long term staff absences to maintain the service for families. The team includes early years practitioners (EYPs), pupil support assistants (PSAs) and support workers. EYPs, PSAs and support workers have a variety of shift patterns throughout the day and across the week. Recruitment and retention of early years practitioners is a significant challenge across the local authority.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the team worked well together to staff local and in-school Hubs. Commendably the team maintained a service for children and families despite considerable staffing challenges last session.

The local authority are aware of important improvements needed to the physical environment of the indoor playroom. Children use the boys and girls toilets in the school premises. The local authority are currently developing plans on how best to provide dedicated toilets for nursery children.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Cradlehall nursery class provides a secure and caring environment for children and their families. Staff are hardworking and committed, ensuring a positive and nurturing approach. The team provide a setting where children and their families are made welcome and are listened to. This achieves one of the many school aims and values. The newly appointed headteacher recognises that a shorter, more accessible version of the vision is needed. Nursery children, parents and staff involvement in shaping this vision should ensure that it is meaningful to everyone.
- The acting DHT is an experienced, resilient and supportive leader for the nursery team. The school improvement plan includes clear, relevant improvement priorities for the nursery. The acting DHT has accurately identified important improvements such as outdoor learning and increased opportunities for children to share their views. Parents welcome information shared about improvements in newsletters, events and using online platforms. The team regularly ask parents and children for feedback, for example during open afternoons. Children, parents and partners could be more involved in leading and evaluating the impact of change. The team follow a self-evaluation and monitoring process recording important annual, termly and monthly tasks. During periods of absence and staff turnover last session, a few areas were

understandably not actioned. Very recent self-evaluation activity and in-service discussions focused on the purpose and content of observations of learning. As a result, staff observations show early signs of improvement. The team should now reflect on and evidence the impact of improvements on outcomes for children.

- The team have made important changes to the outdoor area as a result of professional learning. Children's experiences outdoors and their progress in health and wellbeing demonstrate the positive impact of this work. The acting DHT worked with practitioners to produce an induction resource for new staff. As a result, staff have clear information about their roles and responsibilities as they start a new position. Recently appointed support workers do not yet have leadership roles. A few staff plan to undertake qualifications to develop further their knowledge, understanding and practice. At times, well-intentioned changes do not always develop further the skills or concepts that children need to develop next. The team should now continue to develop further their understanding and use of national practice guidance to inform improvements. Staff should now focus on continued improvements to spaces, routines and consistency of interactions.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Children are happy and increasingly confident as they play and talk with their friends and adults. The majority of children are engaged in exploring and investigating their own ideas. Children very much enjoy being outdoors. Practitioners plan this area well to ensure there is a good range of real, imaginative and natural experiences. Children explore and revisit ideas in more depth as they play in the outdoor area and eco-garden. A few children work well together over days to create opportunities to balance and climb. Children work well together to mix, pour and transport water and natural materials in the mud kitchen. There is an appropriate balance between time children choose their own activities and time participating in adult directed tasks. At times, the majority of children find it difficult to concentrate on their play in the indoor area. Children frequently move between areas, come together as a group, tidy up the playroom or get ready to go outside. This can interrupt children's play and concentration. Practitioners need to continue to think carefully about the experiences and resources they plan for children. A few activities do not yet provide children with sufficient challenge and breadth in their learning.
- Staff interactions with children are gentle and contribute to a respectful, caring culture. EYPs have a developing understanding of children's individual stage of development. The team have a good, shared understanding of children's needs. Practitioners adapt their communication methods well to suit children's needs. The team give children time to explore and investigate during outdoor learning. In the best examples, skilled use of restorative language supports children to understand their own and others feelings. This approach is not yet consistent across the practice of the whole team. A few activities are not yet challenging enough for all children. The team now need to have a clear focus on key skills and progression in learning.
- The team work well together as they begin to make changes to their planning. Practitioners use floorbooks to plan and record children's learning. They should continue their work to develop further how they plan, assess and evaluate children's learning. This will support staff to focus more clearly on skills children need to develop next. Practitioners record short observations about the progress children make. Recent in-service training has established expectations on the focus and content of observations. The acting DHT uses local authority systems to track and monitor the progress children make. As practitioners improve how they record and identify next steps in learning, they will gather clearer evidence on children's progress. Practitioners will benefit from reinstated progress meetings. This professional dialogue will help support the team to use their evidence to inform their planning and assessment of learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a curriculum that is play based and increasingly responsive to children's interests. Planning continues to develop in line with national guidance. The team plan an appropriate balance of adult led and open ended opportunities for children to explore literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners would benefit from continued support from the local authority and senior leaders to understand and develop further their curriculum. This should include their planned work to develop further approaches to planning and their curriculum rationale. This will develop further a shared understanding of the curriculum across the team, with families and with partners.
- The nursery team support children well as they start the setting for the first time or move on to primary school. Staff work effectively with other settings that children attend to share information about children's learning and progress. Nursery children benefit from visits to the primary one class and lunch hall. Practitioners share information on children's progress in personalised, detailed transition reports to highlight their individual progress to parents and staff. The acting DHT is working to develop further play pedagogy across the early level. The team should now continue to develop their shared understanding of early years pedagogy.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have good relationships with parents and welcome the increased opportunities for parents to share important information and build relationships. Parents and children are positive about recent well-attended stay and play and curriculum sessions. Staff and parents have regular two way contact through opportunities to meet together, review learning profiles and through the use of online platforms. This means staff have close working relationships with parents. Parents feel well informed and involved in their child's learning and development. Regular contact with parents enables practitioners to share information on children's progress and achievements.
- The acting DHT and staff have frequent contact with relevant partners. The team work in effective partnerships with health visitors and speech and language therapists. Practitioners implement strategies they have agreed with visiting professionals. As a result of effective partnership working, practitioners make a positive impact by meeting the needs of children requiring support and their families more effectively.
- Children are confident and comfortable to share their views and ideas with practitioners. This includes sharing what they like about nursery. The team plan to increase the ways children can influence the work of the setting and share their views.

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

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

- The wellbeing of children is central to the work of the setting. Practitioners know children well as individuals. The team have a detailed understanding of each child's needs and preferences. They have a clear focus on doing their best for children and families. Practitioners are kind and thoughtful in their interactions with children. This approach supports children to settle well into nursery and feel safe and secure. Staff are patient as they support children well to resolve disagreements over sharing space and resources. Most children demonstrate care and kindness to each other. Older children enjoy supporting their friends to complete tasks, wash their hands and look after their environment. Children can talk about how to keep safe and healthy and know to ask for help from an adult when needed. Practitioners could now support children to explore a fuller range of wellbeing indicators as they play and learn. This will support children to understand and express a fuller range of their needs.
- Practitioners are developing their awareness of statutory requirements in relation to ELC. The team are clear about their responsibilities for keeping children safe. For example, staff undertake checks to ensure records of medication are up to date. Children have personal plans that outline their care and health needs. Children who have additional needs have plans that outline specific strategies that will help them make progress. All staff understand and use these important strategies. Practitioners record children's needs on a variety of paperwork. The team are currently in the process of introducing new local authority Being Me! forms to record and review the impact of strategies used. Staff discuss and review children's needs with parents at regular intervals. This means targets and strategies are appropriate and where possible, used at home and nursery. The acting DHT and practitioners work in effective partnership with other agencies. The acting DHT is proactive in working with other professionals to source and use information about previous and shared placements. At times, this has been difficult to access. Commendably, staff have been determined to obtain this information to understand better how to support children. Good sharing of information between agencies means there is better continuity in the support children and families now receive.
- Children benefit from healthy lunches provided by the school dining hall. They enjoy their lunch in a sociable and relaxed environment in their playroom. Recently practitioners have increased opportunities for children to pour their own water and use cutlery. Moving forward, practitioners could consider increasing opportunities to develop further children's independence and leadership during snack and lunch experiences.
- Children and families benefit from the inclusive ethos within the nursery. Practitioners treat all children with respect. Children feel valued as individuals. All children, parents and staff share the Makaton sign of the week and are encouraged to use signs at home. Practitioners should now increase opportunities to promote diversity through experiences and resources.

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 early language and communication. They are developing an interest in mark-making and enjoy sharing their drawing and 'writing' with adults as they draw pictures. Children would now benefit from more frequent opportunities to mark-make across learning. Most children listen well to other children and adults as they talk about a story. A few children enjoy sharing books independently. The majority of children listen with interest to stories during a group activity. Children listen and talk with interest to adults and each other as they work together to make playdough. Practitioners have rightly identified the need to increase opportunities for children to apply their early language and communication skills in outdoor learning opportunities.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They recognise numbers and count with increasing confidence as they play. Children join in enthusiastically to count items for snacks. Most children join in well with counting games and rhymes. They are beginning to use appropriate mathematical language as they compare the size and capacity of containers when filling them with sand and water. Children investigate weight as they use fir cones to balance scales in the home corner. Practitioners need to continue to support children to develop a wider range of early numeracy and mathematical skills through real-life contexts.
- Children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Most children are caring, kind and respectful to others. Most children are happy to support one another if they need help to complete a task or progress an idea. Children are learning about healthy foods and lifestyles and are developing their awareness of healthy food choices as they serve themselves snacks. Most children enjoy taking part in energetic activity outdoors. Children show increasing confidence and independence as they explore the interesting eco-garden. Most children are making good progress in their gross motor skills. They climb trees, swing from ropes and balance on planks of wood with increasing skill. A group of children persevered very well to cooperate and take turns to create towers and slides from loose parts.
- Most children are keen to learn and explore enthusiastically the learning environment when engaging in free play. Children should have increased experiences in expressive arts and the range of technology available to them as they play. Most children respond positively to general praise and encouragement from practitioners. In the best examples, this praise focuses on children's individual skills and capabilities as they try a new activity for the first time or help a friend. Moving forward, it is important to ensure all feedback from staff centres on what children can do and celebrates achievements. Parents are encouraged to share children's

achievements from outside the nursery so that practitioners can acknowledge and celebrate them, helping children to recognise the progress they are making.

- Practitioners demonstrate their awareness of their responsibility to promote equity for children through their work with children and families. They are proactive in identifying and using appropriate strategies to support children who face particular challenges such as developing their social skills or increasing their vocabulary. They work with a range of partners to ensure children make appropriate progress. The nursery team work with the acting DHT to track children's progress. Children are proud of their learning profiles. Most children enjoy reviewing floorbooks, individual profiles or using the online platform to share learning and achievements with parents. A few children can talk about what they enjoyed learning about. Practitioners recognise that they need to increase the involvement of children and parents in identifying and reviewing next steps in 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.