

Summarised inspection findings

Sandwick Junior High School Nursery Class

Shetlands Islands Council

17 September 2019

Key contextual information

Sandwick Nursery Class is part of Sandwick Junior High School and provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for children aged three until starting primary school. The setting is registered for 24 children at any one time. The current roll is 33. Children attend from the South mainland of Shetland. In the last year, a number of changes have taken place within the management structure of the school including the leadership of the nursery. The headteacher now has full responsibility for leading and managing the nursery. Staffing over a week includes a part-time teacher who is also the P1 teacher, a full-time early years worker, three part-time early years assistants and a Modern Apprentice. A few practitioners are relatively new to the setting. The school is in the process of recruiting a senior early years practitioner.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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

- In the last year, the nursery has experienced a number of changes within the senior leadership team and within the nursery team. Practitioners, with the valuable support of an acting principal teacher and nursery teacher, have strived to do their best for children. Together, they are a motivated team and, despite staffing challenges, they have made improvements within the setting. This includes the quality of outdoor play, and the increased use of loose parts and natural materials to support children's play. Practitioners have also taken positive steps to improve the quality of communication in the setting.
- The headteacher, who has overall responsibility for the setting, now needs to take a greater role in providing strategic leadership and direction for all practitioners. With the many changes, they will require an increased level of day-to-day support and management. Currently, there is a lack of formal monitoring of learning and teaching, and tracking and monitoring, of children's progress. Senior leaders and practitioners need to review and update policies to ensure all practitioners understand nursery procedures and practice. Clear remits and responsibilities are required for the team, including the nursery teacher and senior early years worker. Once the new team becomes established, it will be important to ascertain individual skills, talents and expertise and identify clearly the leadership roles. This will support further improvement in the setting.
- The nursery teacher in consultation with practitioners has recently updated the nursery aims. These aims reflect the current practice and vision of the nursery class. There is scope for nursery practitioners to be involved in the development of the whole school's vision, values and aims. It will also be important to reflect the unique context of the nursery and involve parents and children in the process.
- Practitioners access professional learning through the local authority and a few are currently undertaking qualifications. They have found these opportunities to be valuable in supporting their knowledge and practice. They will need continued support from senior leaders to help

them build their knowledge further and embed practice. This will help them to reach a shared understanding of pedagogy in order to provide high quality ELC.

- Priorities for improving the nursery class are included in the school improvement plan. Practitioners are aware of the overarching priorities which relate to ELC. However, clear measurable targets which are specific to the nursery class are not identified yet. A next step for the school's improvement plan will be to identify targets which relate specifically to the nursery, as well as the staff who will lead on identified tasks. This will develop individual expertise, support the pace of change and enable practitioners to measure the impact of improvements made.
- Practitioners are aware of national guidance to help them evaluate the quality of ELC. They are a reflective team and are motivated to make improvements. They have had very limited experience in undertaking self-evaluation activities using national guidance. Senior leaders now need to support and guide practitioners to gain an understanding of self-evaluation as an integral aspect of their work. This should include support to help them implement robust processes so that change is based on sound judgements. It will be important to seek the views of all stakeholders and use the information to inform improvement and change.

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 confident in the nursery and engage positively during free play and adult-led experiences. They move freely between indoors and outdoors, giving them access to a wider range of experiences on a daily basis. Children sustain interest for extended periods of time when mark making, using loose parts and creating pretend structures, such as tunnels and a car wash. All children access the outdoors during the nursery session, including making use of a community garden. Practitioners have reflected on how children use the outdoor area and have made positive changes.
- Practitioners interact with children in a professional, caring and sensitive manner. Positive relationships are evident. In the best examples, practitioners' questions support children to extend their learning. It will be important for practitioners to continue to develop their skills in using effective questions and commentary to extend learning and challenge children's thinking. At times, there are missed opportunities to extend children's play and deepen their learning.
- Practitioners continue to develop their skills in observation and recording children's learning. This has been a recent focus and there are early signs of this improving. It will be important for practitioners to ensure that they identify significant learning and record this in a manageable way. As the quality of observations improve, practitioners will be better placed to identify clear and relevant next steps in learning for individual children.
- Each child has a scrapbook that records experiences and achievements. In addition, practitioners record children's achievement of skills on individual trackers. Practitioners now need to review and refresh this system to ensure it provides a coherent picture of children's learning and progress across the curriculum. While practitioners know children well, they need to know them as learners in order to provide the right level of support and challenge. This will enable practitioners to support children to make the progress they are capable of.
- Children do not yet use their scrapbooks to reflect on or lead their learning. They would benefit from participating in more regular discussion about their learning.
- Practitioners plan for children's learning over different timescales. Increasingly, practitioners are taking into account children's interests, however, there is scope to develop this further and engage children at a deeper level. There will be benefit in making the learning wall more inviting for children to encourage them to engage with it more often. This could include recording aspects of their learning and achievements and pictorial examples of their work in relation to specific learning contexts.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners use national guidance to plan the curriculum, which is based on play and linked to children's interests. Children experience a range of experiences both outdoors and within the playroom. There is scope to use the community more fully to enhance the curriculum. Overall, there is a need for the school and nursery to come together with stakeholders to establish a clear rationale to help inform the future direction of the curriculum. Staff plan by recording coverage of the experiences and outcomes for Curriculum for Excellence. The use of the learning wall is helping practitioners to capture and record children's interest. As a result, children are becoming more involved in curriculum planning. Practitioners are working positively to develop further the balance of adult-led and child-led activities.
- The curriculum places an important emphasis on health and wellbeing and children are happy and enjoy being at nursery. We discussed the importance of building on the positive start to develop literacy and numeracy fully across all areas of play. Outdoor learning provides children with opportunities to develop their physical skills while using the pirate ship and structures created from loose parts. As the outdoor provision develops, children will have greater opportunities to develop creativity, inquiry and problem solving. Practitioners should continue to use the design principles to inform the curriculum. This will ensure that it provides breadth, depth, relevance and challenge for all children.
- Practitioners plan transitions from home to nursery well. Parents are offered a home visit to help build relationships and to enable staff to get to know the child more fully. A variety of activities support children with their move from nursery to P1. Most children are confident in this transition due to the layout of the school. We ask that practitioners continue to work with staff at P1 to develop their understanding of learning progression at early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- See the choice QI.

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

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

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 are caring and nurturing in their interactions with children. This results in children feeling comfortable and safe when they are attending the nursery. The wellbeing of children and families is important to practitioners. The recent introduction of a 'soft start and finish' is enabling a welcoming and friendly ethos for families. Parents now have the opportunity to access the playroom and engage in play with their children.
- Children share their views about nursery experiences and recent visits out with the setting with practitioners. Most children develop early leadership skills through specific tasks, which promote their confidence, self-esteem and sense of responsibility. Tasks include 'snack helper' and responsibilities for keeping the nursery tidy. The role of 'welcomer' gives a pleasant start to the morning as they greet every individual child into the setting. There is scope to extend these opportunities further to other areas of responsibility.
- The nursery team does not have yet a shared understanding of the national wellbeing indicators. As identified in the previous Care Inspectorate report, practitioners would benefit from professional learning on Getting it right for every child. Children recognise the importance of being healthy and are aware of how to be safe. Practitioners should offer ways to enable children to engage with all of the indicators through routines and relevant experiences.
- Children play well together and are developing friendships. They demonstrate care and concern for each other. When minor conflicts arise, practitioners support children sensitively to be aware of how their actions make others feel. Children are familiar with the nursery rules as a result of practitioners consulting with them. Practitioners use the rules to reinforce positive behaviour. The school's current policy on promoting positive behaviour requires to be reviewed and updated. This should help practitioners to be more consistent in promoting positive behaviour in the nursery. It is important that policy and procedures reflect the nursery children's stages of development and understanding.
- Practitioners continue to improve the quality of children's care plans. They now record key information from parents to ensure that practitioners are fully aware of children's individual circumstances and care needs. When required, practitioners work with partner agencies to support children who may have a particular care or learning need.
- We would suggest that the headteacher contacts the Care Inspectorate for support, to increase his knowledge and understanding of his role and responsibility relating to key guidance, documentation and regulatory frameworks. As discussed with practitioners, risk assessments should be carried out on aspects of the playroom and the outdoor areas used by the children. This includes the community garden.

- The nursery has an inclusive ethos and children and families are treated with fairness and respect. Practitioners value diversity and challenge any discrimination in a developmentally appropriate way. Cultural festivals including local festivals are celebrated. There is scope for practitioners to review their resources to ensure they reflect 21st century society.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

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

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress across their learning and development. Relationships between children and staff are positive and caring. They focus well on aspects of children's health and wellbeing. Children work well together to share resources and take turns. Children are aware of how to keep their bodies safe as a result of involvement in a specific health programme. They are developing their physical skills well in the outdoor area, climbing ladders and trees in the community garden. Children demonstrate a high level of skill using three-wheeled trikes and are ready for the further challenge of two-wheeled bikes. Children develop their sense of responsibility in looking after plants and in taking part in the community clear up. Children express confidently their likes and dislikes and are now ready to be involved in making decisions at a greater level.
- In communication and early language, children are making satisfactory progress. They are articulate, take part in conversations with each other and are confident chatting to adults within the nursery. Children listen well and most follow instructions. Most children like to listen to stories and demonstrate an interest in books. More could be done to ensure that children can access books on a range of subjects across the nursery, including outdoors. Most children recognise their name and a few are attempting to write their name, letters and a few familiar words. There is a need to reduce the amount of templates and worksheets used across the nursery. These are limiting children's learning experiences. Practitioners should consider how they could embed experiences for communication and early language fully across learning, including through real-life experiences. There is also scope to provide a few children with more challenging experiences within their play.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in mathematics. The majority of children are able to count to ten, with a few children showing confidence in counting beyond ten. A few can recognise numbers within ten. Children are starting to use mathematical language appropriately during play experiences measuring their own height and the length of objects. They recognise and name simple shapes during games and are learning to sort and match objects and make repeated patterns. They use timers well across the nursery and, as a result, children are developing an understanding of duration of time. There is a need to develop children's understanding of numeracy across all areas of play. Practitioners should ensure that children are learning about other mathematical concepts such as money and information handling within their play and through real-life contexts.

- Children are developing confidence and are enthusiastic about learning and finding new information. They enjoy spending time with older children at the primary stages and have opportunities to learn together at assemblies. They access the facilities of the school campus and enjoy storytelling with the school librarian. Children are developing creativity and demonstrate independence as they select materials to support their play. There is scope for children to experience more opportunities to investigate and solve problems. Practitioners capture children's achievements from home through scrapbooks and an interactive online resource. This could be developed further. Practitioners celebrate children's achievements through displays and awards. Children start nursery with a variety of skills and they experience a wide range of activities at home. Practitioners should ensure that they build on these experiences so that children continue to make progress.
- Practitioners record children's experiences within scrapbooks and track what children can do on individual trackers. They now need to build on this to create a robust assessment of children's progress over time. At present the current systems record achievements but do not identify next steps in learning, which should inform subsequent planning.
- All children have equality of access to all nursery experiences and practitioners ensure finance is not a barrier to children taking part in activities. The nursery fundraises to help keep the cost of activities at a minimum to ensure all children can access outings. The nursery staff are aware that they would benefit from increasing their knowledge and understanding of equity.

Choice of QI: 2.7 Partnerships

- Engagement of parents and carers in the life of the setting
- The promotion of partnerships
- Impact on children and families

- The Parent Council has been involved in recent work on revisiting the school's vision, values and aims. There is considerable scope for this work to be developed to take forward people's views. There is also scope to consider further collaborative work with parents to support self-evaluation and improvement activities across the whole school. This will reflect parents' rights to be more included in decisions which affect their children's learning.
- Practitioners have introduced a 'soft start and finish' in the nursery to improve children's experiences and communication with parents. These times give good opportunities for information to be shared between parents and practitioners. Over the course of this year, the nursery plans to re-introduce formal reporting on children's progress to parents. The nursery teacher is leading this. Practitioners share children's experiences with parents in other ways. For example, scrapbooks, a digital photo frame and an interactive online resource. Parents note that the school has improved some aspects of communication. However, there is further work to be done in this area. Across the whole school, reporting needs to give more consistent, specific messages about children and young people's progress in their learning.
- A few partnerships with local organisations, businesses and community groups are increasing the range of learning experiences from which children benefit. For example, a link with the Hillswick Wildlife Centre has provided children in the early years setting with an opportunity to find out more about conservation. Early years and school links with South Mainland Up Helly Aa (SMUHA) allow children and young people to engage with local cultural heritage. There are a few opportunities for parents to come into the setting to share their skills, talents and information about the work they do. There is scope to increase partnership working to enhance curriculum experiences for young children.
- The setting works closely with local health professionals and other partners to support children and families. As planned, closer links with the health visitor will support practitioners to build on children's previous experiences to ensure continuity in their care and learning.
- Overall, there is scope across the school to develop a strategic approach to partnership engagement which enhances further the experiences of children. This engagement should be based firmly on the school's reconsidered vision, values and aims.

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.