

# Summarised inspection findings

**Sacred Heart Primary School Nursery Class**

Midlothian Council

9 May 2023

## Key contextual information

Sacred Heart Primary School Nursery is based in a purpose-built area alongside a P1 classroom, within a secure section of the main school building. There is a purpose-built space including two interesting outdoor spaces including multi-level spaces, tunnels, dens, story-telling areas, and large sand play areas. The design of this space was intended to support partnership working and transition between the nursery and P1. Staffing challenges and a period of frequent changes in leadership have prevented this approach being implemented at this time. The nursery provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for children aged three to until they begin primary school. The current roll is 27, however there is capacity for 64 children to attend. Most children attend for full days during term time. The recently appointed acting headteacher has overall responsibility for leading the team. Currently the team consists of an acting senior practitioner and a small team of full and part time early years practitioners (EYPs). Only one member of the current team was in post during periods of Covid-19 restrictions and recent building works.

### 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

- Practitioners in the nursery now work well as a team. The team engage in honest professional dialogue and apply knowledge from recent professional learning to implement improvements to spaces and mealtime routines. The acting senior practitioner (senior) practitioners and children co-operate effectively to begin to put a staff and children's charter into action. Adults and children treat one another with respect and kindness. To support and sustain improvement the school leadership team, senior and practitioners need to look outwards to deepen their shared understanding of best practice in early learning.
- The team have amended the school improvement plan, aims and vision to begin to reflect the nursery context. This influences a few aspects of the practice of the team. As leaders develop the vision and values further, it will be important to involve the team, children, and partners meaningfully. This will help ensure that they fully reflect the nursery context. This should help the team take ownership of the vision and use it to inform and drive continued improvements.
- The team have benefitted from focused professional learning, support from local authority colleagues and daily meetings to talk about their approach. The senior and practitioners identify and try out new ways of working. The team have successfully used audits of literacy and numeracy to accurately identify and make initial improvements. Practitioner's recently made changes to spaces and resources. They involved children in reflecting on their use of spaces with staff to make the changes. Improvements to the location and improved use of resources ensure children can concentrate on activities and independently access materials. Children now understand the purpose of signs and displays that include their own mark making. Children frequently transport resources, including loose parts, to develop their own

ideas. The team now need strategic leadership to support them to reflect more deeply on the impact of changes made on children's learning.

- The team have experienced frequent changes in leadership, different ways of working and uncertainty over staffing. They have sustained positive relationships for parents and children throughout this time. Practitioners within the nursery need strategic leadership to help them develop a robust and systematic self-evaluation processes. A quality assurance calendar is in place and staff are attentive to tasks they need to undertake. Practitioners are reflective and talk daily together about what children need and how to best respond. They would benefit from more regular, focused feedback on the quality of their work. Senior leaders need to now work with the team to lead self-evaluation that drives improvements. This would help the team evidence the impact of improvements and ensure experiences and interactions challenge all children.

## 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

- Practitioners and children have close, trusting, and positive relationships. Children are secure and increasingly confident indoors and when they choose to play outside. Most children settle quickly to familiar activities and routines as they play with their friends. A few children are supported sensitively by practitioners to spend longer amounts of time at nursery as they settle in. Practitioners' recent changes to spaces, routines, and experiences support children to develop independence and persevere to complete tasks with help from an adult or a friend. The nursery team have identified that many children need encouragement to sustain outdoor play. Practitioners should continue to develop further approaches to outdoor learning with children, parents, and partners.
- Practitioners have increased the number of open-ended materials to support children to be creative. Most younger children are engaged in developmentally appropriate, imaginative play for most of their session. Most children would benefit from experiences and interactions to challenge them further. This will help them explore their interests in more depth and apply their skills in motivating real life contexts.
- Children benefit from attentive, patient, and caring interactions from practitioners who listen carefully to their ideas. The team support children's verbal and non-verbal communication well with their vocabulary and use of visual signs and symbols. Practitioners should develop further their skills in observing children's play to provide support or challenge.
- Practitioners have changed their approaches to how they plan learning for individuals and groups. This is beginning to improve the balance of spontaneous and intended learning. Children are beginning to be more involved in sharing their questions and ideas of what they would like to learn more about or explore in more depth. Floor books now include children's mark making and samples of discussions between children. The nursery team are beginning to use these more effectively to inform the planning of spaces, experiences, and interactions. Practitioners should ensure their observations, assessments and interactions of children's learning influences their planning of learning.
- Practitioners have rightly identified that the quality of observations does not yet consistently identify the skills children are developing. Staff dialogue has focused on the purpose and content of observations shared with parents online. They have rightly arranged professional learning on effective use of observations. The senior recognises that they do not yet have an overview that enables them to track and monitor the overall progress that individuals and groups of children make. The nursery team have introduced new individual learning priorities and have made a positive start in noting children's progress in these areas. Most children are aware that they have a record of learning. A few children ask to include videos and photos of experiences they enjoy. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to reflect on and

share their learning. Parents and children now need to be more involved in shaping and evaluating children's progress.

- Practitioners use daily conversations, parent meetings and engagement with other professionals to record plans for children who require additional support with their learning. These are recorded in their 'all about me' and personal plan records. All practitioners understand and implement strategies for specific children. They have benefitted from training in supporting children with additional support needs. Senior leaders in the school should support the team to build their confidence and skills in recording and reviewing targets in individual educational plans. This will assist practitioners in recording and assessing how well children are progressing in relation to targeted interventions or strategies implemented by practitioners and parents.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners' changes to the indoor and outdoor learning environment ensures children have choice, variety, and time to play. The team plan experiences to support expressive arts and problem solving in addition to core areas of learning. Practitioners use children's interests and needs observed as they play to inform their planning of seasonal and responsive activities. The team should now focus on depth and progression across all areas of children's learning.
- Practitioners prioritise time to support children and families well as they begin their time at nursery. The team are patient and flexible to suit the needs and preferences of individual children and parents. Practitioners and parents make good use of initial meetings to share information about children's stage of development and needs before children start. This means staff are well informed about new children as they transition from home to nursery.
- As children move onto school, practitioners accompany them on visits to P1. The team have not yet been able to make full use of the spaces designed to support shared play and learning with children from the school. Children enjoy a few shared play sessions with their siblings. The team should now work together with staff across the early level to establish a shared pedagogy. Practitioners and teachers working together to share information and approaches will support progression across the early level.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners warmly welcome parents into the nursery at the start and end of the session. A few parents spend time in the playroom to support their child to settle in. Children and practitioners share what children have been learning about in a relaxed exchange at the end of the day. Parents and children enjoy stay and play sessions. Practitioners should continue to involve parents in evaluating the quality of their work.
- Practitioners share children's learning experiences using an online platform, school newsletter, one to one conversations and regular meetings. Practitioners and parents regularly share information about what children experience in nursery. The team should continue to seek creative ways to encourage parents and carers to contribute to their child's learning journal. Key workers could pose questions, set challenges, involve children and parents in uploading content and invite parents to share learning from home.

## 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

**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

- Children benefit from positive, nurturing relationships with practitioners. Most children are confident as they express their needs. Children ask for help to dress for outdoor play or resolve a disagreement over sharing resources. As children start their day, they share how they feel with staff using feelings stones and stories. Most children are beginning to develop a positive sense of self and build their self-esteem through positive interactions and experiences that build their confidence.
- Children develop independence skills well as they help practitioners prepare a healthy snack and clean their dishes after lunch. Almost all children have lunch within the nursery. Practitioners have recently changed the mealtime space and routines, this supports a calm, sociable experience. Practitioners noticed that there was a high amount of food waste and requested changes to the menu. They should continue to monitor and evaluate mealtimes with children to ensure food waste is minimised. The recent changes to mealtime routines mean most children quickly re-engage in their play after lunch.
- Children are proud of their improving skills as they help practitioners prepare snack. Children are becoming familiar with a few new leadership roles. Practitioners should increase the range of leadership roles available. This would support children to take increased responsibility, apply their skills in motivating contexts and identify the skills used as they carry out important roles.
- Overall, children are not yet confident in talking about wellbeing indicators in their lives. They Practitioners support children to understand and use the language of a few of the national wellbeing indicators, in particular, safe and healthy. Children are becoming aware of their meaning as they check it is safe to jump across a tunnel or help a friend to build a ramp. Older children can confidently share what they need to do to keep themselves and others safe. Practitioners should continue with their work to support children and parents to explore the full range of wellbeing indicators. Practitioners have not yet developed children's understanding of their rights.
- Practitioners work closely with a few agencies and professionals to provide support for individual children. Parents have requested referrals to speech and language therapists and practitioners keep in close contact with professionals involved in supporting children. Practitioners have recently re-established small group work for specific children to improve their language and communication skills. This needs more time to impact on children's progress. The team should work together with parents and partners to evaluate the impact of targeted interventions on children's progress.
- All practitioners have a sound understanding of their statutory duties relevant to early learning and childcare. They know their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe and planning to support children's health, care, and wellbeing needs. They need to improve

how they use individual educational plans to help measure progress of children with additional support needs.

- The team include celebrating a few festivals such as Chinese New Year as they plan learning. This helps children reflect, explore, and understand their world. Practitioners should provide a wider range of experiences and resources to engage children in exploring, celebrating, and valuing diversity.

### 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

- Children are making satisfactory progress in developing their communication and literacy skills. The majority of children are eager to communicate with their friends and adults, and willingly share thoughts and ideas. Children frequently engage in sharing stories and songs with practitioners. They talk confidently about the buildings and roads they have made in the block area. Most children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their knowledge of familiar stories and characters to capture their own stories. A few children are proud that they can write their name and are interested in identifying familiar letters and words. All children would benefit from increased opportunities to apply their skills in real-life contexts in the playroom and outdoors.
- In early numeracy and mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress. Most children identify numerals to ten. Children count for a purpose at snack time and when using loose parts in their play. A few children are keen to add numbers together. Children attempt to count forwards and back as they explore their interests in larger numbers, patterns, and time. Children would benefit from developmentally appropriate experiences that challenge them to develop and use their skills in, for example information handling.
- Children are curious and creative in the music, art, and outdoor spaces. Children frequently persevere to problem solve on their own or with a friend as they build ramps or structures. Children enjoy mixing colours and exploring the texture of playdough as they roll, cut and shape materials. Children enjoyed using tools to make bird boxes. Practitioners recognise that they should offer a wider range of materials. This will help children make connections and explore their own ideas more frequently.
- Practitioners have started to ask parents and children about their achievements outside nursery. They record these in children's 'all about me' books and celebrate these with parents and children in daily discussions. They recognise that these achievements do not yet influence their planning or feature in children's online journals. As planned, practitioners should track these achievements to demonstrate the wider range of children's experiences and the skills they develop.
- The senior and practitioners meet daily to discuss their work and pay attention to individual children's progress and strategies to overcome barriers to learning. They identify children needing further help or challenge in their learning. Practitioners should agree how their reviews

of progress for children who have additional support needs will inform their tracking and monitoring of progress.

## 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.