

Summarised inspection findings

Echt School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

19 March 2024

Key contextual information

Echt Nursery Class is based within Echt Primary School which is a small rural school situated in the village of Echt, Aberdeenshire. The nursery serves the village of Echt and surrounding villages. The nursery consists of one playroom and free access to an outdoor area. In addition, the nursery can make use of the school hall and a community garden beside the school grounds. Children attend the nursery from the age of three until starting primary school. The opening hours are 8 am – 6 pm, term time. Children have various patterns of attendance including full and part days. The nursery is registered for 40 children at any one time. The current role is 24.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery with an early years senior practitioner (EYSP) assuming leadership for the provision. The EYSP is supported by two acting early years lead practitioners who are in job-share positions. There is a team of five practitioners with various patterns of employment.

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

- Senior leaders have recently reviewed the nursery vision, values and aims in partnership with practitioners and parents. Children have had the opportunity to contribute their thoughts and ideas in a developmentally appropriate way. As a result, the nursery values of kindness, respectful, safety and teamwork are shared and understood by all. Practitioners bring these values to life through their professional and respectful interactions with children, parents and each other. Children demonstrate their understanding of the values through their play, for example, when describing what it means to be safe and kind.
- The EYSP provides effective leadership to the team. She is visible within the setting and leads and guides practitioners well. The EYSP encourages practitioners to access professional learning, additional qualifications and personal reading to deepen their knowledge and support their practice. As a result of specific professional learning, practitioners feel more confident in meeting the range of children's learning and development needs within the nursery.
- Practitioners contribute well to the development of the nursery by undertaking leadership roles such as leading on outdoor learning and parental engagement. These roles are improving children's woodland experiences. Parents report positively about the opportunity to share nursery experiences through 'play and stay' sessions. All practitioners are ready to strengthen their leadership roles in, for example, key areas of the curriculum.
- The EYSP meets with practitioners regularly to discuss children's progress and next steps in learning. She monitors children's learning journals regularly to help identify the progress children make and to ensure the journals are of a good standard. The EYSP supports practitioners well to identify gaps in children's learning and where children require additional help.

- Senior leaders and practitioners use audits to evaluate key areas of the playroom and practice. They meet regularly to discuss what is working well and what could improve further in relation to children's experiences. Senior leaders look outwards to other settings to identify good practice and share this with practitioners. It would be beneficial to include practitioners in future visits. The EYSP has provided support to cluster schools by sharing practice on early numeracy and mathematics outdoors. This involved the nursery practitioners showcasing examples of the experiences they provide in the outdoor area. Moving forward, the EYSP with the headteacher, could look at ways to improve further collaborative working across the early level.
- The headteacher and EYSP meet to discuss and plan future improvements based on school improvement priorities and nursery self-evaluation. As identified, all practitioners could be more involved in robust self-evaluation using quality frameworks. This would give practitioners greater ownership and involvement in the improvement planning process. Current priorities focus on listening and talking skills, early maths and children's social and emotional development. As a result of this focused work, children are progressing well with their counting and listening skills.

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 are friendly, caring and respectful. Children enjoy the positive relationships with practitioners which help them to feel secure and cared for within the nursery. The EYSP and practitioners demonstrate a commitment to children's rights. They value children's views and the contribution they make to the nursery. Children confidently make decisions about where they want to play and choose resources freely that will support and extend their interests.
- Most children engage well with the range of interesting experiences both indoors and outdoors. Practitioners provide a good range of literacy and numeracy experiences within the playroom. Children use their communication, problem solving and imaginative skills well as they build a fire engine and car with large blocks. They confidently extend their play by acting out different roles. Children are independent as they get ready for outdoors. They have fun catching the snow and feeling the cold on their face. Practitioners make good use of local woodland to enable children to learn within and from a natural environment.
- Practitioners understand how young children learn and develop. They give children the right amount of time and freedom to lead their play. At times, practitioners play alongside children, successfully joining in at the right time to support and extend children's learning. They should embed this good practice across all aspects of children's learning. Children confidently use the interactive board to draw and play shape games. Practitioners should build on this and increase opportunities to use digital technology to assist learning and teaching.
- Each child has an electronic learning journal. As a result of professional learning, practitioners have improved the quality of their written observations. They use this information well to inform next steps for individual children. Practitioners share this with parents who also contribute to children's learning journals. Children could have more ownership of their learning journals to help them recognise and celebrate themselves as learners.
- Practitioners plan for children's learning using responsive and intentional approaches. They follow children's interests naturally and plan accordingly to support their learning. Moving forward, practitioners should develop further their floorbooks to demonstrate how children deepen their learning over time through nursery experiences. Practitioners should ensure responsive and intentional planning ensures children have opportunities to develop, apply and consolidate their skills.
- The EYSP monitors children's progress through data collected from children's learning journals. She should continue to build the teams' confidence in making professional judgements about children's learning. With practitioners, she should develop tracking of children's learning further to demonstrate clearly the wide range of skills children are developing.

- Practitioners support children who require additional help with their learning very well. They plan carefully to ensure learning experiences meet the needs of the children. This is having a positive impact on the progress children are making in their development and learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners implement the curriculum through play. The curriculum is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Getting it Right for Every Child and nursery values. Practitioners make good use of the community and visitors to enrich children's learning through real-life contexts. Practitioners use the local authority progression pathways to support their planning for children's learning. Building on this, they should make more effective use of the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence across all curriculum areas. This will help practitioners to improve further planned learning experiences and provide greater depth and challenge for children's learning.
- Practitioners support children very well to make a smooth transition from home to nursery. The EYSP and practitioners are respectful and flexible in their approach to ensure they meet the needs of children, parents and carers. They use a 'talking book' with children very effectively to share nursery experiences with children who are about to start nursery. During the last term, practitioners work closely with teachers to support transition from nursery to school. They provide additional time for children who require increased opportunities to become familiar with teachers and the classroom. All children would benefit from greater connections with P1 throughout the year. This would help practitioners and teachers to plan more effectively for continuity in the curriculum and progression in learning across the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners encourage parents and carers to be involved in the nursery at varying levels. They invite them to engage with children's learning through a range of activities such as, crafts, story sessions and 'stay and play' opportunities. These sessions help parents and carers to engage in their child's learning and share in their experiences. Practitioners helpfully share with parents, the range of signs used by children to communicate with their peers. This helps parents, carers and children to practise these signs together at home. A few parents and carers are members of the school Parent Council which supports the nursery by fundraising to enhance children's experiences.
- Parents, carers and partners contribute well to the nursery and children's learning. They share their experiences, skills and jobs that they do to enrich the curriculum and to enable children to learn through real-life experiences. For example, children enjoy visits to and from farmers, doctors and community council members who help with woodland visits.
- Practitioners use an online platform well to share children's experiences, learning and progress with parents and carers. When required, they provide enhanced communication for families. This may be as a result of children requiring additional support from nursery practitioners and partner agencies.

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

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

- Children's wellbeing and getting it right for children and their families sits at the centre of practitioners' work. Practitioners support children very well to feel safe and secure while at nursery. Parents and carers describe the nursery as 'feeling like a family'. Practitioners are very good role models for children. This results in children demonstrating care, kindness and respect for each other. They play well together. When required, practitioners use restorative approaches to help children to understand how their actions can impact on others. They listen carefully to children and respectfully take their views into account. Children are becoming familiar with the language of the national wellbeing indicators and are confident to describe the meaning of a few. For example, how to be safe, healthy and responsible. Practitioners support this very well by modelling the language and using characters to help children learn about the wellbeing indicators through meaningful and familiar contexts.
- Children demonstrate independence in a variety of ways. They take on responsibilities enthusiastically for risk assessing the outdoors, clearing snow from the garden area and mopping up spillages of water during play. Children understand the importance of their role in keeping everyone safe. All children benefit from a calm, unhurried lunchtime within the school dining hall. This is enhanced by the very positive relationship children have with the school catering staff. Children readily engage in conversation with adults, demonstrate good manners and develop their fine motor skills as they use cutlery. As a result, lunchtime is a very positive experience for children. Moving forward, practitioners could seek ways to enable children to be more independent, for example serving themselves at the table.
- Practitioners know their children and families very well and strive to do their very best to meet their needs. They are attuned to children's individual needs and make helpful adjustments to the playroom and their interactions. This ensures all children are included and access the range of nursery experiences at their own level of development. Practitioners work very effectively with partner agencies. They seek advice timeously and use the expertise of other professionals to provide tailored support to individual children. Parents and carers report positively on the proactive approach by practitioners in supporting children who may require additional help with their learning.
- The EYSP and practitioners are fully aware of, and comply with, statutory requirements in relation to early learning and childcare. They have undertaken appropriate training, to know and carry out diligently their roles and responsibilities in helping to keep children safe.
- Both children and families benefit greatly from the welcoming and highly inclusive ethos within the nursery. Practitioners value diversity and will challenge discrimination. Children learn about the diverse world in which they live through meaningful celebrations, relevant resources and successful partnerships with parents and carers. The EYSP and practitioners use key events

successfully to help children develop an awareness of the needs of others, for example, Children in Need.

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 early communication language and literacy, most children make good progress. Children confidently communicate with known adults and will engage in conversation. They are learning sign language to fully include all children in their play. Children enjoy listening to stories in groups and on a one-to-one basis. They confidently answer questions about the text and understand the role of an author. A few children use extended vocabulary to describe their experiences. Children recognise that signs give us information during a community walk. A minority of children are beginning to explore initial letter sounds. Most children mark-make in a variety of contexts. They practise their 'writing' as they create signs and labels around the nursery and 'write' their notes in the pretend Doctor's surgery. A majority of children are ready to explore initial sounds in their name and familiar words.
- Most children make good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. They count confidently during play and routines. Most children count to 10 and a few count beyond this. They know what comes before and next and can identify missing numerals on a number line. A few children understand that zero means nothing and recognise amounts without counting objects one for one. They are beginning to explore simple addition and subtraction using concrete materials. Children explore volume and capacity while they play in the snow, fill and empty containers and make pretend soup during water play. They use relevant mathematical language to describe weight, size and length. Most children explore time through the seasons and by crossing off each day on the nursery calendar. As identified, children could be developing further their skills in using money, exploring shape, three-dimensional objects and information handling.
- Most children make good progress in health and wellbeing. They confidently recognise different emotions and feelings when listening to a story. Children share how they feel in different situations, for example, when playing in the snow. Most children differentiate between what is safe and what is dangerous and confidently explain why. They learn to manage risk when outdoors in the garden and during trips to local woodlands. Almost all children develop gross motor skills well, such as running, balancing and climbing during play outdoors. They develop their fine motor skills through threading, cutting and chopping the fruit for snack. Most children are confident in hygiene routines and understand the importance of washing their hands.

- Children are becoming confident, resilient and independent learners. Practitioners use an online platform to help them track children's progress. The manager collates this information to identify the progress children have made in health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. To develop this further, practitioners are currently trialling developmental overviews to provide more reliable data on children's progress over time.
- Practitioners offer meaningful praise and encouragement to support children in their play. They use children's learning journals, floorbooks and wall displays to celebrate children's achievements for example, their progress in drawing figures. Parents and carers share children's achievements from home through their child's electronic journal. This year, nursery children have been involved with the school as part of their work to develop rights-based approaches. As part of this, children have been learning about working as a team, being responsible for the environment and keeping each other safe.
- The EYSP and practitioners promote equity through their supportive and inclusive ethos. They know and understand the varying needs of children and families and potential barriers to learning and inclusion. Practitioners are proactive in seeking advice from partner agencies. They use this advice effectively to ensure their interactions, experiences and learning spaces meet the needs of all children. The EYSP and practitioners are beginning to use data to help them to identify gaps in children's learning. As a result, a gap was identified in children's listening skills. Practitioners accessed additional training and resources to support children's emerging literacy. As a result, children's listening skills have improved significantly. Most children focus well during story time and can follow a two-step instruction.

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.