

# Summarised inspection findings

**Dalbeattie Primary School Nursery Class**

Dumfries and Galloway Council

13 February 2024

## Key contextual information

Dalbeattie Nursery Class is located within the Dalbeattie Learning Campus, sharing the building with Dalbeattie Primary School and Dalbeattie High School. The nursery's playroom has direct access to a large outdoor area. The nursery is registered for 60 children aged between two and up to primary school age. There are currently 44 children on the roll, which can include a maximum of 10 children of two years of age. Most children access their entitlement to 1140 hours by attending from 9 am to 3 pm each day. Others attend on a variety of attendance patterns to suit family circumstances. The nursery is managed by the headteacher with support from a recently appointed acting nursery manager. There is a vacancy for an acting depute manager. Further staffing includes four nursery practitioners and three nursery assistants. The nursery can operate between 8 am and 6 pm but currently closes at 5 pm each day as there are currently no requests for places beyond 5 pm.

### 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

- Leadership of change in the nursery is weak. While the headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery, she has delegated the day to day responsibility for the nursery to the acting nursery manager. The headteacher does not rigorously monitor the work of the nursery or lead self-evaluation. As a result, the pace of change is too slow across the nursery, children's experiences are not of a high enough quality, and they make insufficient progress from their prior learning.
- Nursery practitioners participated with primary school staff in reviewing the vision, values and aims. They have identified the need to make these more readily understood by young children. Practitioners have embedded well the values of kindness, respect and consideration in the everyday life of the nursery through their daily interactions with children. Staff know their community well and strive to do their best for children and families.
- The recently appointed acting manager has developed positive relationships with practitioners. The headteacher has developed a self-evaluation calendar which is comprehensive and identifies important topics. However, recent self-evaluation by senior leaders and practitioners has been ineffective and has not resulted in significant improvements. The headteacher recognises that she needs to make more regular visits to monitor the work of the nursery to help ensure improved outcomes for children.
- Practitioners are not yet fully involved in self-evaluation of the nursery. Practitioners need to be more involved in identifying strengths and weaknesses to support them to know and understand key areas for improvement. The acting manager is focused on developing a more collegiate approach to leadership and, as a first step, has begun to involve practitioners in planning processes. Practitioners do not have a strong understanding of planning to meet the needs of all learners in the nursery. Senior leaders need to support practitioners to review

planning processes and identify areas to improve. Practitioners need clearer leadership from the headteacher and wider leadership team. The acting manager, together with the wider leadership team need to manage the pace of change more effectively.

- Practitioners have engaged recently with professional learning on numeracy and aspects of spoken language. They have not yet embedded their learning from the professional learning in their work in the nursery. Moving forward, there is a need to develop the environment and support children better to help them to develop their numeracy and literacy skills. Practitioners need to take on roles in leading these initiatives in the playroom and improve their knowledge of current thinking on early learning to evaluate their work with greater accuracy.
- Practitioners are becoming more reflective, participating in opportunities to share information about children's learning. In addition, most practitioners are keen to develop their knowledge of early years issues. However, they do not yet focus their professional learning clearly on the nursery's priorities. As a result, pedagogical approaches across the setting are weak and children do not make sufficient progress in their learning.
- The headteacher has developed an improvement plan which outlines proposed work on vision, values and aims, and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This work is at a very early stage of development. Practitioners have identified additional areas for improvement which include a review of the balance of the curriculum, and improvements to outdoor provision. These additional priorities are not yet reflected in the improvement plan and the pace of change is too slow.
- While children have opportunities to offer some ideas for activities, practitioners are not yet involving them enough in the life, work and improvement of the nursery.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- Learning, teaching and assessment in the nursery is weak. Practitioners need to improve the indoor and outdoor environments to ensure children are motivated and engage effectively in their play and learning. Children who attend the full day do not experience breadth and balance of learning across the day. Practitioners need to improve children's learning experiences. They need to develop high quality observations and tracking of children's progress. They need to use data gathered through observations and tracking to plan high quality learning experiences to help children to make better progress.
- Relationships across the nursery between practitioners and children are caring and nurturing. Children arrive happily and almost all are confident when approaching adults. Most children interact positively with their peers and are able to choose where and with whom they play. While a few children can sustain interest for short periods of time, most do not persevere with activities. Children are disengaged regularly throughout the day and need more adult support to play purposefully.
- The current play spaces planned by practitioners are not sufficiently rich and varied. Practitioners provide opportunities for children to play both inside and outdoors and offer a limited range of open-ended resources. Practitioners need to review the environment, through discussion with children, focusing on high quality ways to promote curiosity, creativity, and imagination. They need to enhance significantly play spaces by providing a more varied range of materials and texts.
- Practitioners are not yet offering sufficiently varied programmes in afternoons, for those children who attend for the full day. There is an urgent need to improve the quality of children's experiences across the nursery and during the nursery day. Practitioners should extend the use of digital technologies with children to support and enrich their learning experiences.
- A few practitioners make effective use of questioning to extend children's learning. However, this practice is not of a consistent high quality. Practitioners miss opportunities to develop and enrich children's play. They would benefit from further professional learning in using skilled questioning and interactions to challenge and extend children's learning. Practitioners also need to ensure they meet the specific learning needs of children aged under three, through improved decisions on age-appropriate resources, experiences and routines.
- Practitioners are at the early stages of using a few observations well to identify the skills children are developing and their next steps. These observations of children's learning are not consistently effective. Practitioners need further guidance to support them to plan children's learning more effectively. The acting nursery manager recognises that practitioners are not yet ensuring an appropriate balance between intentional and responsive planning. Practitioners should continue to engage with national guidance to aid professional reflection.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a curriculum that is play based and linked to seasonal changes and festivals. Children are able to make choices in their learning, indoors and outside. Practitioners do not yet make best use of space and they need to increase the variety of play spaces for children. They do not yet offer a rich range of resources to engage children and sustain their interest. Practitioners should develop children's curiosity and sense of wonder better through enhancing the indoor provision and the outdoor areas and making them more inviting.
- Practitioners take account of children's comments and interests to vary resources. They are not yet making full use of children's voice to seek their opinions on what they would like to learn. The practitioner team has an understanding of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. They should use this knowledge, in balance with national guidance for younger children, to review and structure their curriculum.
- Children benefit from regular access to the school gym hall and enjoy attending whole school assemblies. Practitioners could make more use of the local community to enhance the curriculum, for example by using parks, the forest and shops.
- Practitioners have good links with staff who teach at P1. They organise enhanced transition activities for those children who require them, including those who require additional support. Parents and children are supported well for children's move into the nursery, and as they move on to primary school. Practitioners and teachers working at the early level of CfE, across the nursery and early stages of primary school need to work more closely together. They need to work together to develop a shared understanding of high-quality play.

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

- Practitioners have developed positive relationships with families. Parents feel they are welcome in the nursery each day when they drop off and collect their child and at stay and play sessions. Parents are kept well informed of the life and work of the nursery through a closed social media page and an informative noticeboard. They can access their child's personal learning journal and make helpful comment on their child's progress and wider achievements. Parents understand the contribution they make to their child's learning.
- Parents have regular opportunities to see the nursery in action during 'stay and play sessions' which are well attended. Families' engagement in learning activities with their children helps parents to understand how their involvement contributes to their child's progress. Parents are not yet fully involved in self-evaluation of the work of the nursery. Practitioners need to explore ways of involving families more fully, for example through parent focus groups and regular surveys of parents' views.
- Practitioners have strong partnerships with a range of agencies which support both children and parents well. Practitioners could extend their partnerships with the local community to develop children's learning, for example by contributing to richer learning experiences.

## 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

- Children can regulate their behaviour with support from practitioners. They demonstrate their understanding of how to stay safe in nursery and are kind and respectful towards each other. Practitioners need to help children to understand, talk about and value the difference between individuals in the world around them.
- Practitioners have created a friendly, welcoming playroom where most children are happy, settled and confident in exploring play spaces. Practitioners are kind and caring in their interactions with children. When children are upset or angry, practitioners help them to understand their feelings and self-regulate their behaviours. Children are encouraged to share their toys and cooperate with each other. The acting manager has plans to help practitioners and children become familiar with children's rights to support further their wellbeing. Practitioners could make more use of the national wellbeing indicators with children to support this process. For example, they could present the wellbeing indicators in age-appropriate ways through puppets and stories. This should help children to understand and talk about their own wellbeing.
- Children show independence by selecting and tidying resources. They serve themselves some items at snack time. They could be more involved in preparing foods and have greater opportunities to choose, prepare and taste different foods. Practitioners need to review the lunchtime arrangements to increase children's independence and to help children develop their social skills further. Children are beginning to understand how cleanliness and hygiene can affect their wellbeing. They participate in a toothbrushing programme. Practitioners must ensure that daily routines include a stronger focus on regular handwashing.
- Practitioners are clear about their responsibilities for keeping children safe and well. All practitioners understand the nursery's approach to child protection. They engage in regular training and carry out their safeguarding roles and responsibilities effectively. Practitioners have included helpfully the wellbeing indicators in children's care plans. Families use these well when completing children's personal information and consent forms. Practitioners review care plans regularly in consultation with parents. Practitioners and parents agree appropriate wellbeing targets where appropriate.
- Practitioners know children and families well and have a sound understanding of their context, including the rising cost of living. Practitioners do not yet evaluate their approaches to inclusion and equity to ensure that they are leading to improved outcomes for children. Practitioners need to increase the range of resources which promote the understanding and valuing of diversity, including age, race, religion, disability and different types of families and beliefs. In doing so, this should help to raise children's awareness of the world in which they are growing up.



### 3.2 Securing children's progress

weak

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

- Progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing is weak. Practitioners do not have clear information about children's significant learning and as a result do not identify gaps in learning.
- In communication and early language a few children listen well. Almost all children talk to each other and adults about their play. The majority enjoy mark-making at the writing table. Children need to develop further control of their fingers and hands as part of mark making activities. The majority of children enjoy sharing a story with adults and take a book home each week to share with their families. The majority of children are not yet able to discuss the characters in books and retell a story. Children need to engage more with a wide range of texts. More children are capable of making better progress.
- In mathematics, the majority of children are developing their skills in sorting, matching and counting. Children use mathematical language appropriately in their play for example, forward and backwards. A few children are able to name two-dimensional shapes such as square and circle. Most children are not yet using the language of measure well. They do not use the language of time to describe their day. Children need to improve their skills in counting in order beyond 10. More children are capable of making better progress in numeracy and mathematics.
- In health and wellbeing, most children are making satisfactory progress. Most children are developing their skills in sharing and are gradually developing their capacity for teamwork. Most children make healthy choices at snack and lunchtime. Almost all children are independent with toileting and are beginning to dress themselves appropriately for outdoor play. Children are beginning to understand the benefit from fresh air and exercise as they climb and balance in the garden. Most children are socially confident in the nursery. Within the nursery, children need to develop a greater understanding of personal wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.
- The nursery does not yet have accurate information on children's progress over time. Practitioners record observations of children's learning in learning journals. However, their information which is recorded does not capture fully children's significant learning. Practitioners are at the early stages of tracking children's learning to record progress made by individuals and specific groups. As a matter of urgency, the headteacher, together with the acting

manager needs to address this to ensure that attainment information is accurate, and children's progress is monitored on a regular basis.

- Children's wider achievements are displayed within the nursery, including those which parents share from beyond the nursery. Children are beginning to develop their skills as confident individuals when they engage with visitors to the nursery.
- Most practitioners have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context in which families live. Practitioners treat all children fairly and with respect. They do not yet use data about children's progress to identify areas where children require support to make better progress. They are not yet providing targeted interventions for children with gaps in their learning. Practitioners do not yet have data about gaps in children's progress between cohorts of children. Practitioners need to gather data about the progress of children across the curriculum and towards their developmental milestones. They need to use this data to help them identify children who are not making good progress and plan appropriately to ensure all children make progress in their learning and development.

## 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.