Summarised inspection findings

Simpson Primary School Nursery Class

West Lothian Council

21 January 2025

Key contextual information

Simpson Primary School Nursery Class is based within an area of Simpson Primary School. The nursery comprises of a large playroom, a family room and access to a fenced outdoor space. There is a separate entrance and cloakroom area for children and their families. Children attend from the age of three until starting primary school. At the time of inspection, the roll was 91. The nursery is open the full year from 07.47 a.m. until 6.14 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 8.00 a.m. until 11.54 a.m. on a Friday. Children can attend the full year and access a range of half or full day sessions. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery and is the named manager. The depute headteacher has delegated responsibility for the day-to-day management of the nursery. The nursery team are supported by an Early Learning and Childcare Area Support Manager who has responsibility for management of the nursery during school holidays. The wider team includes two early years officers (EYOs), 11 early years practitioners and one pupil support worker.

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 welcome children into the nursery and create positive relationships with families. Children are beginning to understand and use language about their rights. Most children settle well and feel safe and secure. However, there are a few children who need more support to help them settle into the nursery. Practitioners need to review the learning environment and create cosy welcoming areas to suit the needs of younger children.

■ The majority of children are motivated and enjoy their play indoors and outdoors. They have time and space to make choices and engage in a variety of experiences provided by adults. A few children play for extended periods of time, particularly within the construction area indoors. Throughout the day children experience a mixture of free play and planned 'skill sessions'. EYOs should observe and evaluate these planned sessions to ensure they are meeting the needs of all children effectively.

■ Most practitioners are attentive and responsive in their interactions with individual children. There are daily opportunities to gather children's thoughts and support their learning responsively. However, at times, a minority of children do not sustain engagement in their learning. Practitioners should develop the environment to provide motivating and developmentally appropriate opportunities to stimulate and engage all learners. As a team, practitioners need to continue to develop their understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. This will help them to support, challenge and extend children's learning. Children use the interactive board to play number games and experiment with mark-making. Practitioners should continue to support children to develop their skills in digital technology.

Children enjoy periods of free play in the nursery. During this time, practitioners make observations and record children's experiences using photographs and comments in online journals. Parents comment positively on this information and appreciate knowing what their children are doing in nursery. However, this process does not always capture significant learning or show clearly the progress children are making. Practitioners should continue to develop how they observe and record children's significant learning. They need to use this to plan appropriate next steps in learning for individual children.

■ Practitioners plan responsively for children's learning using mind maps and floorbooks. They use children's interests to plan experiences across the curriculum. Practitioners know children well, especially in relation to their health and wellbeing. They use a local authority tracking system to monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. EYOs use this data successfully to identify and address gaps in learning. Practitioners should now use this information to inform planning for spaces, experiences and interactions to ensure appropriate progress in learning for all children.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

■ 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

■ Across the nursery, most children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. They enjoy looking at books and listening to stories, rhymes and songs. A minority of children talk to adults and each other and take part in conversations with confidence. A few children need greater support to express themselves. A few children show a good level of skill while attempting to write their name and other words. Practitioners need to provide more opportunities for children to develop their skills in mark-making through play.

■ Children are making satisfactory progress in mathematics. They are starting to show a greater understanding of shape, measurement and mathematical language as a result of a recent focus on mathematics and numeracy. This is beginning to impact positively on children's interest and understanding of mathematical concepts. They are beginning to use mathematical language appropriately during play. The majority of children can count to five with a few counting to ten and beyond. Practitioners should continue to embed experiences for mathematics into children's daily routines. This will help children to consolidate their skills and make better progress in all areas of mathematics.

■ The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They enjoy playing in the outdoor area and are developing skills using balance bikes and obstacle courses. Children are learning about eating healthy foods and keeping themselves safe. They are becoming more independent as they serve themselves at snack time. Practitioners should encourage children to take more responsibility during other playroom routines, for example putting on outdoor clothing. Children are learning about their emotions and are starting to talk about their feelings. There are a few children who need a greater level of interaction and support to help them make appropriate progress.

■ The majority of children are making satisfactory progress across most aspects of their learning and development. They enjoy problem solving as they create models in the construction area and are learning about planting and growing in the garden. Overall, children play well together and are learning to share resources and take turns. Children have freedom in the nursery and make choices about their play. They now need support to start to talk about their learning.

■ Practitioners share information about children's progress regularly with parents through online journals and organised parents' evenings. Children overall achieve very well in the nursery. Practitioners praise children's achievements in the nursery and encourage parents to share children's achievements from home.

■ The nursery staff team create a supportive and inclusive ethos where they treat children and parents with respect. The early years officers are proactive in identifying barriers to children's learning. They work closely with other agencies and plan helpful strategies to support children's progress. They should now ensure that they share this information and any agreed strategies with all practitioners to help provide consistent levels of support for all children.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Ineffective systems for recording and actioning child protection and wellbeing concerns meant there was potential for children to be at risk. Poor record keeping and significant gaps within chronologies, meant children's information was not being appropriately assessed and shared. Staff were unclear about child protection reporting procedures and who the identified lead person for child protection was in the service. We identified that improvement was needed to ensure that appropriate action would be taken to raise concerns with lead agencies in a timely manner (see requirement 1).

Most children benefitted from staff interactions which were warm, caring and responsive to their need for physical comfort and reassurance. As a result, this enabled positive relationships with staff to develop. Children experienced kind and gentle interactions during personal care which met their needs in a dignified and respectful manner.

Staff knew children well enabling them to meet their needs most of the time. Approaches to personal planning for children with additional support needs had been improved. As a result, most staff used individualised strategies to support children throughout their daily experiences. We encouraged the service to develop this to ensure that all children consistently experience personalised care and support.

Children experienced positive mealtimes as they sat with their friends, chatting, and eating together. Opportunities for independence around mealtimes helped children to build their confidence and life skills. Meals and snacks were healthy and nutritious, children had opportunities to understand the seed to plate concept through growing, harvesting and cooking their own food. Children's choice was promoted at snack times as they chose when to eat, limiting interruption to their play. We encouraged the service to carry out a review of the lunch time routine to enable children greater choice and flexibility on when to sit for lunch.

Children's health and wellbeing was not fully supported. Accident recording and reporting to families was inconsistent. Although following current local authority guidance and policy, children's asthma plans there was scope to enhance these to make them more personalised. This meant there was potential for children not to receive the right care at the right time. The provider was aware of the need for improvement and was working with other agencies to address this.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: weak

1.3 Play and learning

Children had choice as most resources were readily available across various play areas. However, there was scope to increase this for example, reviewing the art and craft area to allow children to access and mix their own paint. Children's free flow access to the outdoor space was impacted on as a result of the door remaining closed. This meant children required adult support to transition between these spaces which limited their independence and choice. This should be reviewed to enable children to fully explore all areas of the setting and lead their own play.

There were increased opportunities for parental involvement. They were now able to enter the building to collect children and spend time in the setting such as through 'fire pit' sessions and learning groups. In addition, parents views were actively sought through ongoing consultation

using the 'see saw' digital app and floor books. This enabled a shared approach to children's learning.

Children had opportunities to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy across the indoor environment. For example, through the repetition of words, singing, mark making, reading stories and the use of mathematical language and concepts within play. Some children were supported to explore their interests and extend their learning through responsive support from staff and the use of digital technology. However, this was not consistent for all children as at times, experiences were adult directed. This did not enable children to meaningfully lead their own play and learning.

The range and amount of resources for children enabled some exploration and extension of play. Whilst children enjoyed exploring, some children were disengaged for periods of time. Some play spaces were not resourced appropriately to meet children's developmental needs. There was a lack of cosy and quiet spaces for children to rest and relax. A review of resources and materials provided indoors and outdoors and creation of homely spaces would stimulate and challenge children and meet their wellbeing needs (see area for improvement 1).

Families also had opportunities to be involved in their child's online journals. These provided them with frequent personal updates on their child. However, the journals did not always record significant learning and relevant and meaningful next steps (see area for improvement 2).

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Staff were currently reviewing the vision, values and aims of the service to support a shared understanding. The setting should ensure they consult with children and families in the development of these to ensure their views are included and reflected.

Families had varied opportunities to provide feedback on the quality of the service, supporting their inclusion. This included discussions with staff, floor book feedback, questionnaires on different activities and family engagement sessions. This enabled families to influence practice which supported continued improvements.

Staff were involved in self-evaluation which enabled them to make improvements specific to their leadership roles. This contributed to children's development in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing. Self-evaluation should be further developed to ensure that reflections consistently have a positive impact on practice. Quality assurance processes had some positive impact for example, two requirements and an area for improvement identified at the last inspection had been met. However, there were gaps in the areas covered by the quality assurance systems. For example, there was no effective system in place to record, monitor or review child protection and wellbeing concerns. A lack of monitoring of the quality of children's experiences and staff interactions meant that inconsistencies in practice had not been identified by leaders. As a result, not all children experienced high quality care, play and learning (see area for improvement 3).

Relevant notifications had not been submitted to the Care Inspectorate in a timely manner in line with guidance to support safe practice (see area for improvement 4).

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

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.