

# Summarised inspection findings

**Abbotswell School nursery class (primary  
school nursery class)**

**Aberdeen City Council**

**SEED No: 5237521**

**13 February 2018**

### 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.

- Working with parents and children, practitioners and teachers have revised and refreshed the vision, values and aims, taking into account the early years setting within the school. These aims and values reflect the unique context of the setting. Helpfully, practitioners have written a statement of the values and aims in language that very young children can understand. They have used illustrations of these values and aims in action to share with children and their parents. As a result, the vision, values and aims are relevant to all within the setting, and help to drive the positive ethos and expectations.
- The work of the setting is embedded within the school improvement plan. For example, a focus on outdoor learning has improved learning experiences for children in the spacious outdoor area. Additionally, practitioners identify areas for improvement within the setting that focus on developing the learning environment and children's experiences. Improvements are recorded and regularly reviewed. We discussed with practitioners how this start to using self-evaluation should be developed further, to include the impact on children's learning. Led by senior leaders, practitioners need to plan a more systematic, rigorous approach to self-evaluation. Using national frameworks and guidance such as *How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?* and *Building the Ambition* will ensure their practice develops further in line with national expectations. Regular input by senior leaders to more closely monitor the impact of change will support the setting on its journey of improvement.
- Practitioners have worked hard to develop positive teamwork over the past year. Led by the nursery teacher and the senior early years practitioner, long established and more recent members of the staff team work together well. They have established a positive environment for learning within the new facility. Practitioners are reflective and strive to improve the layout of the learning environment to reflect the changing needs of the children.
- Practitioners make occasional visits to local nurseries to share good practice. They would benefit from further focused opportunities to look outwards to observe practice and to work with others to moderate their expectations of children's learning across the curriculum. Practitioners access career-long professional learning and development opportunities which support them to refine their service for children. This often results in interested practitioners leading new initiatives. We discussed with practitioners that, building on this energy and enthusiasm, a more strategic approach to devolving leadership roles should now be developed, in order to better reflect the priorities in the improvement plan.



## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences 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.

- The majority of children engage well in a range of experiences which encourage their independence. The introduction of loose parts play encourages them to be imaginative as they build structures with boxes. Practitioners are responsive to children's interests and this helps shape the direction of learning. In order for children to play a greater role in leading their own learning, a language of learning now needs to be developed. The introduction of learning conversations would enable children to make a connection between what they are doing and what they are learning. We discussed with practitioners that conversations with individual children and in small group sessions should be developed to provide focused opportunities for children to reflect on and talk about their learning.
- Practitioners are caring and supportive as they interact with children. They know them very well and understand the particular needs of the many children who require additional support. In the best examples, practitioners listen attentively to children and support them in developing their language skills. We discussed with practitioners the importance of allowing children thinking time to respond to questions. In a few examples, skilled questioning promotes curiosity to support learning. It would be useful to build on these positive examples in order to develop a consistent approach. There are examples of children using digital technology well e.g. using the interactive board and tablet computer. There is scope to develop further the use of digital technology to enhance children's learning.
- Children's voice is evident in the setting. They are regularly consulted about what they would like to learn. Practitioners encourage children to record their knowledge and what they would like to learn on mind maps. Further development of the 'learning wall' approach will provide more opportunities for children to revisit and build on their prior learning. Children have access to the outdoors where they explore their world and also take part in energetic play. We discussed with practitioners that there is scope for the indoor and outdoor environments to be improved to further enrich children's experiences. This includes by providing more open-ended, natural resources to encourage more creative and challenging learning experiences. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop cosy spaces, stimulating, interactive displays and more defined areas to encourage and support children's learning across the curriculum.
- Practitioners have regular planning meetings where they share knowledge of children's progress. They plan core learning experiences to support children's development of skills and knowledge. They record individual children's progress in interactive learning diaries,

based on regular observations. The quality of these observations is inconsistent. All observations should focus on the learning that is taking place and identify next steps in learning, as appropriate. Currently, practitioners focus on a few children each week, taking a close look at their learning and progress. They share this information with parents. This interactive approach ensures the majority of parents are active participants in their children's learning. We discussed with practitioners the need for their records of children's learning and progress to now become more accessible for children. To be of maximum effect, these records should be developed as a tool for children to recall their previous learning and to talk about their own progress and next steps.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners are responsive to children's interests and use these well to plan learning across the curriculum. Practitioners maintain an overview of the experiences and outcomes which children encounter over their time in the setting and wider life of the school, which helps to provide a balance of learning experiences. There is scope to enhance learning further by reflecting on the principles of curriculum design, with a particular focus on challenge and learning in depth.
- Practitioners continue to improve the learning environment to allow children more opportunities to independently access a range of experiences across the curriculum. Professional learning activities have helped practitioners to take this forward. Time should now be spent evaluating the impact of new developments on children's learning and development. As planned, practitioners should build on this approach across the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- Whilst there are opportunities for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across their learning, there is considerable scope to develop this further. Practitioners need to ensure all children, and in particular higher-achieving children, are provided with appropriate challenge in learning.
- Practitioners make good use of resources within the school, such as for physical education, music and using the library. They are developing children's awareness of road safety with a view to taking children outdoors beyond the school to develop their understanding and exploration of the world around them. Practitioners use their local community to provide real-life contexts for children to apply and develop their skills. For example, a walk around the area helps to promote road safety skills. As planned, extended use of the local community and visitors to the nursery will help to enrich children's learning.

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

- Regular involvement of parents supports children's learning and development at home and in the setting. Parents are kept informed about their child's progress through a range of informal and planned opportunities for discussion. Parents have access to children's online individual learning journals where they can make comments and share learning from home. This helps to nurture the close relationships between home and the setting and ensures practitioners have secure knowledge of children and their families. Parents demonstrate their interest and involvement in the life of the setting when they participate in the very well attended 'stay and play' sessions and support outings in the community. The very interesting nursery blog and informative display boards give families a good understanding of the range of experiences their children participate in. A parents' comment book is also regularly used to make suggestions about learning. Children take part in 'home learning challenges' and share these with their peers. Overall there is a strong ethos of welcoming, inclusive relationships across the entire early years community.

## 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

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.

- Within the setting there is a welcoming and friendly ethos. Children and families are valued for the contributions they make and are encouraged to share their views. Parents' suggestions are actively sought and used to help evaluate the service and to make improvements. Practitioners understand the importance of strong relationships in creating a positive climate for learning. They know each child well and all share in the responsibility for creating a respectful ethos and sense of community.
- Practitioners have established warm and caring relationships with children. They respond to them sensitively, giving attention to their emotions. This is helping children to begin to develop their resilience and understanding of their own feelings. Practitioners have worked well to establish a shared understanding of the wellbeing indicators. As part of this work, they have sought the views of parents to find out about their understanding of children's wellbeing at nursery. We have asked practitioners to continue with this work to help children develop the language with which to express their experiences and feelings. This will also support children to build relationships with each other.
- Positive behaviour is promoted well by encouraging children to develop respectful relationships and be aware of the needs of others. As a result, most children are able to play together co-operatively or alongside each other. They are supported to share resources fairly and to negotiate this independently, where their stage of development allows. When necessary, practitioners intervene in a way that is restorative and is respectful of children's feelings.
- Children are actively involved in making decisions during their time in the setting. They influence planning by making choices about what they would like to learn and vote for snack suggestions. Practitioners are effective in capturing the children's voice throughout their learning and in displaying this to share with families and others. They listen well to children which results in them becoming confident individuals who approach practitioners for help and to communicate their needs.
- The team of practitioners are reflective about their practice and are keen to continue to improve outcomes for children and families. They undertake professional learning tailored to the needs of the children and to further their own understanding and knowledge. Practitioners keep up to date with important developments in early learning and childcare in order to fulfil their statutory duties. In particular, they are mindful of their responsibility to promote children's health, safety and wellbeing. Practitioners effectively identify where

children may require additional support with their learning and make links with the relevant external agencies to support them across their development.

- Practitioners are aware of their responsibility to promote inclusion and equity in their work. They value diversity and encourage children to learn about a range of cultures. Practitioners understand the circumstances of individual children and families and use this knowledge effectively to help promote their participation. Planned, targeted interventions support children to make improved progress in their learning. As these develop, it will be important to evidence over time the link between improved approaches and the progress of particular groups of children.

### 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.

- Most children are making satisfactory progress in early language and communication. The majority of children converse with each other during play and can communicate their needs. A few children enjoy sharing stories with each other and discussing the characters. The majority of children show an interest in mark making and are developing these skills as they create pictures and pieces of artwork. A few children are beginning to form letters and words that are important to them. We have asked practitioners to review and continue to improve opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills in early language, communication and early writing.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. The majority of children count as they make playdough cupcakes and prepare snack. They are developing their number recognition skills through use of games on the interactive whiteboard with a few children confident in ordering numbers to ten without support. Children are developing their understanding of mathematical language as they fill and pour at the sensory play station. A few children show an interest in using measuring tapes to measure objects around the playroom. We have asked practitioners to review the learning environment to improve opportunities for children to develop and apply these skills throughout their play.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing their understanding of how to make healthy choices and show confidence in routines such as brushing their teeth. Most are developing self-help skills such as dressing themselves to go outside and are learning the rules of good hygiene. Children are developing their physical skills well through planned sessions and playing outdoors. The majority of children demonstrate an awareness of the needs of others and their own feelings. We have asked practitioners to consider how to build on children's understanding of emotions to support those who find this more challenging.
- Children attend regular music sessions and enjoy taking part in group song activities. A few children show confidence in their singing ability and are confident to lead the group and demonstrate the actions. Children are interested in different musical instruments and keen to experiment with the sounds they make.

- Children’s achievements from home are celebrated within the nursery and displayed on the ‘wow’ wall. We discussed with practitioners the scope to give children more opportunities for leadership and achievement. For example, they could with adult support, plan, resource and look after areas within the learning environment. This will also help children to develop a sense of responsibility and apply their decision-making skills in a relevant and meaningful context.
  
- We discussed with practitioners that, in addition to the work already in place, there is now scope to promote more challenge and depth across learning, to ensure appropriate progression for all children. As they continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of national benchmarks for the early level of Curriculum for Excellence, practitioners will have a better understanding of children’s progress in line with national expectations.

## Setting choice of QI : 2.2 Curriculum

### Theme: Rationale of the curriculum

- Inspectors are in full agreement with the school that the curriculum needs to be updated to reflect fully the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. The school is taking forward steps to revise and update its curriculum rationale to better reflect its local context, and this is well documented within their improvement planning processes. Effective consultation with children and parents is ensuring that the new vision, values and aims for Abbotswell School and nursery class is informing the refreshed curriculum rationale, reflecting the needs and aspirations of the school community. An important next step for staff and practitioners will be to shape the results of this consultation into a shared rationale for the curriculum, which also takes full account of learners' entitlements and includes national priorities such as Developing the Young Workforce.
- A strategic overview of the curriculum is needed to support further implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. This needs to outline what is to be taken forward and when, to ensure a well-informed and brisk pace of change. This strategic overview should clarify for staff and practitioners how their role in planning the curriculum contributes to the totality of children's learning. Time needs to be protected for the staff team to develop a shared and consistent understanding of the key features of, for example, literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across learning. The school should continue to refresh and review the curriculum by ensuring systemic, rigorous and outward-looking use of an appropriate range of professional learning and self-evaluation activities. To increase the impact of change, the school's current self-evaluation approaches need to align more closely with and focus on key priorities, such as closing the attainment gap.
- School leaders acknowledge that there should be improved skills progression pathways for all learners and better opportunities for children to build on prior learning as they move through the nursery and stages of the school. Within the development of their curriculum rationale, staff and practitioners should collaborate to consider how best to plan children's learning across the four contexts for learning. This should include reviewing the school's interdisciplinary learning approaches, to move away from a purely topic-based approach. Currently at individual class level, the majority of children have the opportunity to learn through cross-cutting themes such as enterprise and creativity. There is now an opportunity to build on this practice to incorporate these important skills for learning, life and work on a planned basis across the curriculum.

## 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.

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