

Summarised inspection findings

Dunnottar School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

7 February 2023

Key contextual information

Dunnottar nursery class is located within the Carronhill School campus, approximately one mile from Dunnottar School. The current nursery roll is 18, with a maximum of 16 children aged three and over registered to attend at any one time. The small playroom has timetabled access to a secure outdoor area. There is no staffroom or additional areas. The team of six full and part-time staff are well established. The team includes a newly created post of early years senior practitioner (EYSP) which was filled over a year ago. The EYSP works in close partnership with the headteacher to lead the work of the nursery team. Expansion of the service to provide 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) means the session now runs from 8.40 am to 2.40 pm each day. Changes to provision include providing lunch for children.

There have been plans, over many years, to build a new nursery class. These plans have been subject to delay. There are important plans within the current provision to create direct access to a dedicated outdoor space. Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estates Team is developing plans to build a new Dunnottar School with a provisional completion date of 2025. This will include provision for the nursery class.

The team provided support for children and families during periods of remote learning. They implemented many changes to their practice in line with national guidance. Practitioners report that the impact of COVID-19 was particularly evident for children last academic session. The team observed the impact of delays to children accessing support, interruptions to learning and increased time needed to settle children and support them to follow routines. The team note this has improved this term. A few children are taking up an additional year of funded year of ELC.

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

- Across the setting, children benefit from consistently nurturing interactions. All practitioners work effectively together. The staff team respect and value all children and are good role models. Children feel secure in their play, indoors and outdoors, due to the consistently positive and supportive learning environment. Practitioners ensure children understand and can follow the well-established routines of the day. The team use praise well to reinforce positive behaviour, encourage good manners and recognise achievements. There is a calm, purposeful and relaxed atmosphere throughout almost all of the day.
- Practitioners have a good understanding of the needs and interests of all children. Staff use their position in the room, eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice well to show their attention to and value for children's ideas. The team adapt their vocabulary or commentary well to support individual children to explore their ideas further. A few practitioners should develop further their use of higher order questioning techniques. This will support children to explore their questions about the 'possibilities of puddles' or how digital devices work in more depth.

- The team are skilled in noticing and anticipating what is important or tricky for children. Practitioners use this knowledge effectively to inform when to join in with, or take time to observe, children's play. They provide well-judged levels of support and encouragement. The team have adapted their practice to provide a better balance between adult and child-initiated learning. This means children develop their own ideas, are increasingly confident and learning experiences are more meaningful to children.
- The EYSP has introduced new approaches to the planning of experiences and spaces. This new approach has improved the quality and relevance of learning experiences. Practitioners take forward children's individual interests and build increasingly on prior learning and skills. As the team implement their new approaches, practitioners should continue to reflect on the depth and challenge children experience across their learning. The team have improved the quality and focus of their observations of children's learning. Observations are now personalised to each child, include significant learning and include more comments and reflections from children about their learning. A few parents comment share, comments about their child's progress. Practitioners should continue to develop how they work with children and parents to identify, follow up and evaluate next steps in learning.
- The headteacher and EYSP use the local authority tracking tools well to review and evaluate individual children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The team should continue to interrogate systems to ensure they build on children's strengths and reflect the development of the whole child. Practitioners should build their skills and confidence in using assessment to inform how they plan for learning as well as to track and monitor children's progress.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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 developing a keen interest in mark making. They communicate in their own way to represent their ideas in floorbooks, displays and as they reflect on experiences in their community. A few children form recognisable letters and confidently write their name and familiar words. Children enjoy writing for a purpose as they post letters home to their family. A few children enjoy sharing books independently or join in with a song or story. A few older children are ready for more challenging opportunities to apply and develop further their skills. This will support them to explore their big questions and theories about how things work in more depth and apply their skills.
- Children are making good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Children estimate and count for a purpose as they prepare snack and lunch. A few children sort, order and compare objects using their own criteria. Children are beginning to use the language of volume appropriately as they explore their interest in water. A few children compare the height of towers they have made in the construction area. A few children are ready for more challenging experiences to apply and develop further a wider range of early numeracy and mathematics skills.
- Children understand how to keep their bodies healthy and are beginning to explore their own and other children's feelings and emotions well. Most children are caring, kind and respectful to others. Children are learning how to be patient and to share time and space appropriate to their stage of development. A small group of children co-operate and persevere well to construct a large model of a car outdoors. Children work together to create a picture together at the art area. Almost all children are very independent as they quickly get themselves ready for outdoor play. Children are proud of themselves as they set up and clean up after snack and lunch. They develop their gross motor skills well as they challenge themselves to transport heavy materials or use tools to explore ice. Most children persevere and are determined as they use their imagination to make models using recycled and natural materials. Practitioners reinforce the language of wellbeing when relevant for children. A few children would benefit from more progressive experiences to explore the full range of wellbeing indicators.
- Staff are sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of all children. Respect for children is evident in the work of the team. Practitioners work with children individually, and in effective partnerships with visiting professionals to improve language and communication. This supports children to communicate their own ideas using visual prompts or increase their

vocabulary. The team should develop further their use of data to evaluate the impact of existing targeted interventions and to help inform any group or individual work to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

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.