

# Summarised inspection findings

**Banchory Primary School and Nursery Class**

Aberdeenshire Council

14 March 2023

## Key contextual information

Banchory Primary School Nursery is a separate building within the grounds of Banchory Primary School. Children benefit from three large playrooms with a small sensory room. Children have direct access to an extensive and very attractive, self-contained outdoor area. Children attend from the age of three until starting school. The setting provides places for 40 children at any one time. Currently there are 78 children attending over the week. Children can attend during term time or over 50 weeks with places offered between 8 am and 6 pm. The nursery has experienced challenges over the last few years including an extensive refurbishment of the nursery building, storm damage, periods of staff absence and significant changes to the staff team.

### 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

- The nursery has a well-established vision, value and aims that reflect practitioner's understanding of how children learn through play. Practitioners are developing their skills in supporting the value of 'wonder' about. The team recognises that it would be timely to review the values to ensure they fully reflect practice and the aspirations of everyone involved with the nursery. This review should involve parents and carers and carefully reflect the views of children.
- The senior practitioner took up post immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic and has overall responsibility for the nursery. Two lead practitioners and the wider practitioner team support her. The staff team have experienced significant changes over the last few years and this has had an impact on the pace of change. The current team is still being established as a result of recent recruitment. It will be important to now establish clear roles and responsibilities, particularly for the leadership team. The senior practitioner has managed the challenges well during refurbishment of the nursery building, the pandemic, temporary relocation and staff absences. This has minimised impact on children's experiences. She is passionate about promoting positive outcomes for children, is ambitious and highly motivated to develop and improve the work of the nursery. The senior practitioner has developed a cohesive team who work well together. She is highly visible and takes a lead role in all aspects of the nursery. Her own professional learning is having a clear influence and impact on her plans for improvement. This vision now needs to be realised in practice to improve outcomes for children. School senior leaders need to be more active in and ensure the nursery is fully included in the life of the school community.
- Practitioners participate in a range of professional learning that reflects their interests and stage of their career. This includes studying for initial and further qualifications. Practitioners are enthusiastic about their learning, often putting it into practice immediately, for example, supporting quality block play. This is having a positive impact on children's experiences.

Professional learning should now be more strategically planned to ensure it more clearly links to identified areas for improvement.

- With the visiting principal teacher, the senior practitioner has created a plan for improvement. This contains appropriate priorities, identified by reflecting on the overall quality of provision. These priorities now need to have a simple and achievable action plan to ensure actions impact positively to improve outcomes for children. The senior practitioner is encouraging practitioners to be involved in identifying and leading priorities. This is at an early stage of development but is beginning to develop shared responsibility across the team for ongoing developments. Moving forward everyone involved with the nursery, including senior leaders, should be involved in identifying what needs to improve in the nursery.
- Practitioners reflect on the quality of the provision and are at the early stages of using self-evaluation tools to help them reflect on the quality of experiences they provide. As planned, the senior practitioner, should continue to support practitioners to develop their understanding of what high quality early learning and childcare (ELC) is. This should include an outward looking approach that motivates and inspires practitioners to deliver high quality ELC.

## 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 are committed to ensuring a welcoming, positive, and nurturing environment which supports children to feel valued, safe and secure. Practitioners take time to gather valuable information from parents as children start at the setting. This helps children to settle in well. Children are kind and caring towards each other as they play together.
- Most children are engaged in and enjoy learning as they choose from the indoors and outdoors resources available. A few children move from area to area without being involved in purposeful play. Practitioners do not always identify this and opportunities to engage children in more purposeful play are at times missed. They should improve observations of children at play to capture this more effectively.
- Children have free access to the extensive outdoor play space. This area provides opportunities for children to develop curiosity, resilience and independence as they explore the interesting environment.
- A keyworker system is in place, which allows practitioners to know children as individuals. Practitioners should now use this knowledge to consider how their interventions can support children to learn more effectively. They should build on children's strengths and experiences more consistently to more effectively build on prior knowledge.
- Practitioners are using a variety of approaches such as learning walls and floorbooks to plan and record children's learning. They engage in professional dialogue to plan learning experiences for all children to access within the setting. Practitioners now need to plan more effectively to respond to children's interests and give them more opportunities to lead, develop and deepen their learning.
- Until the start of this term practitioners made observations about each child's learning and recorded them in an online learning journal. Practitioners have recently started using a narrative approach to record focused observations in individual learning folders. This is at the initial stages. Practitioners need to strengthen this approach by documenting evidence of progress and identify clear next steps in learning for all children. At present children are not yet using their learning folder to meaningfully reflect on their learning.
- Tracking and monitoring of children's learning is at the very early stages of development, and this should be improved and built on. The senior practitioner has recently introduced a system for practitioners to summarise termly children's progress in core areas of the curriculum. Practitioners should now consider how parents and children are able to reflect and to contribute to discussions about progress.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Children learn and develop through a range of play experiences. They have access to an extensive natural outdoors space and varied experiences indoors. It is important to ensure that all play spaces remain inviting and high-quality throughout the day. As practitioners continue to develop their practice, it will be helpful to use national practice guidance, Realising the Ambition: Being Me to support and develop their understanding of quality experiences across the curriculum.
- Practitioners are at the earliest stages of using developmental pathways to support progression in children's learning. As the team develop a clearer understanding of early literacy and numeracy development this will support them to deliver higher quality experiences for children. Practitioners should use the principles of curriculum design to increase depth and challenge in learning for all children. Effective use of a Curriculum for Excellence overview would enable practitioners to plan for breadth in learning across all curriculum areas.
- Transitions into nursery are flexible and adapted to meet the needs of the children. As the team continue to strengthen their processes to record children's learning this will provide meaningful information to support transition to P1.

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

- Practitioners work well in partnership with families. Parents appreciate the support given to their child and to the family as a whole. Recently, practitioners held a workshop for parents to share how children learn through play. Parents value the opportunity to 'stay and play' which provides a valuable insight into their child's nursery experiences. They enjoy and benefit from opportunities to meet with other families, for example, the festive open day and Christmas café. Practitioners should progress their plans to restart a parent focus group. This will empower parents to more involved in decision making and self-evaluation.
- Parents are kept up to date with regular communication including termly newsletters and a closed social media page. As practitioners develop the documentation of children's learning they should consider how families can contribute to this. This will also help keep parents up to date with the progress children are making in their learning as a result of their nursery experiences.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

- The setting 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 setting 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

- Practitioners model positive interactions with each other and encourage children to be kind and respectful to each other. As a result, there is a culture of trust and respect that promotes and supports wellbeing. Practitioners are beginning to record children's comments and thoughts, for example, in displays and floorbooks. As this develops it will help children recognise the importance of their views and engage them in decisions that affect them. Children have the capacity to take on more responsibility, for example, in leadership roles and contributing to the life of the nursery.
- Children are becoming more aware of the importance of their own wellbeing. Recently, focused sessions, such as 'Mindful Mondays' are introducing children to strategies to help them relax and self-regulate. Practitioners encourage children to be very physically active, for example through dance and challenging physical play, such as controlling their body on the zip wire. Children are also developing an awareness of the needs and importance of the wellbeing of others through intergenerational links in the local community.
- Children are at the early stages of developing an understanding of the national wellbeing indicators. Practitioners have identified this as a priority for improvement. They are developing strategies and using language that encourages children to be responsible within the nursery environment, including respecting resources. As planned, children should develop and apply their understanding of the indicators in different contexts.
- Practitioners are aware of, and comply with, statutory requirements in relation to ELC. They are clear about their responsibilities for keeping children safe. Each child has an individual plan, which outlines care and health needs. Children who have barriers to their learning or health needs have additional plans to ensure practitioners are clear about how best to support them. Practitioners work effectively with families and other professionals to help children get the support they need to help them make the best possible progress.
- Practitioners have developed approaches to deliver improved experiences at snack, lunch and supper. As a result, children can choose when they eat and benefit from relaxed and unhurried mealtimes. Children are developing independence through routines such as serving themselves, baking bread daily and being responsible for clearing the table. They try new foods and are developing an awareness of healthy food choices. Children could be more consistently involved in preparing snacks for themselves and others as practitioners continue to develop the quality of children's eating experiences.
- Practitioners have created a very inclusive ethos where each child benefits from being celebrated as an individual. They promote equity for all with everyone treated fairly and with respect. Practitioners should introduce children to a broader range of diversity that values and celebrates the richness of the nursery community in a meaningful way.



### 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

- Children are making satisfactory progress in early language and communication skills. The majority of children can talk confidently about their experiences to adults and other children. Children take part in sharing stories and poems with adults and each other. The majority of children are exploring letters and sounds in their name. Children are capable of making increased progress in literacy that builds on the skills and knowledge they bring to nursery.
- In numeracy and mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress. Children use numbers in simple songs and rhymes and can apply early numeracy skills as they count in routines and play. They use appropriate language when comparing the sizes of blocks as they build complex structures. Practitioners should develop the breadth of children's mathematical experiences across all areas of the setting. This will support children to make the progress they are capable of in all aspects of mathematics.
- Work to support children's health and wellbeing is a focus within the setting. Almost all children enjoy exploring the outdoor play space where there are exciting opportunities to develop gross motor skills as they navigate different terrain and equipment. Children are encouraged to participate in a range of physical activities indoors and outdoors, including 'Workout Wednesdays' and 'Fitness Fridays'. Children are aware of the benefits of basic hygiene routines such as handwashing.
- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in their learning for their age and stage of development. However, a minority of children could make better progress across a broader range of experiences. As learning and developmental pathways for core subjects develop this will help practitioners have a clearer understanding of children's progress in their learning.
- Children have experiences of growing a wide range of produce and benefit from sharing their harvest with families and the wider community. Through a recent collection for the local foodbank, children learned about the needs of others in the community. Children could be achieving more through a wider range of experiences as citizens of the local community and Scotland.
- As the information available about children's progress develops, practitioners should make full use of this in planning purposeful play. This includes using data related to socio-economic context to support closing any poverty related attainment gap. Information

should support practitioners to identify where planned strategies may be required. This will support and maximise children’s learning and development and support them to make the progress of which they are capable.

## 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.