

Summarised inspection findings

Papa Westray Community School Nursery Class

Orkney Islands Council

25 June 2024

Key contextual information

Papa Westray Community School is on the island of Papa Westray, Orkney and includes a nursery class. The original 'peedie' (small) island school was established in 1877 and the community school opened in 2002. The current population on the island is approximately 70.

The nursery opened in 2022 and is registered for four children aged from two until starting primary school. The current roll is three. All children currently attending are aged three and over. Current staffing consists of a lead practitioner who has been in post for two years and a temporary part-time practitioner. The lead practitioner is often a lone worker in the nursery playroom.

The school has experienced three changes of headteacher since 2022/23 which has resulted in an unsettling time for staff. The current acting headteacher has been in post since October 2023 and will remain in post until the end of the summer term 2024. The local authority is currently recruiting for a headteacher.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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

- In her short time in post, the acting headteacher has worked extremely hard to develop positive relationships with all staff, children and families. She has made a determined effort to understand island life and the community in which she works. All staff and parents value this. The lead practitioner has created a welcoming ethos for children and their families and knows and understands the island community and children's needs very well.
- The nursery shares the school's vision, values and aims. The acting headteacher and lead practitioner recognise that these should be reviewed and amended to better reflect the unique context of the island school and nursery. Moving forward, the new vision, values and aims should be co-created and reflect the unique context of the school and nursery.
- The lead practitioner has a significant role in leading the nursery on a day-to-day basis. She welcomes and appreciates the support she receives from the acting headteacher and local authority officers to assist her in her role. The small nursery team work very well together and use each other's skills, knowledge and experience to provide children with quality learning experiences. They use weekly opportunities for professional dialogue and reflection to reflect on children's experiences and to discuss children's progress and possible next steps.
- All practitioners value professional learning opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve practice. This has been particularly effective in supporting practitioners to improve the quality of their interactions with children. The lead practitioner and acting headteacher attend training sessions together to support a shared understanding of play pedagogy across the early level. The lead practitioner looks outwards to other island settings to identify and share

good practice. She has used all of these experiences to deepen her knowledge and understanding of research and current thinking in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). As a result, children are thriving and making very good progress in their learning.

- In her two years in the setting, the lead practitioner, along with practitioners has made several effective changes. This includes significant improvements to the quality of learning spaces. As a result, children access attractive and well-considered learning spaces. The lead practitioner records self-evaluation activities within a floorbook to demonstrate what is working well and improvements that could be made. It will be important to record consistently, the impact of change on improving outcomes for children. Building on this good practice, the lead practitioner should seek ways to ensure self-evaluation becomes a consistent feature of practice. In doing so, she should increase opportunities to gather the views of all stakeholders to support the continuous improvement of the nursery.
- The lead practitioner has been involved in identifying key priorities to support early level transitions and play pedagogy across the early level. She has worked collaboratively with the acting headteacher to improve the quality of play within the school. Moving forward, the nursery team would benefit from consistent strategic leadership to support and guide the work of the nursery. This should be done in partnership with the lead practitioner to build on the very good practice within the nursery.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to children's rights. They encourage and support children to make choices and decisions and influence the flow of their day. Children benefit from positive, nurturing and respectful relationships with practitioners and each other. They are happy, settled and confident within the setting. Children play well together and demonstrate care and kindness to each other.
- Children engage very well with the wide range of well-considered learning spaces and experiences which reflect children's stage of development. They provide sensory and open-ended experiences and provocations which encourage and support children to be inquisitive. As a result of rich learning experiences, children sustain interest for extended periods of time.
- During walks on the island, children explore vast pieces of land, navigate different terrains and spot wildlife. Practitioners encourage children to 'notice' the richness of their island by observing seasonal change. Children visit the local gardens where produce is grown for the local shop. They are curious and learn about the different fruits, herbs and vegetables grown by the market gardener.
- Practitioners' unhurried approach provides children with time and space to explore and develop their ideas over time. All practitioners skilfully use commentary and well-considered questions to develop children's thinking time and to deepen their learning without interrupting their play.
- Practitioners use digital technology meaningfully to help answer children's questions and deepen their learning about their interests. Moving forward, practitioners should look at ways to use a wider range of digital technology that supports their pedagogy. It will be important to help children to develop further their skills in using digital technology for a variety of purposes.
- Practitioners have a deep knowledge of individual children. They observe children closely as they play and make 'peedie' notes of conversations and the learning taking place. Practitioners also use more focused observations to create individual learning stories. These detailed stories identify key features of children's play, children's developing skills and possible next steps in learning. Children are proud of their individual learning journeys and explore them along with practitioners and their peers to reflect on their learning. Practitioners also record children's experiences in online profiles which parents access, giving them a helpful insight into their child's day and learning. The lead practitioner is beginning to engage with staff from other 'peedie' ELC settings to reach a shared understanding of children's progress.
- Practitioners are highly responsive to each child's interests and ideas and support children's involvement very well through their considered planning process. They use their observations

meaningfully to plan for learning spaces and children's experiences. This supports children very well to develop their ideas and deepen their learning. Practitioners plan occasional group times where children come together to focus on developing specific skills related to key areas of learning. This enables practitioners to provide support which is tailored to meet the needs of individual children.

- Practitioners make effective use of 'Peedie Pebbles' which is a local authority tool to identify key skills for children to develop within nursery. They use this well to track children's progress and to identify next steps in learning. Since taking up her post, the acting headteacher meets with the lead practitioner to discuss the progress children are making. Building on this good practice, practitioners should check on children's progress at more regular points in the year. This will help practitioners to identify clearly any potential gaps in children's learning where focused planning would support children to make the progress they are capable of.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum is firmly based on play. Practitioners ensure children have a broad range of experiences across the curriculum through their well thought out continuous provision and curriculum planning. They track this effectively using the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence. Children have the opportunity to develop early literacy and numeracy skills through meaningful indoor and outdoor experiences. Practitioners ensure children's experiences are matched to their interests, learning needs and stage of development. Their planning of the learning environment and children's experiences is flexible and highly responsive to enable children to develop their interests and lead their play.
- Practitioners make good use of community partners to enrich the curriculum. For example, the local shop, market gardener and emergency and health services. They should continue to extend the range of partners and parents involved that can share their skills, knowledge and talents with children. This will broaden and deepen children's learning about their island, wider community and the world of work.
- Children and families are supported very well during transition into the nursery. Practitioners are aware of children's emotional needs during this time. They work closely with parents to ensure the transition into nursery is tailored and at an appropriate pace to meets the needs of individual children. The lead practitioner ensures key information is shared on children's progress to enable children to make a smooth transition from nursery into school. As identified, they should consider ways to improve further, the transition process that builds gradually over the year to support children moving into P1.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners ensure parents are informed regularly about their child's nursery experience and their progress in learning. Parents are at ease within the setting and take time daily to talk with practitioners about their child's day and ask any questions. Practitioners use an online platform to share more detailed information with parents on the learning experiences their children have engaged with.
- Twice a year, practitioners meet with parents to update children's personal plans and provide detailed information on the progress their children are making in their learning. Parents are very positive about the work of the nursery. Practitioners should continue to consider ways to increase opportunities for children and their families to play and learn together within the setting and at home.

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

very 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

- Positive relationships, nurture and the wellbeing of children sits at the heart of practitioners' work. They view children as unique individuals with their own personalities, interests and needs. Practitioners plan learning spaces thoughtfully taking account of each child as an individual. Children use the attractive spaces to have quiet times in their own space to rest when required. They often choose to use these spaces when they first come into nursery in the morning. Children enjoy this peaceful and relaxed start to their day as they engage in discussions as a small group or listen to stories.
- Due to the small numbers in the setting, children have firm friendships with each other. Practitioners are very good role models for children and demonstrate empathy, kindness and respect for each other and the children. They notice small changes in children and respond positively to offer extra care and attention. Children are comfortable and confident to make their needs known to familiar adults. Practitioners make very effective use of restorative approaches in a developmentally appropriate way to help children resolve their minor differences. Children assess and manage risk and will talk confidently about how to be safe and keep others safe.
- All staff within the school ensure children's mealtimes are calm and relaxed. Everyone, including visitors, eat together. This offers children the opportunity to sit with their siblings and children from the school, giving lunchtime a 'family feel.' Children are independent and demonstrate good manners as a result of positive role models from all staff and older children.
- The acting headteacher and practitioners are aware of statutory requirements and codes of practice in relation to ELC. All mandatory training has been undertaken. Practitioners update children's personal plans regularly to ensure children's health, care and welfare needs continue to be met. They do this in partnership with parents.
- Practitioners have created an ethos where all children are welcomed, included and nurtured. They treat all those connected with the nursery fairly and with respect. Practitioners value diversity and ensure children develop an awareness of the world in which they live. They do this very well through relevant stories and the use of technology to enable children to 'find out' about life outwith their island. Practitioners are aware of and understand the necessary planning required to ensure children who may require additional support, experience no barriers to learning. The lead practitioner has been proactive in accessing professional learning which provide her with the necessary skills and knowledge to support specific learning needs.

3.2 Securing children's progress

very good

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

- Due to the small number of children attending the setting and their different stages of development, their progress will be expressed using overall statements.
- Overall, children make very good progress in early communication, language and literacy. Children listen attentively to stories. They predict what might happen next and ask relevant questions to help their understanding. Children use extended vocabulary beyond expectations for their stage of development. They are beginning to explore letter sounds and can identify other words beginning with the same sound. Children should be supported through increased opportunities, to explore rhyme and rhyming words. They regularly mark-make and 'write' for a purpose when making signs around the setting and price lists. Children understand that print has meaning.
- In early numeracy and mathematics, overall, children make very good progress. They explore two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects when using blocks and open-ended materials. Children copy and continue patterns using natural materials. During play and routines, they confidently count and identify amounts up to four without counting out one for one. Children could be supported to extend further their skills in using number and number processes relevant to their stage of development. They use relevant mathematical language in the correct context when comparing height, weight and length. During snack preparation, children are beginning to explore how they can share out items and split a whole piece of fruit into smaller parts. Children are becoming familiar with how to use money and its value through pretend and real-life situations such as the shop or café. They explore the concept of time through the visual routine. This gives children confidence in knowing what happens next and when different adults will be working within the setting.
- Overall, children are making very good progress in their health and wellbeing. As a result of the nurturing ethos within the nursery, children confidently share how they are feeling and talk about different emotions in relevant contexts. They explain clearly how to keep themselves and others safe. Children are very aware of the importance of personal hygiene routines such as handwashing and toothbrushing. They develop their fine motor skills very well. Children skilfully manipulate intricate objects, sew and use secateurs in the market garden. They develop gross motor skills as they grind barley and use apparatus in the school grounds which develops their strength, balance and coordination.

- Children develop a wide range of skills and knowledge through the variety of experiences across the curriculum. They are becoming familiar with wildlife living on and visiting their island and their specific features and habitats. Children engage very well when caring for the nursery garden. They describe what plants need to grow and are becoming aware of their names. Increasingly, children are becoming confident in using wood and woodwork tools to make their own creations.
- The roll within the nursery can be changeable due to families living on the island for varying periods of time. However, practitioners have a very good understanding of the progress individual children are making in their learning. Practitioners' observations along with photographs and examples of children's work demonstrates clearly the progress all children have made since starting nursery. The lead practitioner should use the 'Peedie Pebbles' and early level benchmarks more effectively to check on the specific skills children develop through play.
- Practitioners value and celebrate individual children's achievements. They display children's work and creations attractively on the 'proud wall.' Children demonstrate teamwork and responsibility as they care for nursery resources respectfully and keep the playroom tidy. Children, parents and other members of the community come together in a range of ways. This includes charity events and community coffee mornings. These experiences enable children to be active citizens within their island community.
- Children and families benefit from open, trusting and supportive relationships with practitioners. Practitioners are very knowledgeable about the island community and signpost parents to events and services that enable them to become fully included in nursery and island life. Children are supported very well to access all nursery experiences.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Quality of Interactions

In the nursery class, practitioners skilfully use commentary and well-considered questions to develop children's thinking time and to deepen their learning without interrupting their play. Children are making very good progress in their learning as a result of practitioners' unhurried approach. This provides children with time and space to lead their play, balanced with high quality interactions.

- The lead practitioner has used professional learning, personal reading and research very well to deepen her knowledge and understanding of the impact high quality interactions have in supporting and extending young children's learning.
- Practitioners' interactions with children are developmentally considered and adjusted to match each child's individual needs. Commentary and questions are used very well to encourage curiosity and deepen thinking skills.
- Practitioners are highly responsive to children's ideas and interests and gauge their interactions skilfully to ensure they do not interrupt children's play. As a result, children lead their learning, with the appropriate adult interventions to provide appropriate support and extension to enhance learning.
- High quality interactions promote curiosity, creativity, problem-solving, independence and confidence.
- Skilful interactions and training have embedded an effective problem-solving approach to resolving conflict. As a result children use strategies to resolve minor differences independently and know when to ask for help.

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.