

# Summarised inspection findings

**Sound Primary School Nursery Class**

Shetland Islands Council

26 August 2025

## Key contextual information

Sound Nursery Class provides early learning and childcare within Sound Primary School in Lerwick, Shetland. Children attend the nursery from the age of three until they start primary school. Full day, term time sessions are offered between 8:30 am and 4.30 pm. The nursery is registered for 55 children and the current roll is 40. The nursery includes a large play space, a quiet room, and a covered area leading to an outdoor play area. Children can choose to play indoors or outdoors and regularly access spaces in the school including the gym, library, and sensory room. Children also have opportunities to access the local shop, visit the beach and the local wooded areas. The nursery has been through an unsettled period of staffing changes, but most of the team is now established. The depute headteacher works closely with the senior practitioner and the nursery teacher to lead and manage the work of the staff team. There are nine members of staff, comprising practitioners and support workers.

### 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

- Practitioners display the values of happiness, inclusion, respect, safety and determination effectively in their day-to-day interactions with parents, each other and children. They reviewed and agreed their values last year, consulting with families and children. The nursery team work very well together. They provide a welcoming and inclusive ethos for children and families. As a team, they know their community well and are committed to do their best for children and families.
- The team are reflective and undertake a variety of professional learning activities, most recently with a focus on supporting wellbeing. Almost all staff have undertaken training in understanding children's emotional development and the strategies that help children to manage their emotions. Practitioners speak confidently about how effective they have found this training in developing a consistent, positive team approach. This has resulted in improved outcomes for individual children.
- Senior leaders know their setting well and the focus on wellbeing has been an effective response to the needs of the service. Practitioners have developed into a supportive team following an unsettled period. As a next step, senior leaders and staff should now focus on continuing to develop a shared understanding of pedagogy. This should enable them to enhance the quality of learning and teaching to enable children to make the best progress possible.
- Leaders and practitioners know the overall strengths and areas of development for the nursery well. They self-evaluate regularly using local and national guidance. This helps them to identify areas of their practice that would benefit from new approaches. Senior leaders include actions for the nursery team on the school improvement plan where appropriate. The nursery team also identify their own priorities in an action plan. Senior leaders should now develop a

strategic approach to nursery improvement planning focused more clearly on outcomes for children.

- Practitioners recognise that within the team they have different interests and strengths. They should now consider developing leadership roles to support nursery improvement. Practitioners should include children in this leadership journey by providing an increased range of responsibilities, for example through daily routines.

## 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

- Practitioners have established nurturing, calm and caring relationships with children. As a result, children feel valued and secure in the setting.
- Children are motivated by the stimulating range of experiences both indoors and outdoors. Almost all children engage well in a wide range of learning activities, most for extended periods of time. Children explore and experiment, build with loose parts, make soup in the mud kitchen, and plant seeds to grow in the polytunnel. As a result, they are developing well their skills of creativity, curiosity and enquiry. All children are becoming increasingly independent in their learning and make choices about what and where they will play.
- Children use the interactive whiteboard well, playing mathematical games and drawing patterns. They use the tablet to capture their play experiences. The team have correctly identified the need to develop children's digital experiences further.
- Practitioners are sensitive to the needs of children. They make use of a range of strategies effectively to support children's engagement. Staff include role modelling, commenting on children's achievements, and redirecting thoughts and actions. They are skilled at joining play. Most practitioners use commentary and questioning meaningfully to encourage children to share ideas and feelings. This approach helps children to extend their thinking as they play.
- Practitioners know children well as individuals and are developing their understanding of children as learners. They capture observations well in 'learning story' books. These are shared regularly with children and parents, who feedback and include home learning. Practitioners identify next steps for each child and record these appropriately in children's learning story. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to further develop learning stories. They plan to include observations from across the curriculum which should allow a wider focus for next steps. The team have identified a need to develop communication skills further for a few children and should continue with plans to put in place targeted support.
- Practitioners observe carefully children's use of nursery spaces. They make changes in the layout of the play areas to support children's interests. This includes, ensuring there was sufficient space for large construction by moving these resources to a bigger area. Practitioners plan responsively around children's observed interests and needs. The team are aware of the need to further develop their approaches to planning for learning. They should now consider the balance of intentional and responsive plans. This should help them to provide appropriate levels of challenge for all children.

- Practitioners track children's learning and development well. Staff now need to improve the links between observations of learning, identification of next steps, planned supports and tracked progress. This should help staff to ensure children make the best progress possible.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a play-based curriculum. They have produced a helpful play statement which expresses the importance of play for children's health, happiness and learning. They plan to revisit this statement to update it, as their practice and pedagogy develops. The team plan learning across indoors and outdoors and recognise the importance of outdoor learning as a key part of their curriculum. Practitioners plan children's experiences well to ensure children build on prior learning and experience a broad curriculum. They ensure the curriculum is enhanced significantly by planning regular visits into the local community and inviting visitors to the nursery. For example, the children benefitted from a visit from a parent in Viking dress during the Up Helly Aa festival. This enhanced children's participation in community celebrations.
- Practitioners manage children's transitions from home to nursery well. These approaches are positive for both children and their families. Children have opportunities to visit the primary school to use the gym, library, sensory room and outdoors spaces such as the wildlife garden. Staff have developed a well-established transition programme to support children moving into P1. Parents appreciate the enhanced transitions for children who may take longer to settle both into nursery and into P1. As a result, children feel secure in a familiar environment and are ready to engage in their learning.

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

- The staff team has developed positive partnerships with families. Practitioners engage parents in the life of the setting through a variety of approaches. Well attended 'stay and play' sessions provide opportunities for parents to engage in play experiences and share in their child's learning. Parents encourage children to borrow books from the nursery library. Staff encourage parents to share their work experiences with children. A parent who is a paramedic brought the ambulance to the nursery for children to explore. As a result, children are developing an understanding of the world of work. The staff team seek parents' views through, for example, their question of the month. As identified by senior leaders and practitioners, this should be extended to increase opportunities for parents to be involved further in supporting improvement.
- The Parent Council contributes well to the life of the setting. They have supported initiatives such as planting for the community garden and growing strawberry plants. They participate in the planned refurbishment of the mud kitchen.

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



### 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

- Practitioners have developed positive relationships with children. They place a strong focus on children's wellbeing. This is a key strength in the nursery. Practitioners are positive role models and treat children with respect. As a result, children are happy and settled. Most children are articulate and confident. They are kind and considerate and take care of each other well. Children are developing positive friendship groups and play appropriately together. They are well-supported to manage challenges and changes.
- Practitioners have worked effectively with children to capture their ideas about how to behave at nursery. The team should consider how they might promote further the language of wellbeing in the nursery. This should help to develop a shared understanding of the wellbeing indicators amongst the team, children and parents. Practitioners are at the early stages of making children's rights more visible for children.
- Children participate in calm and relaxed lunch and snack times in the playroom. They sit and chat with friends and adults, sharing experiences and learning about hygiene and healthy eating. Practitioners support well-established handwashing and toothbrushing routines skilfully. Children are becoming increasingly independent as they self-select some of their food and pour their milk and water. They would benefit from further opportunities to be more independent during mealtime routines.
- All practitioners have undertaken relevant training in relation to legislative requirements for keeping children safe and meeting their care and learning needs. They work closely with parents and partners using Getting it right for each child (GIRFEC) processes effectively to support children, where appropriate. Practitioners identify quickly where children may benefit from individual input to help their learning and development. They know where to access additional support if required. This helps ensure children get the help they need to make progress in their learning.
- The team have developed trusting relationships with families, allowing them to respond well to children and their individual needs. They support children who may face barriers to learning well, using a range of suitable and engaging resources and strategies. Children who require additional support with their learning have specific plans in place with clear, appropriate targets to direct the work of the team. As a result, children are making good progress in their learning and wellbeing.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

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

- All children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They make choices throughout their day where they persevere, work as a team, and develop their imagination. All children develop their physical skills well as they run, balance, and climb outdoors. They are developing their fine motor skills successfully in a range of activities.
- All children are making good progress in early communication and language. Most children are keen to communicate, and they listen well to each other as part of daily interactions. Children role play their own stories across the setting, for example, using loose parts to build boats. Almost all children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. They independently choose to share books and act out familiar stories, for example 'The Three Little Pigs.' Children make good use of mark-making opportunities indoors and out, developing their skills well. They would benefit from more opportunities to write for a purpose. Children are developing their knowledge of rhyme through singing simple songs and nursery rhymes.
- All children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children are developing their numeracy skills in numbers 0-10. They use mathematical language accurately as they play, describing shape, comparing sizes and counting. A few children are exploring bigger numbers. Practitioners support children to explore shape and measure through their play. Children demonstrate effectively their understanding of positional language. Practitioners should continue to develop opportunities for mathematical learning, including data handling. Children need further opportunities to apply mathematical skills through nursery routines.
- Children's work is valued and displayed attractively in the playroom. Practitioners regularly capture children's voices in comments on their own work. Practitioners are aware of the importance of children's achievements at home and encourage families to share children's experiences with them. These are displayed on the 'Wow' wall and in learning stories.
- Across the nursery, children are making good progress over time. Staff use local authority developmental overviews to record the progress children make in key areas of their development. They also track progress in literacy and numeracy. Staff now need to improve the way these systems are implemented to allow them to capture more clearly the progress children make. This should assist them to identify further where individual children could benefit from specific support and challenge.

- Practitioners view all children as unique individuals and have created an inclusive and supportive ethos. They have a clear understanding of the needs of children, families and the local community. They consider ways to reduce potential barriers to learning and, as a result, children are making good progress. Parents speak positively about the care and guidance practitioners provide for their families. This includes signposting families to local agencies to support individual families' needs.

## 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.