

# Summarised inspection findings

**Southwood Primary School Nursery Class**

Fife Council

21 January 2020

## Key contextual information

Southwood Nursery Class is part of Southwood Primary School and is accommodated within the main school building. It is registered to provide early learning and childcare (ELC) for 40 children at any one time from two years nine months until they are of an age to attend primary school. At the time of inspection 23 children attended morning sessions and 21 afternoon sessions. All children are three to five years old. Children attend from the local communities of Macedonia and Tanshall areas of Glenrothes.

### 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

- The nursery class shares the vision of 'Belong, Believe, Be happy' with the school. This vision is brought to life through the inclusive ethos of the setting and reflects the aspirations of the staff team. The strong focus on wellbeing, particularly emotional, is underpinned by the vision, values and aims. Practitioners demonstrate a personal and collective commitment to securing positive outcomes for children and their families and strive to provide a quality experience for all.
- The current team has been established for a year. During this time they have formed a cohesive and professional team. Along with the senior leadership team, they are establishing what is working well and what needs to improve further. A positive example of this is the development of the learning environment over the last year. Together they reflect on and strive to develop their practice, demonstrating a strong commitment to continued improvement. For example, refining planning and documentation of children's learning. This was noted by the inspection team during the inspection process. Working alongside practitioners, the visiting nursery teacher and Early Years Lead Officer (EYLO) are highly visible and provide well respected and enabling leadership to the practitioner team. The team are well placed to continue to improve provision as the setting moves towards expansion in 2020. They are supported further by visiting staff from Fife Council. We discussed how this collaborative approach could be enhanced further to develop a unified, strategic approach to ensure maximum impact for children and families.
- There is clear recognition of what is important for the context of Southwood Primary School and Nursery Class. Capacity for improvement is being built by increasingly sharing leadership responsibilities across the team. All practitioners have distributed leadership responsibilities including developing areas of the curriculum and mentoring those working towards initial qualifications. Recently practitioners have become involved in working groups to take forward identified priorities. They are motivated and excited by this and by the opportunity to share and nurture their own skills and expertise. As planned this should be embedded to ensure the shared leadership of change with consideration being made to increasing the involvement of children and families in the improvement agenda. Children, for example, could make a valuable contribution to improvement priorities to involve them in this process.

- Professional learning has been identified for practitioners to support continuous improvement and individual development needs. To develop practitioner confidence and build leadership capacity further, it would be useful for practitioner enquiry to be used to develop a deeper and shared understanding of national guidance. This will help ensure that future developments are well-informed and promote a shared responsibility for change.
- During the last year a positive start has been made to developing a cycle of self-evaluation through looking inwards, outwards and forwards. This informs the improvement plan which although aligned to the school priorities is bespoke to the ongoing development of the nursery class. As the cycle of self-evaluation embeds it will support the identification of the most relevant priorities for improvement that will have the maximum impact on children. It will be important to ensure that the impact of improvements are measured and evaluated in order to inform future priorities to be taken forward.

## 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

- The stimulating learning environment promotes the development of children's creativity and curiosity through the provision of interesting natural and real life resources. Children are busy, motivated learners and almost all sustain a high level of engagement in their play. Resources are readily accessible allowing children to confidently make choices and select materials to follow their own interests and develop independence. For example, children make their own playdough and select and mix their own paint.
- Children have access to digital technology such as cameras, laptop computer and an interactive board. Practitioners should continue to develop further the use of digital technology to enhance children's learning.
- Relationships between practitioners, children and their families are warm and nurturing. As a result, children are happy and settled at nursery. Practitioners know children well. Interactions between practitioners and children are gentle and supportive which is building children's confidence and sense of belonging. Practitioners use an effective blend of strategies to engage children in conversations and make good use of open ended questions to extend children's thinking. They listen attentively to what children have to say which supports children to know their thoughts and ideas are valued.
- Planning is responsive to children's interests. The learning wall is used to share learning activities with parents and to capture the children's voice in the planning process. Practitioners should now review the range of planning formats used to streamline paperwork and to ensure there is a sharper focus on the learning outcomes for children.
- Children's Personal Learning Journals (PLJs) contain information on children's progress in learning including observations, photographs, samples of work and tracking sheets. The PLJs are readily accessible to children and a few children were observed using these to remember prior learning activities. The recent professional learning focus for practitioners on the gathering of observations is supporting them to increasingly capture significant learning. Systems to identify and record children's next steps in learning should be reviewed to enable children to be aware of their own learning targets. Parents have access to their child's PLJ at any time and have termly meetings with practitioners to discuss their child's progress. This provides parents with good opportunities to set new targets, update their child's care plan and to review and comment on their child's learning. Practitioners also provide regular sharing of day to day progress at pick up times.
- A language development screening tool is used effectively to assess children's progress in spoken language. The setting has worked closely with speech and language colleagues to

identify enrichment activities to enhance and improve children's language development. Practitioners should continue to gather and analyse data over time to ensure children are making the best progress possible.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners plan for children's learning, taking good account of Curriculum for Excellence. They have high aspirations for children and literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are promoted throughout the setting. Practitioners have a sound understanding of the importance of play and use their knowledge of child development to ensure they are offering age and stage appropriate experiences. There is scope to develop further children's literacy and numeracy skills by introducing more exciting provocations for learning.
- The curriculum takes full account of children's interests. Examples include interest in the role play café resulting in a visit to a local pizza restaurant and children talking about feeling scared on a trip to the woods leading to further exploration of feelings. Children have opportunities to engage meaningfully in the wider community, through trips to the forest and buying snack at the local shops.
- The setting's transition programmes support children well. Children have opportunity to come to a weekly pre nursery group before attending nursery. This allows practitioners and families to share information. Relationships across the early level are founded on mutual respect with practitioners and teachers engaging in ongoing professional dialogue to support learners. Tracking information for individual children is passed on to ensure continuity in learning.

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

See choice QI below

## 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

- Very positive relationships are evident between children, children and practitioners and practitioners and families. This is a key strength of Southwood Nursery Class. Practitioners invest time to develop the relationships required to underpin positive and successful partnership working with families. These relationships are the foundation for the promotion of wellbeing for children and families and are firmly based on mutual trust and honesty. The positive and respectful ethos is a shared responsibility with everyone within the nursery community contributing. Relationships within the practitioner team provide very positive role models for children. This, in turn helps promote the positive behaviour of children. Almost all children, at their own developmental stage, are developing the skills required to play together and show consideration for others. Practitioners have high expectations of, and aspirations for, children and each other. This is reflected in the strong sense of community where everyone is treated and valued as an individual with their own needs and rights.
- There is a clear focus on 'getting it right' for children and their families and improving outcomes for all. The wellbeing indicators are helpfully illustrated to make them meaningful for families. We discussed with practitioners how the language of wellbeing could be used more extensively with children to help them understand and articulate their own needs and wellbeing. Children are consulted on and involved in a range of decisions that affect them, for example planning the nursery garden. Building on the positive examples where children's voice has been sought and acted upon this could be extended to engage children in even more decisions and leadership opportunities.
- Children's understanding of their own wellbeing is being developed through a range of experiences. Regular visits to local woodland and outdoor play promote the development of a range of physical skills alongside resilience, problem solving and risk taking. Most children are keen to develop the skills to pedal and balance on a bicycle. The provision of a range of healthy snacks is helping children to understand the importance of a balanced diet. This understanding of wellbeing is supported further by parental and family involvement in learning such as healthy cooking. Recently introduced mindfulness sessions are supporting children to recognise their own emotions and empower them with the language to articulate them and help be in control of their feelings.
- Together, the senior leadership team and practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding statutory duties including the importance of keeping children safe. We discussed the need to record review of care plans more systematically to better reflect the positive outcomes for children resulting from their nursery experiences. It would be useful for the team to revisit and refresh knowledge of best practice guidance in this area to ensure a current and shared understanding.
- Practitioners are aware of their responsibilities in promoting equality and diversity. To develop children's awareness and understanding, a range of cultures and religions are explored and

celebrated. The inclusive ethos supports all children very well. Using a solution focused approach, any potential barriers to participation and learning are readily identified and reduced or eliminated to ensure equal participation of everyone. Where necessary and appropriate, sensitive interventions, including effective deployment of staff and individualised learning targets, are identified and put in place to secure progress. We discussed the importance of recording all interventions to ensure impact can be identified and measured, and where necessary inform any future intervention.

### 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

- Most children are making good progress in communication and language. They engage in conversations with practitioners and their friends, they talk about their own experiences and can express their feelings and ideas confidently. Children engage in mark making activities to develop their early writing skills. Some are beginning to draw recognisable pictures and a few are beginning to write letters. A range of fiction and non-fiction books is readily available across the nursery provision to support children in early reading. Children are encouraged to self-register using wooden discs to help them recognise their names. Most children enjoy group story times with a few choosing to look at books independently for their own enjoyment. In collaboration with speech and language colleagues, strategies and activities to support children are being put in place to develop their vocabulary and be aware of the rhythm and patterns of words.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They are observed to count to ten, with a few confidently counting beyond ten and demonstrating a good awareness of number values. Children apply their awareness of numeracy and skills in nursery routines and activities. This includes counting ingredients to make individual bowls of playdough, using money in the café and singing number songs. The range of games and natural resources support children to develop an awareness of shape and size. Staff should continue to develop children's awareness of numeracy and mathematics through meaningful and real life experiences across their nursery experiences.
- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing, with all children presenting as happy and settled in their environment. Children make healthy choices at snack and are encouraged to develop their independence skills, for example, confidently collecting own snack and clearing away dishes afterwards. They are developing their physical skills through use of the climbing frame, daily outdoor play, access to the school gym hall and planned outings to the forest. Children develop fine motor skills while using real tools and snack utensils. Practitioners should continue to encourage children to be independent and develop their self-help skills.
- Observations of children's play and the observations contained in Pupil Learning Journals provide some evidence that children are making good progress in their learning during their time at nursery. As identified, a review of how children's next steps in learning are identified will support children further to experience and celebrate success. As planned the setting should

encourage parents to inform practitioners of children's wider achievements so they can also be celebrated in nursery.

- The supportive and inclusive ethos creates a climate of mutual respect and trust. Practitioners take good account of the socio-economic backgrounds of children and their families. They recognise the importance of parental involvement to improve outcomes for children and sensitively encourage parents to take the opportunities provided to be involved in their children's learning.
- As discussed, practitioners could develop the use of data further to promote equity for all. This should build on the use already made of data for example tracking attendance and supporting families as a result of findings.

## Choice of QI : 2.7 Partnerships

- Engagement of parents and carers in the life of the setting
- The promotion of partnerships
- Impact on children and families

- There are extensive opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning and nursery experiences. These include literacy based learning sessions, helping with woodland learning experiences and running the lending library. 'Stay and play' sessions allow parents to share the nursery session with their child. This is supported further by an open door policy to involving families in the work and life of the setting. A learning partnership between home and nursery is promoted through the offer of regular meetings about children's learning. The views of parents are also actively sought through regular 'Cuppachats' which provide an informal forum to share views and ideas about the nursery. The extension of this will be important as the cycle of self-evaluation embeds. Practitioners are very keen to increase the uptake of these opportunities. Together they continue to seek imaginative ways to build upon and capitalise on the already very positive relationships they have with families. It will be important to help parents understand the value of their engagement in their child's learning.
- The reach of partnership working extends beyond the immediate Southwood Nursery Class community. A 'Tots Club' meets regularly in the main school to allow parents to come together with their babies and toddlers prior to starting nursery. This supports them to be part of the school community and develop confidence within the environment. A 'Pre-Nursery Group' extends this further to support children in their transition into nursery. This is supported by the Pupil Equity Fund funded family support worker who works collaboratively with the nursery team. The family support role has been developed to promote learning and enable families. This has created an empowering culture within and beyond Southwood. The established vision for family support should be progressed as planned, for example, extending parenting programmes across the nursery age group.
- An interesting social media page provides a range of information to parents and families, both about the nursery and school as well as the wider community. We discussed how the use of social media could be maximised, for example, to promote storytelling. It would be useful to undertake some measurement of the reach and impact of social media across the school community.
- Good use is made of a range of local businesses to support and extend learning. The team are keen to develop these further to develop life skills of children and promote a pride in their local community. Plans at the early stages of implementation, such as the securing of an allotment and links to promote intergenerational work should be pursued as planned. As these well-considered partnerships develop, their impact on outcomes for children should be evaluated. There is potential to develop this to establish links between the skills children are acquiring and work and employment in the local community. An audit of the range of potential partners, locally, nationally and internationally could support a wider collaboration to enrich children's progress and achievements.
- Links with other ELC settings in the locality promote learning for both children and practitioners. Families have access to activities in the local Family Nurture Centre. The cluster network provide a range of professional learning opportunities for practitioners which support the ongoing development of their practice.

### Quality of care and support

#### Care Inspectorate grade: very good

There were very good opportunities for families to become involved in their child's learning through various groups and information provided. These increased children's opportunities to achieve and be successful learners.

The enabling environment provided challenge through the thoughtful provision, availability and sufficiency of resources which provided breadth of play and learning experiences for children. This was evident in children's levels of engagement. Children followed and sustained their own interests for prolonged periods of time, owing to the natural rhythm of the day and responsiveness of staff. As a result, children were confident, happy and busy. Varied opportunities to be responsible and independent such as shopping for snack and making their own playdough empowered children and allowed them to direct their own play.

Planning was responsive which made learning meaningful to children. However, the service should continue to develop learning walls to show progression of learning. Clear links between these, personal learning journals, planning and home learning sheets would support provision to enhance children's progress.

Children had ownership of their personal learning journals. Written observations within PLJ's were beginning to capture learning supporting staff to plan next steps. Work to improve consistency of quality in observations should continue along with a focus on recording clear next steps and progress made. The recommendation from the last inspection has been made again. See recommendation one.

Snacks were healthy and free access to a range of fruit throughout the day supported children to make healthy choices. This, along with the free flow nature of snack meant children could eat when hungry without interruption to play.

Children were beginning to build awareness of environmental issues through recycling food but were yet unable to talk about it. This should be further developed through ECO school work to raise children's awareness of ecological issues and their impact.

Children's individual needs were met through detailed and respectful systems for recording and sharing health needs. Weekly meetings ensured information was routinely shared. These supported planning of relevant approaches, sharing of strategies and identifying short term next steps. We advised on how this could be developed further as ongoing chronologies for all children as part of their personal plans.

Strong attachments between staff and children were evident due to keyworkers remaining consistent for families. These positive relationships contributed to children feeling secure and loved.

A restorative approach was taken to support children's distressed behaviours and conflict. Along with mindfulness activities this contributed to children maintaining their self-esteem and supported their self-regulation.

Children were active due to free flow access to the garden and the range of play equipment, along with weekly forest kindergarten experiences and community walks. These contributed to children's gross motor skill development and understanding of risk.

Personal plan information was not being reviewed in line with current legislation. Medication plans and registration information held on the seemis system were being reviewed annually. Information within children personal learning journal was also not routinely being reviewed in line with current legislation. All information held on children is referred to as their personal plan which should be reviewed at least once every six months. See recommendation two.

## Recommendations

Three recommendations were made at the previous Care Inspectorate inspection. Two of these were now met and one has been made again.

An additional recommendation has also been made in relation to regular review of personal plan information.

### \*Recommendation 1

The provider should ensure that children's 'Personal Learning Journals' accurately and regularly record children's next steps for learning and development, with evaluations on actions taken. It should be clear how individual next steps are taken forward into planning. This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that "My future care and support needs are anticipated as part of my assessment" (1.14).

### \*Recommendation 2

The provider should ensure all personal care plan information is reviewed whenever the provider is requested to do so by the service user or if there is any significant change in a child's health, welfare or safety needs and at least once in every six month period. This includes ensuring completion of PLJ information to demonstrate children's progress and next steps over their time in the service, 'Seemis' data check information and medical care plan information. This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that "My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices" (HSCS 1.15).

## 2. Quality of staffing

### Care Inspectorate grade: very good

Staff interactions were gentle, nurturing and respectful. Positive role modelling was evident through respectful discussions and polite requests, resulting in children displaying good manners in their interactions. Staff were accessible to children were highly responsive. The lovely ethos was reflected through children giggling with each other and with staff. Children received physical comfort were required and were very comfortable approaching staff. This contributed to children's positive emotional wellbeing and sense of security.

Staff displayed a sound knowledge of children as individuals. This contributed to children receiving care and support which was specific to their current needs.

Skilled questioning promoted challenge in children. This extended children's thinking and problem solving skills.

Staff were respectful of each other. They understood each other's strengths and areas of improvement. This approach contributed to the effective teamwork demonstrated and a collective approach to supporting overall aims.



Regular team meetings ensured staff were able to raise concerns, gain support and explore other aspects of provision beyond planning. This contributed to the positive ethos and enhanced outcomes for children.

Children received care based on current knowledge of child development. This was because there was a strong staff training programme in place. Staff confirmed that they were given many opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through training linked to service and personal needs.

Best practice visits allowed staff to reflect further on their practice. Staff confidently discussed how these had supported their reflection on practice which contributed to ongoing improvements. This was supporting staff in providing children with core learning experiences.

Staff felt empowered by leadership roles. These were linked to curriculum areas which allowed staff to explore each aspect in detail and share this learning to support continuous improvement.

There was scope for staff to explore best practice guidance documents further. This would support development of specific aspects of provision linked to areas of responsibility. Familiarisation of the Health and Social Care Standards in a more active capacity such as through team self evaluation activities would develop understanding of these benchmarks. This would support continued improvement supporting positive outcomes for children.



## 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.