

Summarised inspection findings

Aboyne Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

28 February 2023

Key contextual information

Aboyne Nursery is accommodated within a self-contained wing of Aboyne Primary School. Children benefit from a large playroom with three smaller rooms attached. The large cloakroom area also provides additional space for learning experiences. Children have direct access to a, self-contained outdoor area. Children attend from the age of three years until starting school. The nursery also provides funded places for children aged two years who are eligible for 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC). The setting can provide places for 72 children at any one time. Currently, there are 45 children attending. Children can attend during term time or extended year with places offered between 8 am and 6 pm. The staff team has had significant changes over the last few years with the current team recently established.

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, ably led by the senior practitioner, have successfully worked together to develop, and begin to deliver their commitment to high-quality ELC. The senior practitioner, with the team, review the vision, values and aims annually to ensure they remain relevant to children and families attending the setting. Positively, parents are becoming increasingly involved in this process. This is helping ensure the views and aspirations of everyone are reflected. Children could be more aware of the values and use them to influence their interactions and experiences in nursery.
- The senior practitioner has overall responsibility for the nursery and is supported by two lead practitioners and the wider practitioner team. The staff team has had significant changes over the last few years with the current team recently established. The senior practitioner has managed the pace of change very well, correctly identifying the need to prioritise the development of a positive ethos within the team. Practitioners and families respect and trust her. She is highly visible, motivates practitioners and supports children, in the day-to-day running of the nursery. During her time in post, she has developed an accurate understanding of the strengths of the setting and what needs to further develop. The team welcome and value the support of the local authority early years team as they develop their strategic vision for continued improvement. Senior leaders from the school need to be more involved in directing and managing change and ongoing improvement. This will support the nursery being an integral part of the whole school community.
- Practitioners are increasingly reflective in their practice. They welcome and take up opportunities for professional learning, including further qualifications. Professional learning on national guidance has supported practitioners to develop their practice and is beginning to impact positively on the quality of children's experiences. The practitioner team should continue to explore aspects of their practice, both individually and as a team to promote well-informed developments. As they learn and develop new knowledge and skills practitioners should continue to communicate these across the team to ensure a shared understanding.

- As the team becomes established, the senior practitioner is promoting distributed leadership with practitioners having more opportunities to lead and take forward improvements. Working in this way is sharing responsibility and increasing capacity for improvement and change. It will be important that everyone participates in the evaluation of the impact of improvements made. This will ensure a shared responsibility for implementing continuous improvement.
- The senior practitioner is supporting practitioners well to use formal self-evaluation tools to reflect on the quality of provision. This is helping identify relevant, measurable targets to improve outcomes for children and families. The current improvement plan has been created with involvement of everyone involved with the nursery. Practitioners are increasingly involved in evaluating the quality of their practice and that of others in the team. This shared reflection is helping build capacity for improvement. The nursery is well placed to continue to improve.

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

- All children enjoy their time in the setting. Most are motivated, enthusiastic and can talk about their play and learning. Most practitioners are caring and nurturing and support children well in their learning. The indoor and outdoor environments support children's independence and offer opportunities for personalisation and choice. Improvements in the environment support children's imaginative play and creativity. Overall, experiences meet the learning needs of most children. A majority of children would benefit from more challenge in their learning.
- Most practitioners are developing their use of open-ended questions to extend children's thinking and learning. Children would benefit from greater consistency in the skills of thoughtful interactions across the practitioner team. Practitioners should continue to engage with national guidance to develop further high-quality interactions.
- Practitioners have agreed to prioritise the use of digital technology for children to support their learning. This commitment is at the early stages of implementation. Children use programmable toys to apply directional and positional language. Practitioners should ensure that digital technologies are used to consistently enhance learning experiences.
- Practitioners know children increasingly well as learners. They record individual observations of children's learning within online learning journals. Practitioners effectively use local authority curriculum and developmental milestone progression pathways. As planned, there is a need to consistently identify individual next steps linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. This will support practitioners to accurately plan and assess children's learning. Senior practitioners should continue to moderate observations and support practitioners to develop their skills in identifying and recording children's significant learning.
- Almost all practitioners are contributing to 'in the moment' planning which includes and responds to children's ideas and interests. The practitioner team has been directed to refer to the school's early level intentional planning. This approach needs reviewed to ensure practitioners prioritise planning for children's individual stage of development. This should include a coverage of CfE experiences and outcomes through continuous provision. Practitioners will benefit from opportunities to share observations and review planning for children's learning. This should also include the evaluation of the planning cycle including what is working well and how it can be improved. As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should look at ways planning formats can be more visible and accessible to children and adults. This should ensure a balance of adult initiated, child initiated and intentional promotions.
- The senior practitioner meets informally with practitioners to discuss children's learning. The introduction of planned tracking meetings with senior leaders will support further the identification of individual next steps in children's learning. This process will enable

practitioners and senior leaders to make increasingly confident judgements about children's progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children learn through play across a curriculum which is child-centred and responsive. They benefit from a well-resourced environment. The variety of spaces enable children to play and learn in a variety of ways which promote independence, personalisation, and choice. As planned, practitioners should develop further their knowledge and understanding of the principles of curriculum design.
- Practitioners use local authority progression frameworks for the majority of curriculum areas. This is supporting the identification of next steps in a progressive way. Senior practitioners need to monitor the wider coverage of curriculum areas which are not currently intentionally planned.
- Practitioners created a curriculum rationale with parents which reflects the context of the setting. It helpfully outlines key priorities for the setting. These include the value of outdoor learning, loose parts and the importance of family relationships supporting positive experiences for children.
- The senior practitioner works with staff across the early level to promote continuity of experience and a shared understanding of learning and play. This is at the early stages of ensuring sustained progression for all children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have identified increasing parental engagement as a priority following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. Through a survey, parents have been consulted about how they would like to be involved in their child's nursery learning. As a result, practitioners have introduced a focus story which features as part of nursery experiences with ideas for learning at home also provided. Parents value the opportunity to 'stay and play' which provides a valuable insight into their child's nursery experiences. Parents can access their child's learning journal and contribute examples of learning at home. Practitioners are keen to increase parental contributions to online journals. Recently, parents shared children's experiences of a 'snow day' which have been displayed and discussed in nursery. Practitioners are keen to continue to increase home-nursery links to strengthen partnership working further.

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

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 prioritise the development of positive relationships with children and families. Most practitioners consistently model respectful interactions between one another and with children. At times, a few children would benefit from support to demonstrate consideration and empathy towards their peers during independent play.
- Children display high levels of confidence in their environment. They benefit from a range of approaches that allow them to express their views and feel listened to, for example, in planning their learning. They are ready to have more responsibility, for example, caring for the nursery environment and resources and engage in more decision making that affects them.
- Children are developing their awareness of the national wellbeing indicators well, particularly, being safe and healthy. Practitioners could support children to continue to develop an understanding of the full range of indicators through relevant contexts. Children apply their developing understanding in different contexts, for example, using knives to prepare fruit for snack. Children contribute to assessing potential hazards in the outdoor area. Practitioners need to allow children to manage their own risk more, such as, more risky play outdoors and free access to all learning spaces.
- The senior practitioner has introduced a staff wellbeing survey to promote the mental and physical health of the team. Practitioners appreciate the care and consideration given to them as individuals. This is having a positive impact on staff morale.
- 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 a personal plan, which outlines care and health needs and helps practitioners to identify strategies to support individuals. Children who have barriers to their learning have additional plans to ensure practitioners are clear about how best to support their needs. Practitioners need to ensure that these plans are always available to inform the support offered to individual children. They value and work effectively with other professionals to help children make the best possible progress. This includes practitioners working directly with professionals to develop their own skills and understanding to better support children, for example, developing language and communication.
- Children benefit from learning about healthy eating through snack and lunch routines. Practitioners are sensitive to the dietary needs of individuals. Children are developing independence through involvement in preparing snacks and serving part of their lunches. Practitioners should continue to develop routines to promote children's independence and ensure the learning opportunities are maximised.

- The nursery has an inclusive ethos with practitioners working to ensure that all children make the best possible progress. Children are becoming aware of gender and at times, are developing gender stereotypes. Practitioners should ensure that resources, for example dressing up clothes, do not promote any potential gender bias. To promote an understanding as citizens of the wider world in the 21st Century, practitioners need to introduce children to a broader range of diversity. This should be responsive to the nursery context and that outwith children's immediate experience. Practitioners would benefit from exploring this area to develop their knowledge and understanding.

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

- The majority of children are making good progress in early language and communication. Most children listen and follow simple instructions and routines. They talk to each other during their play and most are confident when communicating with familiar adults. Children's literacy skills include mark making and drawing pictorial representations of people and themselves. A few children write common words and use texts to communicate meaning. All children are being supported to create stories and are increasingly aware of the roles of author and illustrator. Almost all children enjoy familiar books and stories. Children use imaginative play, loose parts and role play resources to create and recount favourite stories.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in mathematics and numeracy, with a few children making good progress. Most children can identify and recognise numbers from zero to 10. The majority of children use one-to-one correspondence to count a given number of objects to 10 with a few recognising numbers to 20. Children use a wide variety of measurement and positional language in physical activity, using loose parts and block play. This includes the naming of common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children confidently link daily routines and personal events to time sequences. Children would benefit from more opportunities to apply their numeracy and mathematics in real and meaningful contexts to consolidate understanding.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing friendships and most play cooperatively. Most children enjoy eating socially at snack time and lunchtime and explore different foods through making snack choices. They understand the need for personal and dental hygiene. Most children have well-developed balance and coordination with a few displaying good ball skills.
- The tracking of children's progress over time is not yet sufficiently robust to reflect accurately the progress children are making because of their nursery experiences. As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should develop further tracking and monitoring processes for all children to ensure appropriate challenge.
- Practitioners celebrate achievements in the setting through appropriate use of praise and encouragement. As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should develop an overview of children's skills for learning and life linked to achievements. This should extend planning for the development of skills further and how they are applied to a variety of different areas of the curriculum.

- Practitioners know the local community context well. This includes the impact of barriers to learning that children and families experience. Almost all parents feel comfortable approaching practitioners if they have concerns, queries or need advice. Practitioners should make full use of information and data available, including data related to socio-economic context. This should help make decisions about any interventions required to support all children 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.