

Summarised inspection findings

Portlethen Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

27 August 2019

Key contextual information

The nursery class has been decanted into temporary accommodation within the grounds of the school. This is to allow the nursery to be refurbished and extended in preparation for expansion of entitlement to 1140 hours. The nursery class is set to increase its roll substantially. Currently the nursery class offers 32 places in a morning or afternoon session. The roll at the time of inspection is 64.

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 teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The nursery practitioners have worked hard to provide a quality service in the temporary accommodation. They have been proactive in making the best use of the space available to them. Children are engaged, happy and obviously enjoy the play opportunities provided. It is evident that children like to explore the environment and have their curiosity stimulated by creative and well-planned experiences. Practitioners plan to introduce a more focused approach to help children understand their rights. In so doing it will be helpful to revisit the vision, values and aims to ensure better ownership and understanding. As they begin to look at rights, a few children have developed a good understanding. They are confident in talking about the importance of dignity and how they experience this. They understand the importance of being able to choose when to rest and play. Relationships are supportive, nurturing and promote mutual respect. Children are encouraged to make choices and they respond well to these opportunities to make decisions about their learning. They help order the delivery for snack and have a range of 'jobs' allocated. There is scope to involve children more fully in contributing to the whole school and local community in purposeful ways.
- Daily outdoor experiences are on offer with some adaptations to suit the current temporary accommodation. Practitioners have focused on creating other opportunities to provide children with interesting and relevant outdoor learning. This includes access to an area where they grow flowers, observe and discuss the effects of seasonal changes. Practitioners take children out in the local community and local park areas. As planned, the setting should continue to work with partners, building on from the parental gardening support, to maximise daily outdoor learning opportunities for children.
- Adults listen well to children and encourage them to express their feelings and opinions through increasingly sustained conversations. Children are encouraged to follow their own interests and are developing their independence and confidence well. Digital technology is used appropriately to enhance the learning. Practitioners have used research well to help develop children's curiosity, building on the learning that takes place within areas within the playroom.

- Practitioners make good use of their observations of children's learning. They have been actively working to improve the quality and consistency of this information to help identify children's progress and shape planning. Practitioners have been involved in moderation activities within the nursery and cluster that have helped them develop a shared understanding of aspects of children's developmental progress. They are also working to improve the quality of next steps in learning linked to these observations. Practitioners are now more confident in understanding the developmental stages and needs of children in their care. There remains scope to involve children in reflecting on their learning, as this does not yet happen consistently. Practitioners have recently introduced folders for children to keep important examples of their progress and achievements. They should look at best practice to ensure these develop well. There are plans to introduce a new online resource to share observations more regularly and timeously with parents. It will be important moving forward that information is not duplicated and that children and parents continue to be meaningfully involved in review and assessment approaches.
- There is a strong culture of improvement reflected in the behaviours and attitudes of practitioners. They actively want to seek out ways to improve their understanding and practice. They appreciate the dedicated development time allocated to them and have been proactive in using opportunities to visit other settings to help develop and strengthen their own practice. An example is the new weekly planning that focuses well on the learning taking place. It is visible to all and responsive. This planning is more focused, and is supporting practitioners to identify existing learning opportunities more effectively for the children. This is beginning to support practitioners to extend children's learning. In moving forward, it will be important to identify the impact on individual children's progress.
- Practitioners share learning well with one another and increasingly this includes parents. The monthly school newsletter is used effectively to share some of the important information with parents. Practitioners have used a range of guidance appropriately to help inform their planning. They have a strong focus on promoting learners curiosity, inquiry and creativity and pride themselves on responsive planning based on children's interests. Good use is made of floorbooks to help capture children's views and interests when planning learning. Developing this approach further would help children evaluate and reflect on their learning. The depute headteacher has developed a helpful tracking system that has been in promoting robust discussions focusing on a few important aspects of children's progress.
- There is a clear focus on communication and early literacy approaches that link well with the primary school. Practitioners working alongside the primary staff have enabled a better shared understanding of the literacy approaches used in school and how to promote this appropriately in the nursery.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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 early language and the majority of children are making satisfactory progress in early mathematics. Communication is promoted well and Makaton signing is used consistently with all children at various times during the session. Children are beginning to engage with rhyming words through stories and songs. They demonstrate an interest in books and can talk about favourite stories. Children enjoy repetitive phrases within familiar stories and willingly engage in helping to retell them. They are attempting to create their own 'stories' that practitioners scribe for them. There is scope for children to have more purposeful opportunities to mark make and 'write' in their own way.
- Practitioners have rightly identified that early mathematics and numeracy needs to be developed further to ensure that children make the best progress. They can build on the positive start to incorporate these experiences within the areas in the playroom and outdoors.
- Children are clear about the rules in the nursery and what to do to keep themselves safe. For example, they understand the importance of wearing helmets when playing on the bikes. Children are beginning to contribute to risk assessments within the nursery. They are confident in aspects of personal hygiene and understand the importance of brushing their teeth. They embark on their 'tooth brushing' song with enthusiasm. Physical development skills are promoted very well through outdoor play. Children also value and are motivated by a regular session in the gym hall that challenges them to balance and climb. Practitioners are at the early stages of helping children to understand important aspects of their wellbeing.
- Most children are making good progress over time in social and emotional development. Children are encouraged to express themselves through a suitable range of play experiences. They have benefited from using a range of construction type materials that have increased opportunities for problem-solving and imaginative play. Children are learning to self-regulate and are supported well to make choices and develop their independence. Parents spoken to as part of the inspection and who returned questionnaires confirmed that their children are happy, settled and have gained in confidence through attending nursery. Practitioners believe the keyworker system has been important in helping to ensure a depth of knowledge about children as learners and individuals.
- Practitioners use praise and encouragement well and are quick to identify and celebrate individual achievements. They actively seek out information from parents through home learning links and informally through daily discussions. There is a focus through the care planning process to ensure interests and talents are also identified early. There are examples

of parents contacting the key worker with information about experiences beyond the nursery that practitioners skilfully build on with individual children. It is important to ensure that those children requiring, and supported by individual plans have targets that link with the care plan priorities and that reviews are kept up to date.

- Total communication strategies are used appropriately in the nursery with a blend of universal and targeted approaches. Children who require additional help with learning are supported well to enable them to make the best possible progress. Practitioners are aware of the individual needs and circumstances of families and are proactive to ensure potential barriers to participation are identified and where possible, removed. They work well with other agencies to help provide support with a clear focus on early intervention. The positive relationships with families and the inclusive ethos in the nursery class provides a strong basis to meet children's needs and promote equity.

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.