

Summarised inspection findings

Lybster Primary School Nursery Class

The Highland Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Lybster Nursery Class is situated within Lybster Primary School, which is a small, rural school situated in the village of Lybster in the Highlands. The nursery provides funded early learning and childcare (ELC) between 9 am and 3 pm, term time. Children attend from the age of two until starting primary school. The nursery is registered for 23 children at any one time. The current roll is 15. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery. This responsibility has been delegated to the acting principal teacher, who has been in post since August 2023. The principal teacher has a half day management time for the nursery each week. The nursery has experienced staffing changes since August 2023 when an additional two practitioners joined the team from another setting which is currently mothballed.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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 quality of leadership for the nursery is weak and as a result, is impacting on the quality of nursery provision. Senior leaders need to provide clear strategic leadership and direction for the nursery team. Practitioners require clear guidance to help them to develop further the quality of their practice. They need senior leaders to manage and guide the pace of change more effectively. With the support of the local authority, senior leaders should develop their knowledge of ELC in order to provide stronger leadership of learning and teaching. Along with practitioners, senior leaders should revisit national practice guidance, Realising the Ambition: Being Me. This should help them to gain a deeper understanding of current thinking in ELC. Senior leaders and practitioners need to reach a shared understanding of early years pedagogy. They need to monitor nursery practice regularly with a focus on learning and teaching. Senior leaders should have a clear overview of the progress all children are making in their learning.
- The practitioner team works very well together and have built positive and respectful relationships with each other. They strive to do their best for children and families. Staff undertake leadership roles including literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing (HWB). Practitioners are eager to make improvements to their practice to provide children with a quality ELC experience. The team recognise that improvements are necessary. They have been working well together to develop further, planning for children's learning and the lunchtime experiences for children. All practitioners are ready to undertake further leadership roles with the appropriate support and guidance.
- Practitioners took part in a review of the school's vision, values and aims. They chose not to adopt the school's and created a new version for the nursery along with a curriculum rationale. Practitioners bring the values of happy, kind and fun to life through nursery experiences and their interactions with children and each other. In future reviews, practitioners should consult

with children, families and their local community. This should ensure the vision, values, aims and the curriculum rationale reflect the unique context of a rural village nursery.

- Practitioners have the opportunity to attend online professional learning which is helping them to develop further their knowledge on key areas of practice. For example, early literacy programmes and planning for children's learning. They now need opportunities to discuss their professional learning with senior leaders and plan how they will implement new developments in a measured way.
- The headteacher sets out key priorities for the school with a few tasks for the nursery. Moving forward, nursery priorities need to be more specific and measurable within the improvement plan, based on robust self-evaluation. Senior leaders along with practitioners, need to review the progress of improvement priorities systematically. This should ensure an appropriate pace of change to secure the continuous improvement of the nursery. Practitioners would benefit from protected time to meet with senior leaders who should guide and manage the self-evaluation process. The nursery team is reflective, and practitioners engage informally in professional dialogue. They talk about what is working well and what they could improve. Practitioners use an improvement model of 'plan, do, study, act' to implement change and improve practice. For example, as a result of changes made, children are having an improved lunchtime experience and better access to story books.

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

- Practitioners have positive relationships with children and as a result, most children are happy and settled while at nursery. Children explore the range of experiences provided for them enthusiastically. They particularly enjoy building with bricks and digging for dinosaur bones in the sand. Children use the available open-ended resources purposefully both indoors and outdoors to support their play. They engage well in these experiences and spend extended periods of time playing in groups or alongside other children.
- Most children enjoy daily outdoor play. They free-flow from the playroom to the outdoor area giving them the choice when to play indoors or outdoors. In addition, practitioners use the extensive school grounds to give children a larger space to jump in puddles, look for minibeasts and climb trees. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop the learning environments to promote sensory play, curiosity and creativity. In addition, they should ensure learning environments promote literacy and numeracy to enable children to develop and apply their skills in different contexts.
- Practitioners are kind and respectful in their interactions with children. They give children time and space to develop their ideas. Practitioners should develop further their use of commentary and open-ended questions to deepen children's thinking and extend their learning. As identified, children could be more involved in opportunities to talk about their learning. Practitioners could make better use of digital technology to support this.
- Each child has a paper profile which contains observations, photographs and examples of their work. In addition, practitioners record this information using an online platform and floorbook. Moving forward, practitioners should review and refine their process for recording children's learning and achievements. At present, there is too much duplication. The team needs to agree the purpose of floorbooks, profiles and online journals in demonstrating children's learning.
- The quality of practitioners' observations of children's learning is not yet consistent. Practitioners need to have a greater focus on the skills children are developing. This will help them to identify clear next steps for individual children and enable them to track their progress more effectively. Practitioners use a local authority overview which helps them identify stages of development according to children's ages. Currently, there is no robust system to track and monitor children's developing skills in literacy and numeracy.
- The current planning approach is based on children's ideas and suggestions. Practitioners respond well to children's interests and support this effectively through the provision of resources and meaningful experiences. They now need to provide a better balance of child-led and adult-initiated experiences with a focus on developing children's skills across the curriculum. Practitioners would find it helpful to revisit the principles of curriculum design. This

could support them to improve further the quality of the curriculum and planning for children's learning. They should have a particular focus on depth and challenge.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners track coverage of the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence to demonstrate the breadth of children's experiences. They should use the experiences and outcomes and local authority progression frameworks better, to improve how they plan for children's learning. Practitioners should have an increased focus on supporting children's learning in early literacy, numeracy and mathematics. In doing so, they should build on children's prior learning and experiences to ensure children learn in a progressive way.
- Practitioners support new and returning children very well as they transition from home to nursery. They are aware of children's emotional needs during these times and respond sensitively. As a result, most children make a smooth transition into nursery and settle well. Practitioners are at the early stage of communicating with other settings where children have a blended placement. They should move forward with this work at pace. This should ensure more effective communication and partnership working between settings to support children's wellbeing and learning needs more effectively.
- Working with colleagues in P1, practitioners should seek ways to plan a meaningful programme of transition events across the year. This should include developing a robust approach to sharing children's progress. It will be important for colleagues working across the early level to reach a shared understanding of early years pedagogy. By doing so, this should provide continuity in the curriculum and learning for all children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners keep parents informed regularly of their child's experiences through an online platform. They share observations, photographs and video recordings of their children at play. Most parents engage with these online profiles, and a few make comments about their child's progress. Practitioners give parents the opportunity to attend open afternoons to see the range of experiences provided for their children. Practitioners should continue to consider ways to enable parents to be more engaged with their child's learning. This could include home-link activities that support children to develop early literacy and numeracy skills through play at home.
- Practitioners should consider allowing parents to drop off and pick up their children from within the playroom. By doing this, parents will be able to see displays of children's work and gain a better understanding of their child's nursery experiences.

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 recognise the importance of positive relationships and model this for children. As a result, children are kind to each other, play well together and are building firm friendships. Occasionally, children choose to be together as a whole group, for example, to have snack together. Practitioners support this well. This reflects the nursery 'family' which helps children to have a sense of belonging.
- Children are at an early stage of awareness of the language of the national wellbeing indicators. Practitioners should continue to use the language of the indicators consistently during play and routines. This would enable children to become familiar with the indicators and help them talk about their wellbeing. Practitioners should assist children to be early leaders and be responsible within the playroom. At times, the playroom can become untidy. Practitioners should help children to take better care of resources. Moving forward, children would benefit from learning about their rights, in a developmentally appropriate way, as part of this work.
- All children have their lunch in the school dining hall. Practitioners have undertaken a test of change to improve the quality of lunchtime experiences for children. They have evaluated this continually and as a result of important improvements, have been able to support children's independence skills gradually. There is scope to improve this further. Practitioners should consider the benefits of eating within the playroom where they can allocate more time for the lunchtime routine. This would allow children to eat lunch in a relaxed, unhurried and homely environment. Children would be able to develop further their independence skills through self-serving and have more time to engage in social conversation with their peers and adults.
- Practitioners are aware of their statutory duties relating to ELC including planning for children who require additional help with their learning. All children have a personal care plan which outlines children's care, health and welfare needs. Practitioners review these plans regularly with parents. Overall, practitioners are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and keeping children safe. The headteacher should ensure all staff are clear on the processes for reporting incidents. Practitioners have relevant risk assessments in place for various areas of the nursery.
- Children and families benefit from practitioners' welcoming and inclusive approach. Practitioners recognise they could do more to help children become aware of the diverse world in which they live. With the support of the Parent Council, practitioners have purchased books to enable children to learn about families. They should continue to offer a variety of meaningful experiences to help children develop an awareness of different cultures and celebrations.

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

- In communication, early language and literacy the majority of children make satisfactory progress. Children engage well when listening to stories and respond enthusiastically at appropriate times. Older children ask interesting questions and practitioners support them well to find out the answers through books and use of the internet. Most children develop their mark-making skills well by using a range of tools and materials. Increasingly, children recognise their name in print. All children would benefit from more environmental print and signs around the playroom to support their communication, language and literacy skills.
- The majority of children make satisfactory progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Children are developing their skills in counting and recognising numerals during play and nursery routines. Using games on the interactive board, a few children copy and continue patterns and match and sort coins confidently. Overall, children should have the opportunity to develop and apply a range of skills through rich interactions, spaces and experiences to support their early mathematical thinking. This should help children to make better progress in this area of learning.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Children play well together and are developing firm friendships. Children share their thoughts verbally and through drawings about how to be safe and strong through a specific programme about positive relationships. Almost all children develop their fine motor skills well as they peel, chop and slice fruit. They demonstrate confidence in running, jumping and balancing as they enjoy the challenge of an obstacle course.
- Practitioners encourage children through meaningful praise. They celebrate children's achievements such as artwork, within the setting and share these consistently with parents through an online platform. A few parents share children's achievements from home. Practitioners should now build on children's achievements and successes from out with the nursery to help them develop further their skills.
- Practitioners could build on children's developing skills more effectively through the use of local authority progression frameworks, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy. This will help practitioners to identify relevant next steps in learning for individual children. Senior leaders should create a robust tracking tool to demonstrate the progress children have made in key areas of their learning since starting nursery.

- Practitioners know children, families and the local community very well, including the potential barriers to learning children may experience. They provide all children with real-life experiences such as visiting the local café to help them develop important skills for life and learning. Senior leaders and practitioners recognise they do not yet have sufficient data to help them to identify where children may require additional support or challenge in their learning.

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.