

Summarised inspection findings

**Cranston Country Nursery (early learning
and childcare standalone setting)**

Midlothian Council

SEED No: 9909108

30 January 2018

Key contextual information

Cranston Country Nursery is an Early Learning and Childcare setting located in a rural setting near Pathead in Midlothian. It provides early learning and child care for children from birth to five years old and works in partnership with Midlothian Council. It is registered for 97 children to attend at any one time and is managed by two directors supported by a senior management team. It is open for 50 weeks of the year, from 7.30am -6pm.

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.

- There is a sense of collective responsibility in wanting to take forward improvements across the setting. The directors provide positive opportunities, and support, for practitioners to lead developments and take ownership of improvements. This has a positive impact on practitioner confidence and morale. At all levels, practitioners are reflective in their practice and want to do their best to make continuous improvements to children's learning and development. Practitioners are proactive in updating their own professional knowledge to make this happen. They work very well together as a team and all engaged very positively with the inspection process.
- Leadership at all levels is developing well with the potential for management to increase this further. Management structures within the setting are well defined, led effectively by the two directors. The senior management team provides effective leadership across the setting.
- Practitioners have developed a broad vision, values and aims for the setting which are relevant to its context. It is recognised that this is on an informal level and could be formalised into a clearer rationale. This would help give a clearer direction for the setting and a greater clarity and connectivity to developments. The directors are aware that in doing this children, parents and practitioners should be involved to ensure they fully reflect the aspirations of all stakeholders. Care should also be taken to ensure that this rationale for the setting's work fully reflects current thinking in early learning and childcare and the unique context of Cranston Country Nursery in its rural setting.
- The setting improvement plan has appropriate targets identified which are leading to positive developments. These can be observed in the daily work of the setting. We have discussed with directors that the identification of these targets could be based more on the setting's own self-evaluation to ensure the most relevant targets are consistently taken forward.

- Practitioners have responsibility for key aspects of the setting. They recognise that this could be developed and strengthened further, particularly as they become more involved in self-evaluation and planning for improvements. This will ensure that the responsibility for the leadership of change will be shared even more.
- Whilst there are opportunities for children to adopt some leadership responsibilities, such as preparing snack, we have discussed with practitioners of the possibilities to increase this further. There is scope to involve children more in planning and evaluating their own learning and the work of the setting. The development of floor books, or similar would support this.
- The senior management team, with the committed practitioner team, show a high level of commitment to securing positive outcomes for children and the future of the setting. Together, they regularly reflect informally on their practice and recognise that they now need to develop processes to evaluate what is working well and what needs to improve in a more structured way and in line with national advice. This will ensure that targets are more relevant and will secure a pace of change that will make a difference based on the uniqueness of the setting. In doing this, practitioners should adopt a more outward looking approach to what they are trying to achieve. The setting is supported by quality assurance from local authority support and development visits.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences 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.

- Across the setting, practitioners work well with children to help them feel valued, safe and secure. Overall, children learn and achieve well and are confident and inquisitive learners according to their stage of development.
- Babies enjoy positive relationships with practitioners who understand the importance of nurturing attachments. As a result, babies are settled and confident in the environment. They are motivated by the range of play experiences which encourage them to make choices appropriate to their developmental stage. Babies enjoy taking part in regular song and music time which is used well to promote their language development and sense of belonging. Practitioners know babies and their individual needs and use this knowledge to tailor their interactions and care. We have asked practitioners to continue to develop the environment to ensure babies have more access to sensory and messy play opportunities to support their development.
- Children aged two to three years benefit from positive relationships with practitioners and are developing their confidence and independence. They are keen to explore and use the range of play resources to problem solve and represent their own ideas. They are building their resilience and curiosity through making choices about their play and using the outdoor areas. Children enjoy accessing books and engaging in song which is supporting their early language and communication. Practitioners are developing their understanding of child development and applying this in their practice. We have asked the team to continue to review the learning environment in line with national practice guidance to provide children with developmentally appropriate challenge in their play.
- During play for children aged three to five years, most engage well, making choices and leading aspects of their learning. They interact well with each other in pairs and in small groups and when adults intervene effectively to support and extend learning. Overall, children learn well when using both the indoor and outdoor learning environment. They enjoy exploring and investigating the various experiences. At times, children need to engage in more meaningful real- life play contexts for developing their skills in learning, life and work. This would add a greater challenge to the learning experiences of children and in particular give a practical application to literacy and numeracy skills. More focused observations by practitioners would support a few children who need encouragement in persevere and stay on tasks and activities.

- Practitioners have identified that they now need to develop the learning cycle be more focused making a clearer link between planning, observations and assessment.
- The senior management team recognise that children could be even more involved in planning and leading their own learning. Whilst most children are able to talk about their learning and what activities they have undertaken recently, there is scope to extend this further. In order to support children doing this, practitioners should ensure that the process of using floor books and e-journals is more meaningful, giving a clearer focus to evaluating learning and what children need to learn next. The clear and consistent identification of children's next steps in learning would support the work of the setting greatly.
- Overall, practitioners support children's learning well. They now need to further children's learning through greater challenge for those children who may need this. Where practice is effective, practitioners use questions well to check children's knowledge and develop their play. In the best examples, questioning and skilled interactions are used to promote curiosity in children's play. This should continue to be built upon to ensure a consistent approach across all practitioners.
- Overall, practitioners organise sessions well to allow children time and space to explore their learning, make choices and follow their interests. Consideration could also be made to the best use of adults, especially in their key worker role, across each session to ensure all children have the time and space to develop their individual interests. Practitioners could also review and improve the purpose of, and arrangements for, 'together times'.
- The use of digital technologies is developing well with children utilising the computer room keenly to support and extend learning. They enjoy using the interactive whiteboard.
- Practitioners are aware of various methods to assess children learning. This is helping them to review children's learning and progress. In order to ensure accurate assessment of children's progress over time, practitioners could now be involved further in moderation using national advice such as the national benchmarking tool. Led by the senior management team, practitioners now need to use assessments better to ensure an accurate overview of children's progress. This will support practitioners in making accurate judgements and assessments on how children are progressing in their learning. In doing this, assessment information needs to be recorded more robustly and better analysed to identify children's strengths and development needs.
- Practitioners use various planning documentation. These would support children's progress more if they gave a greater focus to learning and expected outcomes for children rather than on activities and resources. There is not enough focus on planning for individuals and small groups of children. Over time, practitioners need to review their planning arrangements to better meet children's differing needs.
- Tracking and monitoring of children's learning is at an early stage of development. Whilst practitioners have an understanding of how the use of e-journals can be developed further there is a need for practitioners to develop a shared understanding about what information is needed, how it is gathered and how it is used best in the process of tracking progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Across the setting, planning for children's learning broadly takes account of national guidance. For older children, practitioners make increasing use of the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence and guidance from the local authority to plan for children's learning. For younger children, learning is based on Pre-Birth to 3 guidance and responsive care. Recording of this is most evident in the use of e-learning journals. As the process for planning develops, practitioners should ensure they are planning for progression across all curriculum areas. It will be important to take full account of curriculum design principles to ensure all children experience appropriate challenge and depth in their learning. Whilst increasingly, literacy and numeracy is being promoted and developed across the setting within play, there is scope to give this a higher profile.
- The outdoor area has been developed recently giving a greater focus to outdoor play in children's learning. This is allowing children to develop and apply their skills in a real-life context. Children receive a broad coverage of other curricular areas with children developing skills in, for example, the expressive arts and digital technologies.
- In the further development of the curriculum for all ages, practitioners should link this to a clear rationale in what the setting is trying to achieve. In doing so, practitioners should identify what should be the main drivers of the curriculum for Cranston Country Nursery.
- Transition from home into the setting is managed well. Information gained at this point enables practitioners to get to know individual children and their families. Transitions within the setting are also well managed. For older children as they approach school age, practitioners should consider developing closer links with receiving schools to support learning across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families - parental engagement

- Children's progress is shared with parents through informal and formal discussions. This includes verbal feedback on a daily basis, parents meetings and transition meetings into, within and out of the setting. Overall parents who responded to inspection questionnaire were happy with the work of the setting. However a significant number were unclear as to how they could become more involved in the work of the setting and their children's learning.
- E-learning journals have been developed to capture and share children's learning and achievements. These can be accessed by parents and families, allowing the opportunity to contribute to their individual child's learning journey. Parents spoke positively about this development.
- The setting has a website and uses social media to share information. This is accessed by parents and extended family members who are keen to share in the life of the setting.
- As discussed with the setting, there is scope to explore further ways of sharing learning opportunities at home. To ensure maximum impact and benefit to children, these should be developed in partnership with parents.

2.1: Safeguarding

- The centre submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant practitioners 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.

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.

- Relationships across the setting are built upon mutual respect and trust, leading to a welcoming and friendly ethos for all families. Settling in procedures allow practitioners the opportunity to get to know their children and families well. This supports children to develop a feeling of being safe and secure in their environment. Overall children's behaviour is observed to be positive in line with their age and stage of development. Practitioners should continue to promote positive behaviour through positive relationships.
- Wellbeing folders are used to capture information relating to the individual needs of children across all playrooms. The national wellbeing indicators are referenced by practitioners when completing individual sheets for their key children. Practitioners and children are at the early stages of using the language of the wellbeing indicators across all aspects of their work, consideration should now be given to the further use of the language of Getting it right for every child to promote a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and families.
- Practitioners listen to what children say and respond through daily dialogue and their planning. They should now continue to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for consultation with children. Developing a rights based approach across all aspects of the work of the setting would support this.
- Children are observed to be happy and confident, both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor learning encourages children to be healthy and active. The opportunity to share and take turns with their peers is evident as children recently developed 'loose parts' play area, for example using large tubes to talk and listen. They risk assess their play as they access the climbing frame, tyre swings and trampoline. Most children access weekly outdoor football sessions, following basic instructions and developing their physical skills.
- Overall, statutory duties are actively engaged with. There is a clear understanding of what is required of practitioners and management in their requirement to fulfil statutory duties to secure positive outcomes for children. There are appropriate procedures in place for safeguarding.
- Children who face barriers to their learning have individual plans put in place in consultation with families and other agencies where appropriate. Management and practitioners should ensure processes and systems consistently capture all relevant information about individual children. This will enable practitioners to continue to plan for their wellbeing, care and learning.

- Equality and diversity is celebrated and valued, with all children and families treated with respect in a fair and just manner. Practitioners should continue to explore how they can engage children and practitioners in relevant learning about equality and diversity.

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.

- Babies benefit from the caring and responsive approach taken by practitioners and are developing confidence in making their needs known. They use their emerging language and communication skills to engage with practitioners and make choices. They are gaining confidence in the environment and explore the range of play resources provided. Babies' physical skills are developing well through the use of physical play equipment. Regular and skilled use of song is used to support babies' early language, numeracy and sense of wellbeing.
- Children aged two to three years are making good progress across their learning. They show high levels of independence as they explore and play. Children communicate with each other and practitioners and have time to follow their own interests. They are developing their early language skills well through conversation, singing songs and sharing stories. They are developing an awareness of early numeracy and mathematics as they play with water and complete a range of puzzles.
- Most children aged three to five years are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They show an understanding of their own emotions and how their actions affect others. A few children require support in order to consistently apply this understanding and to maintain their friendships. Children have an awareness of the ways that they can support their own health and wellbeing, for example by making healthy choices and brushing their teeth. They demonstrate high levels of confidence and independence outdoors, challenging themselves by taking healthy risks. Their physical skills are developing well through climbing, balancing and taking part in football sessions.
- Most children are making good progress in early communication and language, with a few making very good progress. They converse confidently throughout their play with a few children demonstrating a wide use of vocabulary. They enjoy books both independently and as a group, with a few children able to recall a familiar narrative. Most children show a keen interest in early writing with a few children regularly writing their names. We have asked practitioners to continue to develop opportunities for children to develop and apply these skills throughout their play and daily routines.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They count with confidence during play and show good number recognition skills. Children compare size

and amount while playing at the water and are developing their use of mathematical language. Children show a developing understanding of shape and mathematical concepts as they use construction materials, blocks and loose parts outdoors to represent their ideas. We have asked practitioners to continue to develop opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills in numeracy and mathematics across the curriculum.

- Children show confidence and enjoyment in their use of digital technologies. They use the computers and interactive board to develop their skills such as mouse control while playing a range of games. A few children are beginning to use the keyboard to explore letters and build familiar words. Children are interested in how technologies work and exploring light and dark through use of torches and other resources.
- Achievements are recognised through effective use of praise and daily communication. The team should now consider ways in which to track children's wider achievements to contribute to an overall picture of progress and build on prior learning. Regular discussion allows practitioners to share their knowledge of children and work in consultation with others to reduce any barriers to learning. We have asked the team to now focus more closely on the impact of interventions over time in supporting children's progress.

Setting choice of QI : 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

- **Theme 1 Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation**
- **Theme 2 Evidence-based improvements**
- **Theme 3 Ensuring impact of success for children and families.**

- There is a strong commitment to self-improvement within Cranston Country Nursery. The directors, together with the senior management team, regularly discuss what needs to be improved in the setting. Practitioners work very well in their individual teams, led by the team leaders. There is evidence of the impact of the informal approach taken to self-evaluation in all areas of the work of the setting. Regular meetings are used by managers to review the work of the setting and allow practitioners to bring suggestions forward through for example their '1 minute talks'. The senior management team should now build on the good professional dialogue already happening in the setting to ensure procedures for self-evaluation are more robust with clearer impact. This should include a more detailed approach to how children's learning is observed and monitored.
- Whilst stakeholders, including parents and children are consulted, there is scope for management to increase the extent of this. Reviewing the role and involvement of parents in this would add value to what the setting is trying to achieve for children. This should be linked closely to reviewing the rationale for the curriculum and the work of the setting so everyone has a clear, shared-understanding of what the setting is trying to achieve,
- Overall, practitioners are aware of a range of assessments and make how to make observations of children's learning. This is helping to track children's progress against the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence in the e-learning journals. The setting is aware that, in order to track children's progress over time in literacy and numeracy it needs to develop a more robust system.

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.

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