

Summarised inspection findings

Castlehill Primary School Nursery Class

East Dunbartonshire Council

17 March 2020

Key contextual information

Castlehill nursery is based in Castlehill Primary School in Bearsden. The nursery caters for children aged two to five years. It can accommodate 87 children. The nursery is open from 8am to 6pm daily. Children aged two to three years are in one playroom while the children aged three to five years have three main playrooms and a sensory room. At the time of inspection there was no free flow access from playrooms to the outside area, but there were imminent plans to rectify this.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- Overall, there are positive and nurturing relationships between practitioners and children. As a result, children are happy and settled in the nursery. Children aged two to three years are becoming confident, as practitioners provide developmentally appropriate experiences for them to explore and investigate their environment. They enjoy sensory play and spending time in the home corner. Children aged three to five years are polite and friendly. They play well together and show kindness and consideration to each other. Children's experiences are enriched by regular visits to the forest. They take increasing responsibility for keeping themselves safe and investigating and solving problems. They enjoy their forest experiences and are very engaged during experiences outdoors. Children enjoy the use of digital technology. At times this helps to support and enrich their play and learning. Staff should create more opportunities for digital learning and extend the range and focus of electronic devices to support learning further. For example, by children taking photographs of their work, they could reflect on and share their learning with others. Staff provide many experiences for children which do not yet motivate and engage children sufficiently. Often, activities are too adult directed, do not follow children's interests and interrupt children's play. As a result, the majority of children are not yet able to sustain their engagement in learning. Staff should ensure that children accessing full-time provision experience a wide range of motivating experiences across the day. Practitioners need to work together to support children to sustain appropriate levels of engagement across the curriculum and throughout the time children spend in nursery.
- Practitioners in the nursery need to improve their interactions and questioning. In doing this, they need to engage, challenge and support children more effectively to lead their own learning. They should continue to review and develop the learning environment and resources. This would support higher levels of children's engagement in learning through play. They should ensure the environment offers more opportunities for investigation, creativity, curiosity and problem solving. Practitioners acknowledge that continued use of national guidance will support them to review current practice. They need to improve approaches to learning and teaching to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. Staff would benefit from visiting other settings to observe and discuss how current effective practice works in other services.

- Practitioners have made an early start to using electronic journals to record individual children's learning and experiences. Practitioners should ensure that they identify and record significant learning in their observations. This will allow them to identify clearer, more relevant next steps in children's learning. Moving forward, practitioners need to provide better levels of support or challenge for all children. They should do this across the curriculum. This will help children to reflect on their learning, be aware of their next steps and recognise success when they achieve their goals. Practitioners should continue to develop learning journals by encouraging parents to add their own comments about their child's learning and share achievements from home. Practitioners support children and families by managing the transitions from home to the nursery, between rooms and into P1 well. Practitioners would benefit from opportunities to collaborate and work closely with teachers at P1. This collaborative approach across the early level will support better continuity and progression in children's learning.
- Planning for children aged two to three years takes account of national guidance. There are important weaknesses in planning for children aged three to five years. As a priority, staff need to align their planning to the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff need to engage in professional learning to develop a shared understanding of expectations across the early level.
- Practitioners are at an early stage of tracking and monitoring children's learning across the curriculum. They have identified the need to develop this further, to ensure they provide experiences which build on and extend previous learning and, as a result, meet the individual needs of all children more effectively. Practitioners would benefit from opportunities to work with other early learning and childcare settings to moderate their assessment of children's learning and progress.
- As a matter of urgency, staff need to change the practice of regularly extracting individual children from their play to develop literacy and numeracy skills. This is not an effective or age-appropriate way to improve outcomes for young children.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school 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.

3.2 Securing children's progress

weak

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 come to nursery with well-developed skills in literacy and numeracy. Practitioners now need to ensure children experience the right level of support and challenge in their play. This will support children to make appropriate progress in their learning and develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills across learning.
- Overall, the progress children aged three to five are making in their learning in literacy and numeracy within the 3-5 room is weak. Senior leaders recognise that existing systems for tracking and monitoring children's progress in learning are not effective enough and do not provide reliable data.
- Children aged two to three years are making good progress in their learning. They are developing their love of stories and songs within a relaxing, comfortable environment. Practitioners support children's language development well through their positive interactions with children. Children's play within the construction area is developing well their understanding of spatial awareness and shapes.
- Most children aged three to five are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. Children are developing well their physical skills, including coordination and balance during outdoor play and in the forest. They are beginning to develop their fine motor skills through play with natural materials and a range of loose parts. Practitioners have begun to encourage children to consider how they might use some simple rules to enable children to get along with each other. Practitioners should continue to develop approaches to help children talk about their wellbeing through the use of the wellbeing indicators.
- Children would benefit from more opportunities to develop further their listening skills. Most children are becoming more confident when talking to each other in their play. They would benefit from more frequent, focused interactions that encourage conversation and listening to others. More work needs to be done to provide quieter spaces to allow practitioners to develop listening and talking skills with children. The majority of children enjoy sharing stories, particularly in small groups and one to one. Practitioners should develop further, children's skills in sharing, exploring, and creating their own stories. The nursery provides weekly book borrowing to allow children to take books home. Practitioners need to do more to motivate children to access books from the reading areas. Children are beginning to learn about, and use, non-fiction texts across a few areas of play such as the construction area. Practitioners should develop this further across more areas of the nursery.

- Children are beginning to experiment with mark-making tools. Most children can recognise their name. Older children are becoming more confident writing their own names. Practitioners need to provide children with more motivating, less formal approaches across the nursery and outdoors to develop their mark-making skills.
- Children are beginning to learn about shapes and patterns in play across the nursery. They are becoming aware of numbers, number order and early counting routines. A few children are more confident in counting and can count to 20 and beyond. There is a need to ensure children experience an appropriate level of challenge in numeracy and mathematics, to develop their skills more effectively. Practitioners should now develop children's numeracy and mathematical skills in meaningful, and challenging ways. They should do this in routines and play throughout the session.
- Staff have raised the profile of children's achievements in the nursery through, for example, introducing a 'home achievement wall'. Practitioners should involve parents and children in ensuring that learning in the nursery reflects the home experiences of children as fully as possible. This will make experiences more exciting and relevant, and enable practitioners to build on what children have already achieved and learned. They should now track the skills children are developing, to support them in planning wider achievement opportunities further. Practitioners should develop further opportunities to enable children to contribute to the life of the nursery and wider school community more fully. Children within the nursery could develop more independence and confidence by being members of the primary school community groups.
- The nursery team know children and their families well. They are nurturing and inclusive of all children. They support children well when they are upset. As a result, children are happy and parents feel welcomed within the nursery. Senior leaders and staff need to now improve the management of information about children's care and learning. Practitioners should ensure that care plans for children have more specific targets to ensure children make good progress in their learning. This will ensure continuity of care and increased progress for all children. Senior leaders need to ensure they introduce appropriate interventions, understood by all, to address any potential barriers to learning for children. Going forward, senior leaders should ensure a clear focus on the impact of planned change on ensuring equity for children and families.

Other relevant evidence

Senior leaders need to review roles and responsibilities of the leadership team within the nursery. They need ensure remits enable them to build capacity within the practitioner team to support staff to understand progress through the early level within Curriculum for Excellence.

Staff should ensure there is a quiet area for children 3-5 to rest, particularly for those who access full time provision.

There is a need to review the access to food and snacks throughout the day to ensure children, in particular children accessing full time provision, have the opportunity to eat outwith the prearranged meal times if required.

Staff need to develop the learning environment more fully to ensure it motivates and sustains children's interest while developing curiosity and imagination. As part of this, practitioners need to access ongoing professional learning to deliver high quality learning experiences. The leadership team should provide protected time for staff for professional learning and for developing more fully the electronic journals.

All staff need to increase the focus on robust self-evaluation using How good is our early learning and childcare? (HGIOELC?) to improve the nursery.

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.