

Summarised inspection findings

Drumblade Primary School and Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

09 October 2018

Key contextual information

Drumblade Nursery Class is situated in an annexe building based in the grounds of Drumblade Primary School. Children attend from Drumblade and the surrounding villages. Morning and afternoon sessions of early learning and childcare (ELC) are provided for children aged three years until starting primary school. The current roll is 19. Almost all practitioners within the nursery class have been employed within the past year.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

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 school vision is shared by the nursery. The vision to be a friendly, happy place to learn is reflected through the positive ethos that has been created by practitioners. As the nursery develops, it will be important to review and refresh the vision, values and aims to ensure they fully reflect the aspirations and uniqueness of the setting and its children.
- Practitioners have worked well together to develop and improve the setting. The headteacher now needs to take greater responsibility and to provide strategic leadership and direction for all practitioners. Practitioners would benefit from a greater level of day-to-day support and management. Currently there is a lack of formal monitoring of learning and teaching and the headteacher now needs to have a clear overview of the progress children are making in their learning. A focus on the leadership of learning and continuous improvement of the nursery is required. Clear remits and responsibilities are required for all staff within the nursery, including the headteacher, lead practitioner, and practitioners.
- Practitioners work very well together and strive to deliver high quality experiences and to improve outcomes for children. The lead practitioner is currently undertaking the leadership role for the nursery. She provides effective leadership and, along with the practitioner team, has been influential in many of the changes that have taken place since taking up post in March 2017. Practitioners have worked well together to transform the outdoor and indoor environments. They have created a space where most children are able to lead their own play and can fully engage with the range of stimulating experiences and resources.
- Practitioners attend a range of professional learning sessions that include looking outwards to other ELC settings and undertaking personal research. These are increasing their knowledge, influencing their practice, and informing the changes that have taken place within learning environments. Recent training on schematic play has enabled practitioners to begin to adapt their practice, and refresh resources. This is beginning to impact on the quality of children's learning experiences. In addition, practitioners benefit from support from the education authority. This range of professional learning is enabling practitioners to build confidence and skills. They would now benefit from having further leadership roles to take forward key improvements and areas of the curriculum.

- The visiting teacher, together with practitioners, has identified specific improvement priorities and these have led to a number of improvements. Practitioners regularly engage in professional dialogue. They are clear about what is working well and where further improvement is required. They now need to ensure there is formal recording of evaluative activity that is evidence-based and demonstrates the impact of change. While practitioners are beginning to use different tools to evaluate the work of the nursery, there is no formal approach. The headteacher now needs to take a lead role in guiding and managing the process of self-evaluation and improvement within the nursery.

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

- Most children engage well with the variety of experiences provided. They confidently make choices and explore their nursery environment. Children use the range of open-ended resources and everyday materials to support and enhance their play. The majority of children demonstrate sustained levels of play, particularly outdoors when playing in the mud kitchen, making dens and navigating obstacles with remote control cars. Overall, children readily lead their play because of the positive changes within the learning environment.
- Practitioners are positive and caring in their interactions with children. They engage in conversations with children and are responsive to their ideas and suggestions. Practitioners continue to develop their skills in using questions and commentaries to deepen children's thinking and encourage sustained play. These now need to be more consistent across the practitioner team. Practitioners make effective use of digital technology to enrich and support children's learning. Researching specific topics and using the computer to create signs and labels for the nursery are good examples.
- Practitioners should continue to develop skills in observing learning during play and adult-led activities. They should review how to use the information from these experiences to plan for children's learning. Practitioners now need to ensure they build on the skills and knowledge children bring to the nursery to ensure sufficient challenge and depth in their learning. Children have individual electronic journals that reflect their engagement in a range of experiences across the curriculum. These journals also include next steps for learning. Practitioners now need to gather information on significant learning more consistently. This will support further the identification of appropriate next steps in order to provide the right level of support or challenge for children. Practitioners plan to increase opportunities for children to contribute to their journals and to reflect on their learning and achievements.
- Practitioners within the nursery are developing a child-centred and responsive approach to planning. They recognise that they now need to build on this approach to demonstrate more clearly, the breadth and depth of children's learning. There needs to be a strategic approach to monitoring and tracking children's progress and achievement. Assessment of children's learning should be integral to the planning process and should support the tracking of children's progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners use the experiences and outcomes of a Curriculum for Excellence when planning for children's learning. They track these to ensure children receive their entitlement to a broad general education. Through a variety of professional learning opportunities and professional dialogue, practitioners are beginning to develop a shared understanding of early learning pedagogy. This has influenced their practice and how they plan the learning environments. Increased use of open-ended materials has supported children's play and encouraged creativity, curiosity and inquiry. As a result of the new developments, there would be benefit in creating a curriculum rationale. This should fully reflect the vision and aspirations of the nursery and its context within the school and wider community.
- Increasingly, practitioners provide literacy and numeracy experiences across learning. Building on the positive start, there is scope to develop this further by increasing the profile of literacy and numeracy within curriculum planning.
- Transitions into the nursery are flexible and managed well to support children and families. Specific activities at certain times of the year are organised to enable children from the nursery and primary school to work together. This includes enterprise activities, joint outdoor play, and outings. It will be important for practitioners to plan these activities well to ensure they are purposeful and effective in meeting the learning needs of all children. Overall, the process for supporting transition for children moving onto primary school needs to improve. This will help ensure continuity in the curriculum and progression in learning, supporting children more effectively.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Families are being encouraged to become more involved in the work of the nursery. Practitioners have reviewed methods of engaging parents, for example in 'stay and play' sessions. This good practice could be developed by taking more account of the interests and experiences of parents. Families are also encouraged to support the nursery in activities such as the woodland walk and through contributing to resources such as loose parts for outdoor play.
- Practitioners keep parents informed through a helpful monthly newsletter, which outlines the contexts for learning and provides suggestions for families to extend learning outwith the nursery. Practitioners also make use of electronic journals to inform parents of children's experiences in the nursery. A few parents share examples of learning from home and practitioners have plans to encourage all parents to become involved.
- Families have opportunities to use home link resources to play and learn together outwith the nursery. Practitioners have acted on feedback from parents to ensure resources are meeting all children's needs. We discussed ways to develop this further such as providing a wider range of cross-curricular resources.
- Practitioners are beginning to consult parents on matters affecting the children such as the proposals around increased hours of ELC and improvements to the outdoor environment. Practitioners are aware of the importance of developing more innovative ways to increase parental engagement.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

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 within the nursery are based upon mutual respect and care. Practitioners interact with the children in a positive and friendly manner. They make appropriate adaptations to their interactions based on the children's age and stage of development.
- The children are polite and well-mannered overall and practitioners model appropriate interactions. Practitioners know the children and families well. Children are happy and settled in the nursery and parents comment positively on the support and experiences they receive.
- Practitioners make use of the wellbeing indicators of Getting it right for every child to help children feel safe and included in the routines of the nursery. Children are involved in risk assessment of the outdoor area and can share their knowledge with their peers. All practitioners make effective use of the wellbeing indicators to encourage the children to make appropriate choices in their play.
- Practitioners seek the views of children in appropriate ways. They consult children on matters affecting them such as the development of the outdoor area, the recently purchased furniture for the playroom and the class charter. Children are involved in the daily routines which are developing their independence such as selecting and preparing fruit for snack. We have discussed with practitioners, how to include the views of children in the planning and evaluation of learning experiences.
- Practitioners within the nursery have a good understanding of their statutory duties and are aware of safeguarding procedures. The lead practitioner has established links with external agencies and professionals such as health visitors and is developing multi-agency working practices in the nursery.
- Practitioners use the advice of external agencies to plan children's individual targets making sure they receive the appropriate level of support. Children's personal plans are shared with parents and their views sought throughout the year. We discussed ways to develop further the personal planning approach by engaging parents in regular dialogue about children's progress in their health, wellbeing and learning. Children's personal plans should also be used to provide transition information for children moving on to primary one.
- Practitioners strive to promote inclusive practices and to make sure all children have the opportunity to contribute within the setting. Most practitioners sensitively encourage children to include their peers and to respect and value diversity. Resources are used appropriately to promote inclusion such as the use of digital technologies to promote wellbeing and visual prompts to secure understanding. Practitioners should ensure their long-term plan takes

greater account of their local context and reflects our diverse society by including specific celebrations and cultural events.

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 confident and independent learners who make choices about where they want to play within the nursery. Practitioners should now ensure that they build on children's prior learning to enable children to make the best possible progress in their learning. While practitioners could describe the progress children make, they do not yet have an effective system for monitoring or tracking progress. Electronic journals do not demonstrate clearly enough the progress children make over time, particularly in relation to early language, literacy and numeracy and mathematics.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in early language and literacy. They listen well to stories and during together time. Children readily engage in conversation with adults and their peers and are confident to describe, in detail, their experiences. This includes demonstrating how to navigate electronic toys and using appropriate language to describe position and direction. Children engage in mark-making experiences using a range of media. The majority of children are now forming recognisable letters, with a few creating signs and labels around the nursery. Practitioners could develop this further through real-life experiences. A few children know the letter sounds of their name and can identify them in other familiar words. Children will benefit from increased opportunities during their play to develop phonological awareness.
- In numeracy and mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress. They develop an awareness of number through daily routines and playing games. The majority of children use appropriate mathematical language when comparing length and describing order. Through enterprise projects, children recognise coins and become aware of their value. There is scope to increase opportunities for children to explore shape and pattern. Through real-life experiences, children could be gathering and recording information in relation to the local community, for example, wildlife or traffic surveys.
- In health and wellbeing, children are making satisfactory progress. Most children are independent in hygiene routines. The majority can describe foods that are healthy. Children develop physical skills during outdoor play. This includes using large apparatus to climb, balance and swing. Practitioners support children to manage risk and make decisions about keeping safe during risky play. Children develop their fine motor skills using, for example, woodwork tools and scissors. It will be important to make sure that children receive sufficient challenge from experiences and these build on what they can already do.

- Practitioners celebrate children's achievements through praise and encouragement. Children also take part in the school's award system. It will be important for children to understand the purpose of the award system. Practitioners should now explore ways to celebrate children's wider achievements from outwith the nursery. As this develops, practitioners should look at ways to build on this information for children to continue to develop their skills and talents within the nursery setting.
- Practitioners demonstrate an understanding of the importance of promoting equity across all aspects of the nursery. They know families well and are aware of the need to be proactive in identifying and reducing potential barriers to inclusion and learning. Practitioners should now gather a range of data to build a picture of the whole child in order to better identify effective strategies to support the holistic development of all children.

Choice of QI: 2.5 Family Learning

- Engaging families in learning
 - Early intervention and prevention
 - Quality of family learning programmes
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- Positive relationships are evident between practitioners and families. Practitioners value the contributions families make to the nursery. They shared with us ways that parents had supported the development of the outdoor area. Practitioners continue to seek opportunities to engage parents in the life of the nursery.
 - Practitioners recognise that they have strengths in terms of parental engagement, however, they are clear that they are at very early stages in developing strategies to support family learning. There is a commitment to supporting families and practitioners are proactive in accessing advice and support from partner agencies to enable them to secure better outcomes for children and families.

Care Inspectorate evidence

1. Quality of care and support

Children were cared for by familiar staff who were welcoming, approachable and friendly. They were inclusive in their interactions with children and their families. As a result, children were confident and settled, and enjoyed being in the nursery. Staff knew the individual needs of the children in their care well. They had worked closely with parents and other agencies to develop care plans for children with additional support needs. Visual aids and other strategies to help children communicate were fully embedded in practice. This helped the children cope with making transitions and supported them to follow nursery routines. As a result, they were growing more confident and independent.

To safeguard and protect children, staff had recently attended child protection training and had a good understanding of possible signs of abuse and the correct procedures to follow if concerned. Child Protection concerns were recorded in chronologies and reported to the manager of the service. Other agencies had been contacted and strategies were in place to help support the children and their families.

There were no children attending the service with medical needs. However, an appropriate policy was in place to support staff if required. Staff were knowledgeable about children with allergies and food intolerances and worked with parents to ensure their needs were met.

To help children achieve and learn, staff planned activities which were responsive to the learning needs and interests of the children. Staff were developing their skills in using their observations of the children at play to help plan learning experiences for the children. These were not always consistent and did not always identify appropriate next steps for children. Staff should continue to develop their skills in observation and assessment to ensure the best possible progress for all children.

Snacks were healthy and reflected best practice guidance. Children's choice was encouraged and opportunities were available for the children to be independent and serve themselves. Children were involved in preparing snack and enjoyed chatting with staff and their friends. This helped develop good manners and social skills.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

The nursery was accommodated within an annexe building in the grounds of Drumblade Primary. The nursery entrance was secure and staff were vigilant about the whereabouts of the children. However, there was a small gate in the outdoor play area leading onto an adjacent property. This was not secure to effectively keep children safe within the boundaries of the service. The manager advised that the gate belonged to the neighbouring property and she would investigate ways of securing the gate.

The nursery entrance hall supported good communication links between home and nursery. Parents were able to access an informative noticeboard and view photographs of their child at play.

The environment had recently undergone significant changes. Staff had involved the children in developing the playroom, encouraging them to take ownership and be responsible. New furniture had been purchased which enabled children to choose independently and freely. The role play corner was well resourced with lots of real life resources. This enabled children to learn through familiar play, develop their ideas and explore their emotions.

The outdoor equipment and resources were varied, extensive and promoted children's curiosity, inquiry and creativity. All the children were engaged in the activities on offer and enjoyed playing in the sandpit and using metal detectors to find treasure. Staff should now evaluate the learning experience for children. They should further develop the learning opportunities in literacy and numeracy and ensure children have a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play.

The children were able to free flow between outdoors and indoors. They were very risk aware and were involved in assessing the safety of the outdoor area before play. Children were very capable and independent and were able to put on water proof clothing and change their shoes before going outside. This helped to keep them clean, dry and comfortable and more able to enjoy the experience.

Appropriate infection control procedures were in place and children washed their hands before eating and after outdoor play. A changing table was available for use. This supported children's safety and dignity.

Staff had completed first aid training which provided them with the appropriate skills to deal with minor accidents. Any accidents and incidents were recorded and the information shared with the parent/carer. This helped support the wellbeing of the child.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

3. Quality of staffing

All staff were registered with an appropriate regulatory body. This is important to protect children and keep them safe.

There had been some recent staff changes which had led to positive improvements. Staff were working together well to support the children, for example they took turns organising snack and reading stories. They had also worked hard to develop the service including making changes to the environment, involving families and improving links with other agencies. This led to good outcomes for children.

Staff were warm, caring and used praise to develop children's confidence and self-esteem. Most staff used good questioning skills to help facilitate play and develop children's learning. This should be developed further to ensure consistency across the service.

Staff were enthusiastic and committed to further develop their knowledge and understanding to improve outcomes for children. All staff had undertaken core training to support the overall welfare of the child. They had attended recent training opportunities on observations and assessment and supporting Schemas (patterns of behaviour) in play. This was beginning to have an impact on their practice to help meet children's learning needs. Staff should continue to evaluate their practice and use this to improve their skills and knowledge in improving the learning outcomes for children.

Some staff did not have a CPD (continuing professional development) file. This would enable staff to evaluate the impact of any training on their practice and help identify where further training may be helpful.

Staff would benefit from having leadership roles relevant to their strengths and experience. This would help staff feel valued and respected and included in making improvements to the service.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4. Quality of management and leadership

Positive improvements had been made to the nursery. With the support of the authority, staff had been very proactive in developing the service. This had had a positive impact and led to improved outcomes for children. However, they had not been supported by an effective strategic manager to provide guidance and evaluative feedback. The school manager had not recently visited nursery and had not attended any nursery meetings. This meant she did not have a clear overview of children's progress and was not providing support and direction to staff.

She was not aware of her responsibility to notify and inform the care inspectorate and of the circumstances when to do so. As a result, this puts children at risk (see requirement 1). Staff had undertaken some self-evaluation to support improvement to the service. However, this was at the very early stages. They were beginning to use informal monitoring and professional dialogue to help develop their practice. However, regular staff monitoring and supervision had not been undertaken. As a result, staff were not fully supported to develop their practice.(see requirement 1).

The nursery provided a welcoming and inclusive environment to families. Families were able to chat with staff on a daily basis and opportunities were available for families to become more involved through play and stay sessions. They were regularly informed through newsletters and by email. Children's interests and preferences were reflected in the activities on offer. Staff should now find innovative ways to further involve parents and find further ways for children to lead their own learning.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

To be completed by the Care Inspector and inserted into the letter

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there is one requirement and one recommendation.

Requirement:

To ensure children receive high quality early learning and childcare, the headteacher must have a strategic leadership and management role in the setting by 15 October 2018.

This ensures care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23). It also complies with Regulation 7 (2) (c) (Fitness of Managers) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011.

Recommendation:

To ensure children receive high quality early learning and childcare, the headteacher must implement a robust and effective quality assurance process.

This ensures that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.