

Summarised inspection findings

Elrick School Nursery

Aberdeenshire Council

2 July 2024

Key contextual information

Elrick School Nursery accommodation is in a purpose-built building situated in the grounds of Elrick Primary School. It is registered to provide Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for 24 children at any one time. Children attending are aged from three to school age. At the time of the inspection 41 children were accessing early learning and childcare through a variety of attendance patterns. The majority of children are in their preschool year. The nursery is open from 8 am - 6 pm across 50 weeks of the year to provide choice and flexibility for families.

The nursery is staffed by two early years senior practitioners (EYSPs), an early years lead practitioner (EYLP) and four early years practitioners (EYPs). Staff work different shift patterns to cover the extended opening hours. One of the EYSPs is the named manager however management of the nursery is shared equally between both EYSPs. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the early years provision. There have been a number of recent changes to the senior nursery posts.

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
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- The nursery is a valued part of the whole school community and shares the school's values which were reviewed in partnership with staff, parents and children. Practitioners refer to the values of 'kind, respectful and safe' in conversations with children and this supports children to demonstrate these values in their play.
 - The headteacher and EYSPs create a positive ethos that supports the team to work well together and with colleagues in the school. They support practitioners to reflect on their practice. Regular team meetings allow the team to engage in professional dialogue and professional self-reflection. EYSPs create conditions where practitioners feel confident to initiate changes to practice. A positive example of this was the introduction of gender-neutral language across the nursery to help challenge thinking about gender stereotypes.
 - There is a culture of distributed leadership and all practitioners have leadership roles and responsibilities relevant to their interests and experience. This is contributing to a few positive changes to improve children's experiences such as the introduction of family nurture sessions and improvements to the nursery environment. Practitioners should build on this positive practice to ensure leadership roles consistently support improvement.
 - Children undertake leadership roles such as snack helpers and risk assessors to begin to develop responsibility. A positive next step would be to develop leadership roles further to support children to lead change.

- All practitioners take part in professional learning. They access training provided by the local authority and engage in the 'Read of the Month' professional reading. This helps to ensure national practice guidance underpins changes to improve outcomes for children and families. All practitioners keep a learning log to record the training they have undertaken and how this will help to improve outcomes for children. Practitioners should also evaluate the impact of changes they make.
- The leadership team have identified appropriate priorities to improve the nursery over time. These are outlined within the improvement plan. EYSPs monitor the action plan to ensure progress is made. They should now consider ways to measure and evaluate the impacts of the improvements they are making. Practitioners should consider age-appropriate ways to involve children in evaluating nursery practice and in the improvement planning process. This will help to develop children's understanding of making changes for improvement.
- Practitioners provide opportunities throughout the year to gather feedback from parents and families through questionnaires and mind maps. EYSPs respond to parental feedback and share any changes they have made through the 'You said, we did' display. As planned, they should continue to seek ways to involve parents and partners more fully in improvement processes.

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

- Practitioners are very welcoming and nurturing in their approaches and strong positive relationships are evident between practitioners, children and families. This supports children to be happy and confident in nursery and to be respectful of others. The nursery environment is well organised to enable children to independently select the resources they need for their play. The pace of the session allows children to have extended time for free flow, purposeful play. As a result, almost all children engage fully in their chosen learning experiences. Practitioners have created a sensory snug for children who need to have time and space to rest and relax when they are feeling overstimulated in the busy nursery environment.
- Practitioners interact sensitively with children and fully engage with children during their play. They listen effectively and support children to know that their views are important. Practitioners ask open-ended questions to extend children's thinking skills and creativity. They should ensure they consistently give children appropriate thinking time to allow them to respond to questions.
- Practitioners support children to use the internet to research their interests. For example, children used the tablet device to take photographs and to find interesting facts about bees. Practitioners promote the meaningful use of other digital technologies to extend and enhance learning through the use of programmable toys and digital books.
- Practitioners know children well as learners and plan responsively around children's interests. They are using national practice guidance to support them to provide a balance of responsive and intentional learning. They should continue to embed this in their practice. Children's voice is evident in the floorbook planning. Practitioners need to ensure planning in floorbooks has a consistent focus on learning. This will enable them to share planned learning with the children and help them to evaluate children's progress more effectively.
- All children have an online profile which contains photographs, observations and next steps in learning. This enables practitioners to share children's learning with parents and allows parents to share learning from home. Practitioners should continue to embed the recording of quality observations to show children's progress in learning over time. They should ensure consistency in the frequency of observations and ensure children's next steps are relevant and meaningful to the individual children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum is firmly based on play and active learning. Practitioners plan responsively to take account of children's interests and next steps in learning. Planning for learning takes account of curriculum for excellence experiences and outcomes and national practice guidance. This is supporting practitioners to provide rich, relevant experiences for children.
- Practitioners use nearby wooded areas to enhance further children's learning. This is supporting children to develop skills in different contexts such as improving their awareness of keeping safe. They are increasing their knowledge of the local environment and community in which they live. They are learning skills for life and learning through baking and planting and growing experiences.
- Practitioners plan well for transition to nursery and this supports children to settle well. They have close working relationships with primary colleagues and the shared pedagogical approaches across early level supports transition to primary. Children are familiar with the school building as they access the dinner hall for lunch and regularly join the school for celebration assemblies. Practitioners also provide keeping in touch experiences for children and families during the holiday period to support transition. Nursery children have buddies in P6 to support transition. As a result, when they move to P1 they have well established relationships with their P7 buddies.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have strong working relationships with families and provide a range of information to support parents to understand about children's learning at nursery. There is an open-door policy and practitioners are available daily to talk to parents at drop off and pick up times.
- Practitioners provide a variety of events to enable parents to share learning experiences with their children such as stay and play sessions, Christmas singalong, daffodil tea and family picnics.
- Families are invited to share their skills with the nursery to enhance children's learning. They help with the sensory garden where children grow flowers, fruit and vegetables. During a recent interest in people who help us, they had visits from parents who worked as police officers, a nurse and a firefighter.
- The online learning journals are supporting all parents, including those who work away from home, to be informed about their children's learning at nursery.

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

very 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

- Practitioners understand the impact of strong nurturing relationships to ensure wellbeing. They place high importance in establishing these as soon as possible and invite parents and children to open events before children start nursery. As a result, the very positive relationships based on trust and respect are a key strength of the setting. Practitioners are proactive in promoting positive behaviour. They model behaviour which promotes care and respect, and this supports children to interact positively with and show consideration for others.
- Practitioners understand the importance of wellbeing for children and their families. This underpins everything they do in order to support children to be the best they can be. As a result, children feel happy, safe and ready to learn at nursery. Children are comfortable to seek out practitioners for comfort if they need reassurance.
- Senior leaders are mindful of supporting the wellbeing of all practitioners. Practitioners receive feedback and praise. Staff achievements are recognised and celebrated. This supports staff to feel valued and confident that they can receive support if they need it.
- Practitioners have created characters for each of the wellbeing indicators. As a result, children have a very strong understanding of what it means to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Children and practitioners refer to the characters such as Safe Sid and Healthy Henry throughout the nursery day to promote wellbeing. Bar matrix codes are displayed in community areas across Elrick to develop a shared understanding of the wellbeing indicators in the wider community. Practitioners should consider ways to develop further children's understanding of their rights and support them to engage in decisions that will affect them.
- Practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding statutory requirements and their professional responsibility in fulfilling them. Regular opportunities for professional learning enable practitioners to keep their knowledge up to date.
- Practitioners have created a warm, welcoming ethos where children and families feel valued. Practitioners are sensitive to the circumstances of individual families and ways in which they can provide support. They provide outdoor clothing and resources to ensure all children can access outdoor play in all weathers. They have created a borrow book box, which allows families to access children's books. In line with the nursery's commitment to eliminate waste, excess food, fruit and milk are made available for families to access.
- Children are developing a good understanding of equality. They are learning to explore gender roles and the diversity of family groups. Practitioners should continue to develop further children's awareness of diversity and discrimination through developmentally appropriate experiences.

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

- Most children are making good progress in communication and early language. The children can express their ideas and opinions articulately and they listen well to each other and to stories during group sessions. Almost all children recognise their own name. A few children are reading familiar words. Almost all children engage in mark making both indoors and out. Most children are beginning to add details to pictures and a few use mark making in their play.
- Most children are making good progress in mathematics. Most preschool children count confidently to 20 and beyond. They are beginning to understand concepts of addition and subtraction in their play and through number songs. Most children use the language of measurement to describe size and length. Children are developing an understanding of weight through following recipes when they are baking. Children recognise and name a few two-dimensional shapes. Children are ready to learn about three-dimensional objects and develop further their skills in information handling, time and money.
- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They are making friendships and show respect for others. Almost all children enjoy a substantial meal either at lunchtime or teatime. They are learning about healthy foods and good hygiene practices. Almost all children are confident in their movements and are developing good physical skills as they climb, run, jump and balance in the outdoor area.
- Most children are making good progress across other curricular areas. They are developing their awareness of movement and forces through exploring the trajectory of balls, cars and water down a variety of ramps. They are developing their observational skills as they reproduce the work of famous artists. They are learning how to care for other living things by looking after the nursery guinea pigs.
- Practitioners were unable to provide robust data that clearly shows children's progress over time as a result of their nursery experiences. They need to review tracking and monitoring of children's learning to streamline paperwork and ensure they evidence the progress children are making. They need to analyse and track more rigorously the progress cohorts and groups make. This will support staff to identify clear next steps in learning and help children to make the progress they are capable of.
- Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated through postcards from home and through the whole school achievement assembly. Practitioners discuss these achievements

regularly with the children. Children are happy that their success is being recognised and this allows them to experience the joy and pride associated with achievements.

- Practitioners create an ethos and culture of inclusion. They liaise effectively with other agencies to seek support for children if required. Support plans ensure that all practitioners are aware of the individual needs of children requiring targeted support. They document strategies as to how these needs can be met.

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.