

# Summarised inspection findings

Walkerburn Primary School Nursery Class

Scottish Borders Council

20 June 2023

## Key contextual information

Walkerburn Nursery Class is an accessible rural nursery within Walkerburn Primary School. It is situated within the village of Walkerburn. The nursery provides places for a maximum of 20 children aged from two years to those not yet attending primary school. The roll at the time of the inspection was 14. Children attend term time from 8.40 am until 3.10 pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30 to 12.30 pm on a Friday. The school is partnered with St Ronan's Primary School and Nursery Class which is less than two miles away. The schools share a leadership team. There is no senior leader based fulltime at Walkerburn Primary School and Nursery Class. The senior leadership team of the Walkerburn/St Ronan's partnership has recently been restructured resulting in a greater role in the nursery class for the principal teacher. A new early years officer (EYO) has been in post for two weeks. This follows a period of significant change within the practitioner team.

### 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 work of the nursery is underpinned by the vision, values and aims which are the same as the school. These were developed in consultation with families and practitioners. "A wee school with a big heart" is a motto shared by all of the children and adults to represent the nurturing ethos of the whole school. The nursery class works in close partnership with the primary classes and children have regular opportunities to explore the values of honesty, achieve, respect and kindness (HARK) together. Children can talk about their nursery values and are supported positively by practitioners to recognise, for example, when they have been kind. As planned, practitioners should continue to embed the vision, values and aims with families and in children's learning and achievement.
- The principal teacher is a supportive leader to the practitioner team. She is providing a helpful programme of induction for the newly-appointed early years officer to help her settle into her new role. It will be important for staff to agree roles and responsibilities which prioritise the current improvement agenda of the nursery. Following a period of unstable staffing, they need guidance, support and reassurance. This will help them balance the agendas of meeting the developmental needs of children and making continuous improvements to their practice.
- Practitioners work very well together as a team to create a child-centred ethos which is respectful and supportive towards families. Practitioners have shown resilience in times of change. Practitioners should continue to build their professionalism and knowledge of early years pedagogy. This will support them in identifying and contributing to nursery improvements which will make the biggest difference to outcomes for children.
- The nursery improvement plan outlines relevant priorities to secure better progress for children in their learning. Practitioners need greater ownership and opportunity to use their own self-evaluation and contribute more meaningfully to their improvement agenda. The significant changes within their team have made this challenging. Practitioners have a clear

understanding of children's learning and wellbeing needs. Moving forward they need a greater role in developing plans for improvement.

- Practitioners work closely with the Scottish Borders Council early years teacher to undertake professional learning to improve their work and enhance their knowledge. They benefit from the professional dialogue about early years pedagogy and how they might bring about change.

## 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 are proud of the quality of relationships they enjoy with children and families. Children settle to their play quickly on arrival and the majority sustain this play well through the day. They are enthusiastic and, through the encouragement of practitioners, are learning to take forward their own interests. Most children show awareness of each other as they play. At times, children demonstrate a reliance on adults to help them play together or follow their ideas. They need continuous support from practitioners to become more independent learners, respond positively to challenge and alternative ideas.
- Overall, practitioners need to encourage children to play outside more throughout the day. Outdoors they show that they can become engrossed in their chosen activity, for example, hunting for insects. Practitioners need to continue to work closely with children and develop further the outdoor space to meet children's varying interests and learning needs.
- Practitioners observe children closely and are well prepared to build on and sustain children's interests. They work hard to deploy themselves to enable children to access a range of learning experiences in different spaces. At times, this results in practitioners finding it challenging to respond to individual children as meaningfully as they would like. Practitioners need to consider the most effective way to use the learning spaces to meet the needs of children. This will help ensure children get the support they need.
- Practitioners support children well to use digital devices to enrich their learning. They like researching information about mini-beasts or exploring their local area through maps. Children incorporate digital devices confidently into their learning.
- Practitioners talk warmly with children and demonstrate that they value conversation with them deeply. They encourage children well to take time to communicate their thoughts and preferences. Practitioners know how use questions to challenge children to learn more. At times they find the balance of attending to children's individual needs and extending their learning difficult. This can result in children losing interest or not experiencing a sense of achievement and success.
- Children have learning journals containing observations of their learning and photographs which children have proudly added themselves. Practitioners continue to build their confidence in making observations of children's significant learning. Practitioners need to continue reviewing the most effective approaches to documenting children's learning. They need to ensure approaches are manageable and demonstrate children's progress in all areas of their learning.
- Practitioners work well as a team to plan a breadth of learning experiences which they know children will enjoy. They use their observations and professional judgement to keep a close

check on children's progress over time. However, they are not always confident that they have all the information they need about children to make accurate judgements about their progress. Practitioners have introduced very recently a new approach to noticing and responding to children's ideas as they occur. This needs more time to develop fully. Alongside the new EYO, it is timely for practitioners to review approaches to planning learning to ensure plans take full account of children's individual needs.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners make good use of the local and national guidance they have to provide a curriculum that is appropriate to children's developmental stages and interests. They worked alongside senior leaders very recently to develop further the curriculum rationale. As planned, it is timely to share this with families and encourage them to contribute their views about the curriculum. Children learn French in the school and there is scope for this to start in the nursery. They visit the library van at the school gate and choose a book to read at nursery.
- Practitioners use the whole school garden areas and wider outdoor learning spaces regularly to enhance children's learning. They use the community well to help children learn about their local area. They are reviewing the secure outdoor space to improve the range and quality of learning experiences for children. This will help children use the space more readily.
- Practitioners work closely with families to plan transition arrangements from home to nursery sensitively and at a pace that suits children. They work closely with teachers in the school to provide shared learning experiences where children can work together. For example, nature Thursday, when the nursery children engage in outdoor learning experiences with children from P1 to P7. Senior leaders need to ensure that they put arrangements in place for children who need enhanced transitions to move through to P1.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have very positive, respectful relationships with families. They communicate with them through informal conversations, regular newsletters and through social media. Families are invited to 'stay and play' to learn more about the work of the nursery and their child's learning experiences.
- Practitioners ensure regular formal and informal opportunities for parents to discuss their child's wellbeing and progress. Parents can view and contribute to children's individual learning journals at any time. Practitioners are keen to increase the frequency of parents' contributions to the journals and they encourage parents to share children's learning and achievements from home.
- Parents play an important role in the setting. They support children regularly with experiences such as gardening and outings. Children engage very well alongside parents who provide nurturing interactions as children learn more about the natural world.

## 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 show care and sensitivity towards children. They are respectful and work closely together to ensure children feel safe and secure, particularly through times of change. Practitioners are attentive to children's personal care needs and parents' preferences.
- Practitioners model the school values well. As a result, children try to show kindness and thoughtfulness towards each other. They help each other with practical tasks. Children like to play in close proximity to each other. They are learning about the benefits of close friendships. Practitioners are helping children learn about the wellbeing indicators and their rights. Children can talk about their rights but need continued support to demonstrate them consistently. The majority of children manage their emotions well. Practitioners review continuously their approaches to helping children recognise and manage their emotions. Practitioners are keen to build on their professional learning to help them do this with greater confidence.
- Practitioners ensure children experience learning across the breadth of health and wellbeing. Children are good at attending to their own hygiene throughout the day. They prepare snacks for their friends and enjoy baking activities. Children benefit from energetic play and are good at recognising when they need a quiet time. Practitioners provide calming stories, yoga and together times to support children to reflect on their wellbeing and rest.
- Practitioners understand their responsibilities with regard to statutory duties to keep children safe. They are vigilant and attentive. Practitioners work hard to support children who need extra help to learn. They are inclusive and readily make adaptations to suit children's needs. Senior leaders need to provide more guidance to ensure all children who require individualised plans have them in place. These should guide practitioners in the steps they need to take to ensure all children make measurable progress from their starting points. Practitioners need sufficient guidance from all professionals involved with children to ensure they take the right actions each day to meet children's learning needs. Plans need to be put in place to support children effectively as they make the transition through to P1.
- Practitioners are effective in modelling inclusive behaviour, which creates a positive ethos in which children learn to accept their similarities and differences. Practitioners support children to learn about diversity through their conversations. They look for ways to incorporate children's languages and cultures into their learning.

### 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

- Children are making satisfactory progress in early language and communication. The majority of children talk openly about their interests and engage confidently in conversation with adults. Children have a wide vocabulary which is helping them to describe in detail what they are doing and create imaginary scenarios. Children do not always listen well. They are beginning to understand how to take their turn. Children like stories and a few use the ideas in books to enhance their play. With adult support, they know how to use print to find information. Children are at the early stages of learning about rhyme. A few children are beginning to incorporate early writing into their play. Practitioners recognise they can encourage this more. A few children draw shapes and write letters for meaningful purposes.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in early mathematics. Practitioners are making more effective use of local and national guidance to progress children's skills more consistently. Children practise counting skills while they have fun singing familiar songs. Most children can count to ten but are less confident in ordering numbers. They use numbers independently to access their snack. The majority of children use the language of measure with understanding through their play. Children understand time through the routines of their nursery day. They are at the early stages of handling information in relevant ways.
- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is satisfactory overall. They take turns to prepare snack for their friends and bake. Children are beginning to learn how to manage their emotions and cope with situations that they find challenging. They rely on their close bond with practitioners to help them overcome situations they find stressful. Children love energetic play where they demonstrate good coordination, for example, on the balance bikes.
- Children are making satisfactory progress over time. Practitioners keep a close check on children's progress. They need to build on their own confidence and understanding of the progress children make from their prior learning. This will help them to plan more effectively to meet children's learning and wellbeing needs. Children are at an early stage of talking in depth about their successes in learning. They experience a real sense of accomplishment when they feel they have achieved what they set out to do.
- Practitioners work closely with children to recognise their individual achievements. All children belong to the school house system. Each week, practitioners recognise children's achievements in relation to the school values. At present there is very limited information from families about children's achievements outside of 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.