

# Summarised inspection findings

**Newton Primary School Nursery Class**

Stirling Council

23 January 2024

## Key contextual information

Newton nursery class is based in a self-contained area within Newton Primary School. Children have access to a large playroom, a small cosy 'snug', cloakroom and a spacious outdoor area. The 44 children on the roll attend on long or short days between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm over 47 weeks of the year. A maximum of 32 children, aged from three years to those not yet attending school, are present at any one time. Children access 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) by attending the setting on a full or part day pattern. A few children experience a blended placement where they go to more than one setting across a week.

The headteacher is the registered manager of the nursery. She is supported in the leadership and day-to-day running of the nursery by a principal early childhood educator (PECE). The headteacher and PECE work in close partnership to manage the work of the diverse nursery team. The team includes two senior early childhood educators (SECEs), an administrator, practitioners, supply staff and a support worker. A few staff are peripatetic and work in more than one nursery over a week or across the year. The nursery has experienced a very high percentage of long and short-term staff absence.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

very 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

- Working together with the school leadership team, practitioners, children and parents have reviewed their vision, values, and aims appropriately and collectively with families. The team ensure their shared values are evident and reinforced in daily practice through a highly consistent approach. They have taken great care to ensure respect and sensitivity towards children, families and colleagues underpins all aspects of their work. New parents are invited to regular events and encouraged to take part in a broad range of stimulating activities when joining children in the nursery. Practitioners ensure that the aims and vision are clear and understood by everyone. All practitioners, including supply staff, are clear about expectations and ways of working.
- The PECE provides very effective leadership. She is a resilient and reflective leader. The team share a clear focus on improvement and this ensures high quality outcomes are secured for all children. Two senior early years practitioners support the PECE well to lead the team. Through effective teamwork and good communication, they coach and guide staff to reflect on and improve their practice. They provide relevant, constructive feedback and suggestions to improve the learning environment, interactions and the record keeping skills of the team. Families and all practitioners appreciate the inclusive approach of senior leaders and practitioners.
- Team members are supported effectively to continue to extend and deepen their knowledge through regular professional learning opportunities linked to improvement priorities. Practitioners' learning, self-evaluation and visits to other settings regularly informs

improvements to their work. All staff have a specific leadership role. The team's enthusiasm for identifying and implementing changes to spaces, experiences and interactions engages children successfully in new experiences and enhances learning. Practitioners have improved their use of the community and increased staff's confidence in using digital technology. Partners and practitioners have worked effectively together to improve children's language development. The team use data intuitively to inform their many improvement plans. All staff now need to streamline their measures of success so that they can focus on the areas that have the biggest impact on children and their families.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- There is a warm, welcoming ethos in the nursery. Practitioners know children very well and are caring and compassionate. The team are committed to children's rights, genuinely interested in all children and all adults respond effectively to their needs. Almost all children are confident, independent, and creative in their well-resourced and stimulating learning environment. They are frequently absorbed, particularly in imaginative play and problem solving, for extended periods of time both indoors and outdoors. Practitioners have worked thoughtfully alongside children to establish and maintain high quality learning experiences and spaces. This supports children to make choices, develop their interests and practice new skills very well. As the team have identified, most children are now ready to take an increased role in leading and reflecting on their own learning.
- All practitioners observe children on a regular basis. They record detailed information about learning in children's journals, including current interests, observations, photographs and videos. An increasing number of parents contribute ideas, suggestions and information from home to these journals that sparks and develops further learning in the setting. Senior leaders and practitioners monitor regularly the achievements and progress of all children. The PECE and seniors guide keyworkers appropriately to ensure learning journals are current, meaningful and demonstrate children's individual progress.
- The PECE has led the team well in introducing important changes when planning children's learning. Children's interests and practitioners' observations provide a meaningful starting point. An improved blend of appropriate adult-initiated and child-initiated learning experiences meet the individual needs of children very well. Practitioners assess and record children's progress at regular points across the year using the local authority tracking system and range of resource materials. Senior leaders lead regular professional dialogue about children's progress. The team should continue to review their approaches to ensure that an appropriate balance of adult and child led learning is maintained.
- The team provide very good support to those children who require additional help with their learning. Practitioners plan in effective partnership with parents and partners to ensure appropriate interventions enable children to access the full range of experiences. Parents, partners and staff review these strategies regularly to determine the progress children make in their learning.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children learn through play across a good range of different areas of the curriculum. Practitioners have been very successful in improving the learning spaces for children. They are ensuring that the learning environment and experiences effectively promote literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Practitioners use natural materials well to promote curiosity and enquiry. Children are supported well in a calm atmosphere where they have space to move, play and explore.
- All practitioners use their leadership roles well to support learning pathways for children to build on prior learning. The PECE has identified rightly a need to extend children's learning across the breadth of the curriculum. Staff's focus on increasing music, drama and learning for sustainability experiences engages children and supports them to make connections across the curriculum. Senior leaders should continue to use their self-evaluation to inform planning in different curricular areas. Practitioners need to continue to develop their skills and confidence in how to best use local authority and national guidance to build on children's skills and prior learning.
- All children are supported very well as they start nursery for the first time, move between home and nursery and as they start P1. Practitioners offer good, well planned, personalised support in established transition programmes. Children's individual needs are the focus for careful, joint planning for their transitions into the nursery. Practitioners and P1 staff work well together to ensure children have a smooth transition to school and begin to share learning across the early level. Teachers visit children in nursery which helps them to begin to form relationships, observe progress and share information with staff. The team need to continue to develop approaches to joint working across the early level throughout the year in order to ensure children's continue to build on their prior learning.

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

- Senior leaders and practitioners work very well with a good range of agencies and community partners to support both children and families. As a result, all children are enabled to be included fully in learning experiences within their setting and local community. Very effective communication between practitioners, parents and other professionals ensures improved outcomes for children and families. Parents and children initiate and respond to opportunities to share learning at home and in nursery. Stay and play sessions, home learning bags, and suggestions in online journals lead to interesting, shared learning experiences that involve families. As planned, practitioners should continue to support parents to understand how children's learning is developed and supported through play.
- All practitioners use online learning journals well to share activities that enable parents and children to share experiences and celebrate achievements. An increasing number of parents share activities their child has enjoyed outwith the nursery. Staff use this feedback appropriately to inform their planning of learning. Practitioners write helpful and insightful reports to share the progress children make in their learning with parents. Practitioners share children's learning targets with parents and review these effectively as part of regular 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.

### 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

- Positive relationships are a key strength of the nursery. As a result, children are happy, secure, and ready to learn. The rights-based approach within the nursery underpins the focus on wellbeing for children and families. Positive, open and respectful relationships are evident between the team, children and families. There is a strong sense of community within the nursery. Practitioners nurture and support children well to develop their understanding of their own emotions using characters they have developed together. Almost all children are developing their ability to explore, understand and name their own emotions. Most understand and use strategies effectively to regulate their own feelings and make positive choices. A few children have a very good understanding of how to show support and empathy to their friends.
- Almost all children are sociable, relaxed and confident during snack and lunchtime experiences. They take turns, are independent and responsible as they set up and clear away their plates and cups. All children benefit from sensitive, patient support from staff to choose and eat their lunch. A few are ready for increased leadership roles across the nursery day.
- Children's wellbeing and resilience is supported very well through their learning in the nursery garden, community woodland and other community experiences. They enjoy the possibilities and sense of freedom as they navigate slopes and muddy puddles or stay close to an adult for reassurance when exploring a new woodland space. Children show very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and when to ask for help to try something new. They enjoy the responsibility of planting and growing their own vegetables and using these to prepare healthy snacks. Children are supported effectively to learn how to keep themselves, pets and other children safe and happy. They do this by taking part in a very good range of experiences including yoga, expressive arts and books and stories that explore emotions. Children are capable, resourceful, and responsible learners.
- Senior leaders and practitioners are knowledgeable about their responsibilities. They understand and follow local and national guidance well. All practitioners engage in regular training to keep up to date with changes to legislation or ways of working, including child protection. The PECE leads quality assurance procedures effectively, including re-establishing regular checks on the work of the team. All staff, including those new to the nursery, understand how to keep children safe, for example, as they prepare to visit the woods or explore their community. Practitioners know individual children very well and capture regularly up-to-date, significant information, or changes at home in children's plans. The team understand and use processes for sharing information well with partner agencies to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- The staff team promote inclusion and equality throughout the setting. Practitioners support diversity as they review and change resources, toys and books to represent a wider range of children, families and disabilities. The team has responded positively to work that explores and



challenges discrimination to ensure that all children and families are treated fairly. A successful focus on gender and language throughout the nursery has ensured language used by all staff and children is inclusive. The team identify and implement interventions for children who have specific barriers to their learning very well. A few children use strategies independently to express their needs, seek out support or take time on their own when they need it.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

very 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

- Almost all children are making very good progress across their learning.
- Almost all children communicate very effectively with practitioners and each other, using a rich and wide range of vocabulary. Younger children vocalise their interests and ideas enthusiastically as they role play in the home corner. Almost all children listen attentively and often explore stories. They enjoy using puppets and voice recorders to create their own, detailed, imaginative stories. They use objects, symbols and cues well to follow routines and instructions or communicate their own needs. Almost all show a keen interest in early writing and most write their name on a regular basis. They write shopping lists in the home corner, explore magazines and non-fiction texts, and enjoy making signs and explaining inventions they display on their learning wall.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They count and order numbers with confidence during play. Almost all children can sort, match and name shapes and are able to create simple patterns. They can order according to size and are developing their problem-solving skills while playing at the block area. A few children need to apply their skills across a wider range of numeracy and mathematics skills in more challenging contexts.
- Almost all children are confident and knowledgeable when talking about their own feelings as they make very good progress in their health and wellbeing. Most children contribute well to discussions and use appropriate strategies to resolve conflicts over sharing space or resources with sensitive support from staff. A few children resolve conflicts independently using techniques they have learned in nursery. Almost all children have a very good understanding of how to assess risks and keep themselves safe as they play. Most are competent at dressing for outdoor play and show resilience and enjoyment when playing outdoors in adverse weather.
- Almost all children are making very good progress over time including those experiencing barriers to learning. Practitioners make confident, accurate judgements about children's progress. Practitioners should continue to extend opportunities for children to discuss their learning and skills.

- Children's achievements are celebrated through praise and encouragement, including on an achievement wall, nursery stars displays and in children's profiles. Children are developing their skills in citizenship and resilience through taking responsibility in different curricular experiences and other community activities. Children know key facts about the environment as part of their Learning for Sustainability approach. They understand the importance of caring for their environment through litter picking, recycling and growing their own food and can discuss these aspects with confidence. They are developing their skills in science and nature, including seasonal changes through their engagements outdoors. Children need to continue to develop their awareness of skills they are developing for learning, life and work when engaging in different curricular activities and experiences.
- All staff understand very well children's home circumstances, individual challenges, socio-economic barriers and life events. Children, who require extra help are identified and supported well by staff to thrive. They make very good progress through well-planned targeted interventions. For example, a specific group of children are making better progress in communication and early literacy through staff's focused approach on language development. A few children who have additional support needs are also making good progress in health and wellbeing in line with their stage of development due to staff's nurturing approaches. Senior leaders should continue to develop further how they gather and use data to evidence the impact of their work with families.

## 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.