

Summarised inspection findings

Macmerry Primary School Nursery Class

East Lothian Council

17 September 2019

Key contextual information

Macmerry Primary School nursery class is located within the main school building. The service has provided 1140 hours provision for 3-5 year old children since February 2019. At the time of inspection, there were 27 children in full time places and two children attending morning sessions. An Early Years Support Teacher (EYST), from East Lothian Council, supports the newly created nursery team. The nursery class has one large playroom, an entrance area and additional flexible learning space and enclosed outdoor area.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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

- Practitioners in the setting are aware of the established whole school vision, values and aims. This is not yet embedded in the everyday life and ethos of the setting. As discussed, the team should work with the whole school community and stakeholders to review and develop an accessible vision that is current and meaningful for all.
- All members of the newly created nursery team, supported by the EYST, demonstrate enthusiasm to continue improving the quality of provision for children. Input from the EYST is based upon observations, self-evaluation and consultation with senior leaders and the nursery team. These activities are beginning to support the team to identify and develop key areas for improvement. This is starting to have an impact on children's experiences through the development of approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring.
- Recent professional learning is beginning to increase practitioners' knowledge and skills, for example, using block play to support numeracy and mathematics as well as 'Making thinking visible' supporting children to understand and display what they are learning and their next steps. All members of the team are committed to independent and collegiate learning, often undertaking this in their own time. Their shared learning shows early signs of leading to improvements, for example, in the work of the team on developing numeracy and mathematical language. Senior leaders should monitor and evaluate the impact of recent professional learning and this should directly link to professional review and development meetings. This will support the identification of future professional learning links to key priorities supporting ongoing improvements in the nursery class.
- Practitioners increasingly reflect on their practice together and are committed to develop further their knowledge of early years practice. Attendance at monthly cluster meetings by the Senior Early Years Practitioners (SEYP) is supporting the sharing of good practice and professional review and evaluation. Regular attendance at local authority meetings for early years practitioners is also supporting the nursery team to develop their knowledge and skills. It will be important for the team to continually reflect on the key areas requiring improvement in the nursery class to ensure the correct priorities are taken forward.

- All practitioners have leadership roles, including leading on numeracy, the development of block play, parental engagement, literacy and health and wellbeing. Children are involved in the evaluation of the learning environment through individual self-assessments, sharing their views with practitioners and increasingly leading their learning through identifying areas of interest. There are considerable opportunities to develop further children's leadership skills, for example, through inclusion in whole school pupil voice groups and specific nursery committees to help further develop the learning environment.
- The team are at an early stage of using the national framework 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' The team are beginning to develop their skills in identifying what is working well and what needs to be improved and will benefit from continued support with this. This is evidenced in a self-evaluation floor book. This includes parents', carers' and children's feedback through regular consultation. Self-evaluation is currently led by the EYST and SEYP. Senior leaders as a matter of priority now need to work with the nursery team on a systematic self-evaluation cycle. As discussed, this will support the strategic approach now needed by senior leaders to ensure an appropriate pace of change.
- There is no improvement plan in place, however, the senior early years practitioner has identified a few key priorities and areas for improvement. These have been shared with the nursery team this year. As discussed, the inclusion of identified areas for improvement through a robust self-evaluation process, in a whole school improvement plan, is an essential next step. The senior leaders and practitioners now need to work together on improvement planning activities. This will evidence the impact of any changes made on children's learning and how this is improving children's progress over time.
- Monitoring of the quality of learning and teaching is informal at present. Recorded feedback, monitoring and evaluation now needs to be more rigorous. The establishment of a quality assurance timetable is needed as a matter of priority. It will be important to ensure a shared understanding of remits and responsibilities for the headteacher, senior early years practitioner and practitioners. This will clarify the collegiate approach to continuous improvement needed in order to deliver high quality early learning and childcare in line with national guidance.

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

- The ethos in the nursery is warm, welcoming and based upon mutual respect. Relationships between practitioners and children are positive and nurturing. As a result, children are happy, settled and enjoy their time at nursery. Children confidently explore the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- The majority of children engage well in their chosen activities and a few are beginning to sustain interest for more prolonged periods. Practitioners have identified a few children who still need to be more engaged in their play. Other children require more challenge to deepen their learning. Children access a wide range of resources and have the opportunity to explore a variety of materials and make choices to create images and models. The use of loose parts and natural materials is supporting children to extend their play and levels of engagement. The team have started to make appropriate changes to the accessibility, quality and location of resources in the learning environment. As planned, they should continue to evaluate their work on supporting and extending children's curiosity and creativity.
- Interactions are caring, supportive and responsive to children's interests and needs. Children interact well with each other and with adults, and have time to follow their own interests. The warm relationships within the nursery are supporting children to develop their resilience and perseverance. Effective questioning is built upon by the use of prompts outlined by the SEYP and EYST. This improved use of questioning techniques is beginning to extend children's thinking.
- Practitioners observe children during play and increasingly use their observations to plan interesting opportunities and experiences to support children's learning. Practitioners monitor children's progress through 'Learning Story' folders and developmental overviews. As planned, they should continue to develop how the information is organised and recorded in order to ensure a clearer overview of children's progress across the curriculum. Children are happy to share their folders to reflect and comment on the activities. They are still at the early stages of being able to talk about their learning. The EYST supports practitioners well and together they have been working towards linking observations to planning to meet children's needs and establish the language of learning. The establishment of key workers is at the early stages of ensuring practitioners increasingly know their children as learners. As planned, practitioners should continue their work to identify children's next steps in learning with children and their families. This will support the improvement of learning and developmental outcomes for children.
- Planning is undertaken over a variety of timescales with coverage of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes recorded. An annual calendar supporting children to become more aware of the importance of celebrations, festivals and customs in peoples' lives is in place. The recent introduction and use of possible lines of development in planning is supporting

practitioners to identify provocations that build upon children's interests and increase levels of engagement. Recently introduced learning walls, based on children's interests, help to gather information on and document children's learning. Further development of this approach will help to ensure depth of learning and increase challenge for children. Allocating responsibility to practitioners for planning curricular areas for a short period is helping to enrich the learning experiences on offer. It is also supporting learning to be modified according to children's needs and interests. Practitioners use established tracking documents for health and wellbeing outcomes, early mathematical and early literacy progressions. As discussed, the review of these documents will support a more detailed identification of individual children's progress and attainment over time. The progress nursery children make in their learning should be included in tracking meetings led by senior leaders. This will ensure progression across the early level and an alignment of tracking processes.

- Children have access to digital technologies, including an interactive white board, laptops and programmable toys. There is scope for practitioners to develop further how digital technologies are used to support and extend children's learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum in the nursery is play based and offers opportunities for learning indoors and outdoors. It is responsive to children's interests and takes account of events taking place in their lives. The nursery class use local authority progression frameworks for all curriculum areas. Practitioners are becoming increasingly familiar with them, which is helping to inform their everyday planning.
- As discussed, senior leaders and practitioners now need to work together with the whole school to develop a curriculum rationale, which reflects their unique context. This should incorporate the vision, values and aims of the setting, and the needs of all children. This will ensure a shared understanding of the curriculum across the whole school community.
- Children's health and wellbeing is given high priority in the nursery and practitioners provide a variety of experiences to help children's development in this area. The nursery provide a wide variety of sensory experiences for children to explore through play. For example, in the mud kitchen and a recent focus on an interest in bees resulting in the tasting of different types of honey.
- Literacy and numeracy are evident across learning with practitioners supporting the development of skills naturally through daily interactions, routines and play experiences. The recent focus on the development of block play to support mathematical concepts is an example of practitioners' commitment to improving outcomes for children.
- A focus on improving the outdoor learning provision following an outdoor audit is resulting in increased opportunities for children to develop their curiosity, enquiry and problem solving skills. Plans to continue to develop the outdoor learning area are being led by the SEYP.
- Careful planning results in flexible transitions into the setting and between activities. As a result, children settle well into their time at nursery. A programme of transition events for children moving on to primary school is shared with parents and carers. Activities including parents and carers welcome evenings and visits to the school to help children and families familiarise themselves with the school environment. The P1 teacher has regular visits to the nursery in the last term with the nursery team sharing information about children's learning. Each child has a P6 buddy who spends time with them in the playground and visits the nursery on a weekly basis. Practitioners support children and families to complete information booklets and these are used to support the transition programme. All of these measures ensure a smooth transition for children both within the nursery and from other settings.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

See choice QI.

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

- Children's wellbeing is central to the nursery ethos. Warm, encouraging and positive relationships between practitioners and children are a key feature of the setting. As a result, children feel safe, happy and confident as they play. Children's views are valued and all practitioners respond carefully to the different ways that children communicate their interests and preferences. The lunch experience in the school dining hall is ensuring children can take turns and have social experiences whilst eating. All children are encouraged to make healthy choices and try new foods. Children are developing their independence as they are encouraged to clear away their utensils and plates.
- Children have an appropriate understanding of what it is to be healthy. For example, through growing their own potatoes, taking part in gymnastics sessions and participation in a programme to help children to learn to ride a bike. Partnership work with a health professional is developing children's awareness that people need different kinds of food to keep them healthy. A local fruit and vegetable producer sells produce to children and families encouraging healthy eating. The developing outdoor provision is supporting the development of gross motor skills and physical activity through practice and energetic play. As planned, practitioners should develop their knowledge of the wellbeing indicators to support children to understand how the indicators relate to them. This more regular use of the wellbeing indicators will help children increasingly express their feelings and emotions in the nursery. The nursery should also ensure a shared understanding of the wellbeing indicators with parents and carers.
- Positive behaviour is promoted and practitioners model respectful and kind interactions and reinforce when children are kind and caring to one another. 'Nursery rules' are displayed to encourage children to show respect for themselves and others. It will be important to ensure there is a shared ownership and understanding of these expectations with all children and families. They should reflect the whole school positive behaviour policy.
- Children are able to express their views and influence decisions that affect them. They choose areas they would like to learn about, make group decisions about their learning environment and help plan outings and activities. There is scope to maximise opportunities for children to develop further their leadership skills. This could include, for example, being part of the school pupil council and taking part in risk benefit assessments in the nursery.
- Senior leaders and practitioners work closely with external agencies to access additional support for children with an identified need. They use child plans to plan learning and take account of additional guidance and advice from partner agencies. All practitioners are aware of children who require specific support and interventions. Attendance at specific training by all practitioners supports children as required and detailed in plans.

- Senior leaders should develop a more comprehensive understanding of roles and responsibilities in fulfilling the range of statutory duties required. This will support the nursery class to better reflect best practice.
- Children and families are treated fairly and with respect in the setting. Children are learning about the needs of others and how they can help. For example, by participating in charity fundraisers. Senior leaders and practitioners are aware and monitor issues relating to equality and diversity to ensure best practice.

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
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- Across the setting, children are making satisfactory progress in their learning. Recent improvements to the learning environment mean that the majority of children are increasingly engaged in their learning.
 - In early communication and language, the majority of children are learning to listen and can follow simple instructions given by an adult. Children play cooperatively and the majority talk to each other in a respectful manner. Children now need to develop further their ability to listen to each other and take turns in conversations. A range of books is available across the nursery with non-fiction books supporting and extending children's interests. Self-registration for snack and on arrival at the nursery supports children's recognition of their name. The majority of children recognise that writing has a purpose such as labelling items and writing up the snack menu. It will be important to ensure that children's early writing skills are sufficiently challenged with emergent writing approaches being consistently delivered and understood by all practitioners.
 - In numeracy and early mathematics, children can match, name and sort objects into colours and 2D shapes. Most children can count up to five objects using 1:1 correspondence. A few can read out numbers in order and identify the missing number. Children know about volume and use mathematical language to describe correctly, when a container is empty or full. Further exploration of 3D objects through the use of loose parts and block play both indoors and outdoors is now needed. This will support children's understanding of mathematical relationships such as symmetry and an awareness and use of positional language. Whilst there are examples of children using numeracy and mathematics skills in daily routines and during free play, there is potential for this to be developed further.
 - In health and wellbeing, children are making satisfactory progress. Most children are developing an awareness of what it means to be healthy, washing their hands and taking part in daily tooth brushing. Children choose snack items and are developing their awareness of healthy food. Children are encouraged to explore risky play in the outdoor area. A positive next step would be to involve children in more risk benefit assessments both indoors and outside. As planned, more regular visits to local natural areas would support an increased development an appreciation of the wider local community and the natural world.
 - From assessment information available and inspection activity, children are making satisfactory progress over time as a result of their experiences at Macmerry nursery class. As the

knowledge, skills and confidence of practitioners continues to develop, children's learning observations will more consistently evidence progress in learning over time.

- Wider achievements are included in children's 'Learning Story' folders. These achievements are also displayed in the nursery and the children given 'Wow' certificates. As discussed, practitioners should continue with their plans to encourage parents and carers to share wider achievements. Sharing of wider achievements at whole school assemblies would be a positive next step and develop further the nursery's inclusion in the whole school community. An overview of children's wider achievements would support the identification of any gaps in learning for individual children.
- Practitioners know children and families well and have a shared understanding of the need to promote equity within the setting. All children have access to a range of learning experiences and a caring ethos is evident throughout the setting.

Choice of QI : 2.7 Partnerships

- Engagement of parents and carers in the life of the setting
- The promotion of partnerships
- Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- The nursery team have a vision for the engagement of meaningful partnerships with parents and carers. They place considerable importance in engaging with families. Practitioners recognise the positive impact that effective approaches to partnerships can have on early learning.
- All practitioners work hard to develop warm, trusting relationships with families. Parents spoken to and involved in inspection activity spoke highly of the supportive relationships they have with the nursery team and acting headteacher. They value the daily informal discussions and the other forms of communication keeping them informed of planned activities and learning being planned for and delivered in the nursery.
- The nursery team use a variety of ways to communicate with families. These include regular nursery newsletters communicating activities and curriculum opportunities, updates using social media and noticeboards. Through daily conversations, practitioners share plans and dates for charity fundraising as well as taking part in national events such as World Book Day. The use of 'home link' bears is a successful approach, which is engaged with well by children and families.
- 'Stay, Play and Share Days' are organised and parents and carers are encouraged to attend and spend time looking at their child's 'Learning Story' folder. Practitioners use this as an opportunity to share learning and next steps. The nursery should continue with plans to encourage more parents and carers to attend these sessions. As discussed, the use of the wider school environment to host parental engagement events due to lack of space in the nursery, would be a positive next step. This would enable practitioners to gather parents' and carers' views and support the nursery in their understanding of the whole child to maximise their potential.
- Through consultation, reporting to parents and carers has recently been reviewed. Currently information is shared through learning stories, regular conversations, stay, play and share sessions, social media and newsletters the learning wall and floor books. As discussed, the nursery are committed to ensuring approaches to parental engagement are reflective of parental wishes. This will help to maximise their involvement and participation in their children's learning.

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.