

Summarised inspection findings

Crossford Primary School Nursery Class

Fife Council

28 November 2023

Key contextual information

Crossford Primary Nursery Class is located in modular accommodation in the grounds of Crossford Primary School in Fife. The accommodation comprises one spacious playroom and a large garden area, which is accessed directly from the playroom. The nursery is registered for 40 children aged three to five years attending at any one time. There are currently 31 children on the roll. Children can access their entitlement to 1140 hours by attending Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 2.45pm. Not all families take up their children's full entitlement. A few children have split placements with other centres. The nursery is managed by the headteacher, who also manages another primary school. The senior leader in the primary school covers both a part-time principal teacher role and a part-time depute headteacher role. The nursery teacher visits for three days every two weeks, working with the three full-time and three part-time early years officers.

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

- The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery and is ably supported by a nursery teacher who works directly with staff. Together, they have successfully implemented a concise improvement plan. The plan aims to increase support and challenge for staff, and to improve the overall quality of children's learning and development.
- All staff worked effectively with families to revisit the nursery's vision, values and aims. They identified accurately the need to use appropriate language and activities which are meaningful for very young children. Children are beginning to respond positively to the refreshed values, which are expressed as 'We take care of ourselves, each other, all things and the places we are in'. Staff help reinforce the child-friendly language by identifying children as 'Crossford Stars' when they have demonstrated one or other of the values
- The nursery improvement plan includes several well-judged priorities. All staff are involved in agreeing these priorities. They are closely based on observations of children's play and prior achievements. Staff are focusing on developing the use of digital technology to enhance learning and providing opportunities for children to develop their understanding of emotions. As the team takes forward improvements, it will be important for staff to agree collectively specific and measurable targets. This will allow them to gather robust evidence of the impact of their improvement activities. The headteacher should now clarify roles and remits within the team. This will ensure clear lines of responsibility.
- All staff think carefully about the effectiveness of their work and have created an effective culture of teamwork. They use evidence from relevant research and national practice guidance to develop their understanding of play pedagogy well. Recently, staff have been successful in creating and ensuring a positive learning environment where high-quality interactions lie at the heart of all they do. As a result, children are supported well to be creative, inquire and explore.

- All staff are highly motivated and display a strong commitment to improving their skills and practice. They engage in professional dialogue during planning meetings, and in professional review and development processes. All staff undertake relevant leadership roles that are leading to positive improvements in practice. They enthusiastically share their professional learning and creative ideas with others in the team regularly. Staff have visited other early years settings to identify further improvement opportunities. Staff should now consider how best to provide further opportunities for children to undertake leadership responsibilities. This will enhance children's voice in the nursery.

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

- Staff have successfully created a calm, warm, respectful and nurturing environment. Children enjoy positive relationships and daily interactions with staff. Children feel valued, safe and secure as a result of the inclusive ethos and very high level of care which staff provide. Children make choices confidently about where they would like to play, and they can readily access the resources they need. Children show good concentration and independence, and clearly enjoy their play. They benefit from free-flow access to the creative, well-resourced outdoor area where they enjoy exploring and navigating the natural environment. Staff create stimulating areas in the nursery to provoke interest and extend children's experiences. For example, children explore patterns using visual resources, and use a variety of tools at the work bench.
- Staff have a strong understanding of how children learn and develop. They use their questioning skills and commentary very well to organise and extend children's thinking and learning. They allow children time to think, explore and respond. This helps children to sustain their interest for longer periods of time. Children know that all staff value them and act on their views, for example, through gathering their opinions and ideas on learning spaces. Staff use floorbooks and wall displays skilfully, to document children's learning and progress.
- Staff assess and track children's progress using observations and ongoing assessments well. Children's learning is noted in personal learning journals where staff record significant learning across all curricular areas effectively. Staff use the early level of Curriculum for Excellence to track coverage of experiences and outcomes. They engage regularly in dialogue with the headteacher and visiting teacher. This includes meetings to consider both children's needs and their achievement and progress. Staff should develop further their practice in providing interventions to help all children who require additional support and challenge in their learning.
- New approaches to planning learning are developing very well. Staff carefully plan across the year to provide an effective blend of adult-led and child-led experiences. Staff successfully use a responsive approach to planning, which enables children to follow their interests. Staff observe children at play carefully and take responsibility to record and evaluate the impact of their plans. In most cases, these records are well supported by photographic evidence and useful evaluative comments. Staff now plan to develop and evaluate this early practice to ensure consistency of approach for all learners.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Children benefit from a rich, carefully planned environment which is well resourced. They interact very effectively with the stimulating contexts both indoors and outdoors, and most children show sustained engagement. The refreshed nursery vision reflects the team's ethos and understanding of their context. This promotes strong relationships and respect for all the children and their learning environment.
- Staff have a clear understanding of how play and learning are linked to both Realising the Ambition: Being Me (2020), and the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. They use national guidance very effectively to plan a broad range of play experiences. These support children's learning progressively as they increase their knowledge and understanding. Staff show skill in developing learning from children's ideas and interests. Staff now need to offer greater challenge in play contexts particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Transitions into the nursery and onwards into P1 are well managed. Children at the nursery stages have settling-in activities which involve parents fully. Staff give children time to settle, and space to explore freely. Nursery staff share information on children's progress with teachers to support children's learning as they move on into school. Senior leaders should now explore opportunities for early years practitioners and teachers to collaborate across the early level. This will help them to develop a shared understanding of play pedagogy and support continuity in children's learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Staff have respectful and supportive relationships with parents and carers. They welcome them warmly to the nursery each day. Staff use a range of approaches to enable families to be involved actively in the life and work of the nursery. This includes ‘cup-a-chats,’ daily conversations, stay and play sessions, informative noticeboards, practical parenting activities and early reading sessions. These are helping parents to understand the contribution they can make to their children’s learning and progress. Children are excited to share their learning with parents and talk animatedly when showing their creations and photographs of activities.
- Staff and parents share important information about children’s achievements. Staff make effective use of daily contact in the playroom, social media groups and online platforms to keep parents well informed. The nursery team is fully committed to involving families further in the life of the nursery. Their active partnership approaches include seeking families’ views and encouraging their involvement in nursery improvements.

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

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

- Relationships between staff and children are a key strength of the nursery, with staff providing very high standards of care. They promote actively the wellbeing of children and their families. As a result, a culture of genuine trust and respect is evident.
- Children are developing a very good understanding of their wellbeing. They talk about how to keep themselves safe, active and healthy. Staff use stories and puppets well, promoting the national wellbeing indicators in a child-friendly and age-appropriate way. Staff have set up play zones where children can explore their emotions and feelings. Staff support children gently to deal with any upset or disagreement so that situations are resolved calmly. This well-structured support enables children to understand how to influence their own wellbeing. Children use 'calm corners' well as part of their self-regulation.
- Staff are very good role models for children. They demonstrate good manners and kindness and work actively to create a sense of belonging for children. This is helping children to feel safe and secure in the nursery. Staff ensure that daily routines meet children's differing needs across the day. Children have very positive experiences at snack and lunchtimes. Outdoor learning supports children's wellbeing, resilience, and their sense of freedom to explore and take calculated risks.
- All staff are knowledgeable about their statutory duties and maintain a clear focus on child protection and safeguarding. Staff know their children very well and capture relevant and meaningful information to improve their experiences and outcomes. Staff take the lead in initiating dialogue with professionals from outside agencies to provide support for children. This effective collaboration supports children and their families very well.
- Children benefit from an inclusive ethos. Staff promote inclusion and equality across the nursery and place a strong focus on meeting children's rights. Staff actively support diversity, and challenge discrimination to ensure that all children and families are treated fairly. Children with English as an additional language are supported very effectively through stories and the celebration of different countries and cultures. Staff are aware of potential barriers to learning and work well to meet the needs of almost all children highly effectively.

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

- Almost all children are making good progress in early communication and language. They listen attentively to staff and show interest at story times. Many can sequence events and talk knowledgeably about story characters. Children are keen to talk and ask questions and they readily approach staff to involve them in their play. Many children show interest in mark making and writing and a few are beginning to write their name. Staff should provide exemplars of simple writing in the mark-making area to support children to write more letters and words. Many children enjoy exploring a range of fiction books. Children need more experience in using non-fiction books, both indoors and outdoors, to encourage them to use books to find information.
- Children are developing a good range of skills in early numeracy and mathematics. Most children understand position concepts such as 'behind' and 'in front of'. Children learn about capacity as they pour sand and water into different sized containers. A recent mini topic on shape encouraged children to explore and begin to understand different two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects. Most children use measure, estimation and comparative language when building complex structures in the construction area.
- Children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. Most children that are new to nursery have settled extremely well. They move confidently around all areas accessing resources independently. Children are learning to use words to express their emotions. This is enabling them to communicate and act on their thoughts and ideas. Children benefit from fresh air and physical activity in the outdoor garden. They run, jump, climb and balance and are learning how to assess risk to keep themselves safe. Children talk confidently about foods which are healthy, and they are keen to explore new foods and tastes. Children are extremely independent at snack and mealtimes, and when getting dressed for wet weather play.
- Staff articulate confidently children's progress in their learning. They monitor children's progress through skilled observations, learning journals and early level trackers for Curriculum for Excellence. This approach provides accurate evidence of children's progress over time. Staff should continue to develop their approaches to planning more targeted interventions for all children with potential barriers to learning.
- The nursery has a very inclusive ethos where children are valued and listened to. Staff should continue to involve all children in talking about their strengths as learners and identifying their next steps. This helps all children to understand better the progress they are making.

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.