

Summarised inspection findings

Deans Primary School Nursery Class

West Lothian Council

22 November 2022

Key contextual information

Deans Nursery Class is part of Deans Primary School and is managed by the headteacher. The nursery offers children 1140 hours on a range of flexible attendance patterns. Sixty children can attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 41 children on the nursery roll. Twenty-four children attend morning sessions, eight attend afternoon sessions and eleven children attend full days on a variety of different patterns.

The nursery team is recently formed with only a few practitioners having worked in the nursery for several or more years. Most have been employed to support the expansion to 1140 hours. All practitioners have an initial qualification with some having gained, or working towards, further qualifications. The nursery development has been impacted by COVID-19 and the changes as a result of the implementation of 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare.

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 and depute headteacher (DHT) provide strong leadership and support to practitioners, children, and families. There is effective communication at all levels. The DHT with delegated responsibility for the nursery class is highly visible, approachable, and supportive. The Early Learning and Childcare Area Support Manager (ELCASM) visits weekly and monitors the nursery systems and procedures effectively. As this role develops, an increased focus on planning for continuous improvement would develop practitioners' skills and confidence in making and evaluating change. Practitioners appreciate the support offered to them by the headteacher and DHT both personally and professionally, for example, in accessing additional training and qualifications. The nursery team is relatively new however, teamwork is developing well.
- The nursery class vision, values and aims, which focus strongly on wellbeing, are clearly stated, and well understood. Practitioners have linked these effectively to quality indicators and national care standards. They are actively working to embed them in the day-to-day work of the nursery. Parents and children have recently been involved in a worthwhile focus session on values. With support from staff, children talk about their three key values and how to implement them as they play and learn together.
- The nursery is included in the school improvement plan. Staff have developed a well-judged action plan which supports specific early year's priorities. These action points are ambitious and appropriately focused on wellbeing, curriculum, and learning and teaching. Practitioners know what improvements are important for the setting, the community, and the children. To implement the action plan, practitioners have taken on specific leadership responsibilities. The

management team are aware that practitioners need ongoing support to develop their leadership skills. This will help them to be more firmly focused on change and improvement. It will be important that all practitioners are involved in evaluating the impact of improvements made.

- Change and development is overseen by the staff team and ELCASM, and well supported by the local authority early years team. The ELCASM and local authority undertake visits and offer a range of training opportunities to enhance practitioner's skills, knowledge and understanding. Practitioners have recently been offered Froebel training and are implementing aspects of this approach successfully. Practitioners willingly undertake their own training, for example, in the curiosity approach.
- All staff are committed to continuous improvement and are beginning to develop their skills as reflective practitioners. They have engaged in a range of self-evaluation activities to identify strengths and areas for development. To ensure continuous improvement staff should continue with their planned focus on a shared pedagogy. This will enhance the team's cohesiveness and effectiveness as they move forward. Practitioners are not yet wholly confident in guiding and managing the process of change although this is improving.
- All staff should continue to develop their knowledge of current early years practice so that best practice underpins continuous improvement.

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

- The calm, warm, nurturing, and respectful ethos supports children very well. The stimulating learning environment includes a very good range of real-life and open-ended materials and resources. These combined support children in developing their skills in creativity, curiosity, and inquiry well. Practitioners are responsive to children's needs and interests. Children have freedom to explore, make choices and follow their own interests indoors and outdoors. A few children are beginning to sustain interest in their play for periods that are more prolonged. As a result, most children are happy, settled and engaged.
- Interactions and relationships are sensitive and understanding. Practitioners know children very well as individuals, value their interests and act on what they have to say. Children interact well with practitioners and each other. Most children play very well alongside their peers, and a few participate in co-operative play.
- Practitioners observe children well during free flow play and adult directed experiences. Staff plan learning using Curriculum for Excellence and national guidance. Children lead their own learning through play. Practitioners now need to enhance the quality of their interactions by engaging with children more readily during play. Practitioners should use more running commentary as they play with children and build on opportunities to scaffold sensitively children's learning. This will extend children's talking and thinking skills and deepen learning. Practitioners should continue to develop further a shared understanding of child development and early pedagogy. This will ensure children experience challenge in their play, learning and development.
- Weekly meetings enable practitioners to plan effectively. Practitioners use online learner journals well to capture and record children's learning and achievements. Children and parents are encouraged to contribute to journals. Senior leaders should continue with plans to develop further practitioner confidence in recording high quality observations and identifying children's next steps in learning.
- Practitioners carefully track and monitor children's individual progress using key aspects of learning and National Benchmarks. The data gathered influences planning and interventions to support learning. Overall, this is beginning to lead to improvements in children's learning and development. The team should continue to develop further a shared understanding of the refreshed planning and assessment process. This will help increase expectations of children as learners.
- The setting provides opportunities for children to learn using digital technology. Children play games using tablets, practitioners closely monitor time spent on devices. The setting should develop further children's use of digital technologies indoors and outdoors.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children experience a curriculum that is firmly based on play and is highly responsive to their needs and interests. Planning is in line with national and local guidance. Practitioners follow children's ideas to ensure children are motivated and interested. There is a curriculum rationale which reflects the strong focus on nurture and supportive relationships. Practitioners make use of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the national guidance, Realising the Ambition, to shape their curriculum developments. Planners partially reflect the principles of CfE. Staff now need to be a clearer on how they plan for breadth, depth and challenge more effectively.
- Transitions into the nursery are very well planned. Practitioners make home visits and share talking photo books. This supports children to become familiar with the nursery and practitioners who will be playing with them. Parents are encouraged to stay for short periods to ease the transition. Practitioners provide sensitive support for children as they settle into the nursery. They record messages from parents to play to children who may be upset during their time at nursery. Staff work closely with parents when their child is finding it difficult to settle.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Children benefit from an extensive range of partnerships to support and enhance their learning. Parents are welcomed into the nursery for a range of activities including Stay and Play and the Peep Learning Together groups. They welcome the opportunity to chat with the leadership team over coffee at the refreshment trolley in the playground.
- Practitioners work very closely with families of children who have specific needs and support them to access a range of services. Many parents commented on how practitioners had supported their own wellbeing. A few parents felt family life had improved due to the guidance and ongoing support from nursery staff. Parents are very appreciative of the ways practitioners kept them well informed during nursery closures. Practitioners make very good use of learning journals to share each child's learning with parents at home. Parents are actively encouraged to contribute to these. A few parents would like more information on how their child's learning is developing.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The centre 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

- Nurturing and supportive relationships are a key strength of the nursery. Wellbeing underpins the day-to-day activities and there is a calm, caring and respectful ethos. Staff interactions with children are consistently supportive and responsive. This is helping children to settle well at nursery. Practitioners provide very effective enhanced settling in support programmes for those children who require them.
- Practitioners have worked with children to develop their understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They have created characters such as Sally Safe to promote the indicators in a meaningful, age-appropriate way. Children talk about safe outdoor practices, for example, by risk assessing their play area and ensuring they wear safety helmets when using wheeled toys. Children enjoy achieving character stickers when they display the wellbeing indicators. Practitioners focus on three key nursery values and children talk knowledgeably about how to display these values in their play. They proudly sing the nursery values song.
- Regular outdoor play, physical activity and forest walks help support both physical and emotional wellbeing. Children enjoy the recently developed calm area when they need a quiet sensory space.
- All staff are very positive role models for children. They are patient and kind and show skill in helping children regulate their emotions. They show a high level of skill in diffusing frustration or anxiety. Practitioners use stories effectively to focus on how to manage negative feelings. Children talk about how outdoor learning makes them feel active and happy. Children show good manners and helpfulness, for example, at mealtimes by helping to serve and share food.
- All staff are aware of and comply with statutory requirements in relation to Early Learning and Childcare. They are clear about keeping children safe. Practitioners create personal plans for children after consulting with their parents. These plans are regularly reviewed to ensure children's needs are met. All staff understand the staged intervention process to support children with barriers to learning. They work very effectively with a range of agencies to access support.
- The nursery is fully inclusive with staff working to ensure that children have the best possible experiences resulting in positive outcomes. All staff treat children fairly and with respect. Practitioners could extend the opportunities for children to learn about diversity through a range of stories, resources and play activities.

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

- A majority of children are making good progress in their language and literacy skills. Children's listening and talking skills are developing well, a few children confidently share their thoughts and opinions with adults. Most children require support to listen and talk to other children during play. Children follow simple instructions and benefit from the use of visuals. Through everyday routines, children are learning to recognise their name in print. Most children are at the early stages of mark making. A few are becoming more confident using writing materials across the setting. Children benefit from specific programmes and short, targeted sessions to support their language and literacy skills. Practitioners could make better use of the story corner to allow children to enjoy stories, rhymes, and puppet play.
- A majority of children are making good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Through play, they are successfully developing early mathematical concepts. Children build simple structures and use rulers and tapes to measure. As they used spoons to fill a jug with muddy water, a few children ably counted beyond 10. Short adult-directed experiences support children to use mathematical language, for example, identifying size and sorting. Children are not yet using mathematical language without adult support. Older children independently and confidently set the table for lunch. Children are beginning to identify and match numerals as they play simple board games. Good opportunities exist for children to problem solve. To provide progression and challenge, the setting should audit and review the jigsaws available.
- In health and wellbeing, most children are making good progress. A few children are still settling into their new environment. All practitioners are very aware of children's individual needs. Children chop fruit and vegetables for snack and their fine motor skills are developing well. They make healthy snack choices and are becoming independent as they self-serve and clear away dishes and cutlery. Lunch takes place in the playroom and practitioners are supporting children well with this recent change. A free-flow approach enables children to access independently the carefully constructed outdoor area. Children have opportunities to develop their gross motor skills using an array of large loose parts. As a result, children's co-ordination and balance is developing very well. The garden provides very good opportunities for children to grow their own fruit and vegetables.
- Senior leaders support practitioners to make accurate judgments about children's progress in learning. As identified, they should continue to support this process. This will support practitioners to provide well-timed interventions to challenge and extend children's learning.

Practitioners use stickers well to help children talk about their successes. Achievements from home are recognised and displayed in the setting.

- All practitioners demonstrate great empathy. They are very aware of the challenges many children and families experience and support appropriately. This is securing positive outcomes for children and 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.