

Summarised inspection findings

Ballater Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

17 September 2019

Key contextual information

Ballater Primary School Nursery Class is managed by the headteacher and is based in Ballater Primary School in the village of Ballater. There are 15 children who attend in the morning and 13 in the afternoon. There are five entitled two year olds in the nursery who attend in the afternoon. There is one lead practitioner and two part time early years practitioners. They receive a support visit from the peripatetic principal teacher every month.

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 teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Children are happy, settled and developing confidence within the nursery. This is particularly true of the two year old children who have settled well in the nursery. Practitioners demonstrate warmth, kindness and care in their interactions with all children. All children are treated with fairness and respect. Practitioners should continue to involve children in developing the 'golden rules' for the nursery which will support them to learn skills in managing their emotions.
- Most children, including the two year old children, make choices about where they want to play. They access a range of appropriate resources both indoors and outdoors. They are actively involved in spontaneous play. Practitioners support this well through positive interactions.
- Practitioners with support from the peripatetic principal teacher have focused on improving the learning environment both inside and outside. This has had a positive impact on children's engagement in their learning. Practitioners should continue to review and develop the learning environment so that it continues to support higher levels of engagement in learning through play. The environment should offer more opportunities for investigation, creativity, curiosity and problem solving. Practitioners could now develop the use of digital technology to enrich children's learning. In order to support and extend their learning, practitioners need to use more effective questioning. This will help ensure that there are fewer missed opportunities to support children to lead their own learning and explore their questions.
- Practitioners should continue to develop responsive planning to enable children to build on their interests. Approaches, such as the use of floorbooks and mindmaps, could be developed to support children in planning and evaluating their own learning. Children are able and ready to take more responsibility for leading their own learning. As discussed, the nursery should plan to provide training for practitioners to develop their knowledge, understanding and practice in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Practitioners make observations about children's learning which are recorded in their interactive learning diaries. These document the range of learning experiences that children

are involved in over time. Practitioners are beginning to use these to assess aspects of learning. This now needs to be developed further to ensure practitioners are identifying significant aspects of learning which lead to children receiving the appropriate support, challenge and depth of learning. Practitioners have begun to develop next steps for children but these need to be more individualised and shared with children and their parents.

- Practitioners with support from the senior management team and the peripatetic principal teacher should embed further approaches to tracking and monitoring, This will support a clear system for tracking and monitoring to ensure that all children are able to make the best possible progress in their learning. Practitioners should continue with their visits to other settings to observe good practice which can then be implemented in their nursery.
- The children are very enthusiastic about taking on the leadership role of 'class helper'. Practitioners should extend and build on this and to try to involve more children in playing an active role within the nursery.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

3.2 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 in the nursery are articulate and eager to learn. By the time children start in the setting, almost all have well-developed skills for their age. Practitioners now need to build on the knowledge and experiences children bring with them from home to increase both the pace of progress in learning and the aspirations and expectations of all children.
- Most children, including those who are two years of age, are making satisfactory progress in early language and communication. They are developing vocabulary and can express their thoughts and ideas with other children, practitioners and other adults. Children are confident and communicate well with each other and they engage in conversation during play. There are plans for children to be involved in the 'Emerging Literacy Programme' which is used in the primary school. Most children enjoy exploring books, both independently and with an adult, with most listening attentively. The majority of children moving onto P1 are able to identify and write their name as they sign in. Opportunities are available for children to copy familiar words and children write their own 'books'. Older children would benefit from opportunities to develop further their early writing skills through increased mark making and drawing opportunities and writing in real-life contexts.
- Within the nursery, most children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy. There is a strong focus on number recognition and counting. Those children aged two are beginning to count. A few children can count to 30. Children have opportunities to explore the concepts of time through the routine of the day and are learning about the days of the week. Most children understand the concepts of size and opportunities are available to measure and compare. Practitioners should continue to develop children's early mathematical skills in more real-life and imaginary contexts as they play within all areas of the playroom and in outside areas.
- Most children in the nursery, including the two year olds, are making satisfactory progress in literacy skills. There is scope for the setting to provide richer literacy and numeracy opportunities for the children both indoors and out. Professional learning to support a shared understanding of early literacy and mathematical skills is required to ensure further improvement in the quality of learning and teaching. It will also enable practitioners to plan more effectively for high-quality experiences to extend and deepen children's learning.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. As a result, most children play together well, cooperate in their play and work independently across the learning environment. Two year old children are also becoming more independent and happily cooperate with other children. They learn about healthy eating through the provision of healthy

snacks and participate in the tooth brushing programme. All children benefit from daily access to the outdoors. We discussed how to make better use of the visits to the park by using, for example, Forest School activities. Practitioners provide experiences to encourage children to become more independent through being involved in choosing snack and new resources for the nursery. Practitioners are involving the children in making risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor play areas. This is helping them learn about keeping themselves and others safe.

- There are some very able children in the nursery but the learning experiences available do not consistently provide opportunity to develop and extend their learning. Practitioners should ensure that they provide high quality learning experiences to challenge and extend all children's progression in their learning and development. Children talk about what they have done but are not yet able to talk in detail about what they are learning. Practitioners should start to talk to the children about what they are learning and encourage them to make choices to develop further their skills and knowledge.
- Achievements are celebrated in the nursery informally when children share them with their peers. Practitioners should consider displaying children's achievements within the nursery to allow children to engage in regular dialogue about them. Practitioners should also continue to encourage parents to regularly share their children's achievements, skills and interests from outwith the setting. This will help build on the practitioners' knowledge of individuals, developing a more holistic picture of children's learning.
- Practitioners know their children and families well and provide support to minimise barriers to learning. This is particularly evident for the entitled two year olds and their families.

1. Quality of care and support

Staff were warm, caring and respectful in their interactions with children, supporting them to play and form friendships during a variety of experiences. Staff worked well with parents. This helped ensure they knew children well and encouraged children to feel secure and safe.

Effective systems were in place to meet children's medical needs. Staff had attended training where appropriate and worked closely with individual families. We suggested gathering more detailed information surrounding individual signs and symptoms. This would support staff in meeting each child's needs.

Children enjoyed a pleasant social experience at snack time with menus promoting nutritious choices. Staff supported children to choose healthy amounts of food by using number card indicators to show children 'how many' of each item. Children were encouraged to wash hands and were supported in hygiene routines. Water was available for children to drink if requested. However, we discussed best practice would be for children to have direct access to their own drinking water.

Personal plans had been developed following a previous recommendation. All about me information was gathered from parents along with information on their child's needs. This helped staff to be knowledgeable about each child's needs and how to best meet them. These should be further developed to form an individual plan for each child setting about how their needs will be met.

Staff used Interactive Learning Diaries to record observations of children's development and learning. Whilst some observations were meaningful this was not consistent for all children. Possible next steps identified did not provide enough challenge and did not allow staff to plan for children's learning and interests. As a result, there were missed opportunities to support children to progress and achieve their potential. **(See recommendation)**

Planning for children's learning was adult led and topic based. This meant that the interests of children were not fully understood and taken forward in a meaningful way. Staff had identified this as an area of development and were sharing practice with other settings in how to plan responsively to children's needs. **(See recommendation)**

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

2. Quality of environment

Children and families accessed the nursery using a separate entrance to the main building. An entrance hall provided a children's cloak room which gave children their own space to keep their belongings. This helped children feel welcome. Wall displays were used to help keep parents informed. Key policies, service aims and objectives and information about activities and outings children had been taking part in were all available. The nursery self-evaluation book provided parents opportunities to view progress and add comments. This helped keep parents up to date.

Space and play areas for children included the main playroom with a connecting quiet room providing soft furnishings and decoration. This gave children an area if they wished to have quieter time with friends, alone or rest.

Play areas indoors and outdoors had been recently reviewed with many being made more inviting and interesting for children. Layout changes meant that children could access toys and equipment independently. Staff spoke to us about the benefits this had to children's levels of engagement and play.

Children were not yet challenged fully in their play and were not being consistently supported to achieve their full potential. Activities available were not always set at the right level for children to extend their thinking, problem solving and curiosity. Children has few opportunities to further develop literacy and numeracy skills to extend their existing knowledge. **(See recommendation)**

Children used other areas of the school, including the gym hall, playground and wooded areas on a regular basis. This encouraged children to be part of the larger school community and supported transitions for children moving forward into primary one

Opportunities to go out and visit areas of the local community were used well. Staff used these times to teach children about road safety. Regular trips to the local field area, parks, shops and library where children joined in book bug sessions gave children opportunities to get to know local services and extend real life experiences.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

3. Quality of staffing

Staff were positive and enthusiastic about their role. They were dedicated and keen to improve and develop the service. We observed they communicated well and supported each other in their work. This contributed to a relaxed environment where children felt comfortable and secure.

Staff were not yet effectively extending the learning of children. They were not confident in the use of open-ended questioning as a way to effectively support children's skills in problems solving, investigation and thinking. This meant at times opportunities were missed to extend children's learning and develop key skills. **(See recommendation)**

Staff did not demonstrate a sufficiently in-depth understanding of observation, assessment and planning. This resulted in observations and next steps that did not support children to adequately progress. Meaningful information was not gathered to support staff to plan effectively. Staff would benefit from continued support in how to identify and plan for play and learning in a way that meets individual interest and promotes children to lead their own learning. **(See recommendation)**

Staff were committed to their professional development and had attended a range of training sessions. Staff were also undertaking a professional childhood degree. They had begun to reflect on the impact of this learning to their practice and aspects of children's learning. These reflections should continue with a clearer focus on how staff learning impacts positively on the outcomes for children.

Some staff had visited other nursery services in the area in their own time. This has provided them with the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on their practice. Staff explained approaches to care and learning that they have developed as a result. These changes however were still very new and should be further developed to ensure positive opportunities for children. Staff should be supported to continue sharing good practice.

Staff were aware of some best practice documents and were in the early stages of using these within their practice. Staff would benefit however from further knowledge on Building the Ambition,

Pre Birth to Three and other best practice documents to ensure that they understand and provide the best opportunities for children to learn through play.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

4. Quality of management and leadership

The headteacher told us that due to teaching pressures they had been unavailable to assure the quality and support improvement within the nursery. This meant that development areas surrounding children's care and learning had not been fully identified. The headteacher should now prioritise time across the school to include the nursery to ensure robust and effective quality assurance systems are implemented.

Some support and monitoring had been carried out by the principal teacher. This is a support service provided by the local authority. Monthly visits along with feedback reports provided some formal monitoring of practice. Some improvements had been made as a result of this. Improvements need to be implemented at a more effective pace to ensure children receive the right care and support and are well supported to achieve their potential.

Effective systems were not in place to evaluate the nursery. Staff made some use of national guidance documents including How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare. This was in the early stages and was not yet impacting significantly on outcomes for children. The service should develop the use of self-evaluation to ensure they are critically reflecting with a clearer focus on impact and outcomes for children. This will support the service to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children. A clearer focus on children's learning and the progress they are making will enable the service to make further improvements. To ensure continuous improvement the management and staff as a whole need to embed this into practice. **(See recommendation)**

Roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined to ensure the nursery was performing at a good level and to drive forward the improvements needed. As the registered manager the headteacher needs to ensure roles and responsibilities are understood and are effective. Support and guidance for staff was not at the right level to be effective in developing practice and ensuring positive outcomes for children. A previous recommendation surrounding support for staff had not been met. Informal visits to the nursery by the headteacher did not provide staff with sufficient time to reflect on their practice and discuss any issues fully and in a way that meet their needs. **(See requirement)**

Care Inspectorate grade: weak

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and three recommendations. From these; one recommendation has been met. Two have not been met. Outstanding issues relating to CI to provide details are carried forward in this inspection. As a result of this inspection, there is one requirement and four recommendations.

Requirements

To ensure children receive high quality early learning experiences, care and support the provider must ensure the service is effectively led and managed by 30 August 2019.

This ensures that care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that as a child I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed (HSCS 4.23).

It is also necessary to comply with Regulation 3: Principles, of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland Regulations 2011.

Recommendations

Care and support

In order to ensure children are supported to achieve their potential staff should:

- Undertake meaningful observations that identify children's learning
- Identify suitable, challenging and appropriate possible next steps
- Plan experiences that follow children's interests and enhance their learning

This ensures that high quality care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that as a child, I am supported to reach my potential in education and employment if this is right for me (HSCS 1.27).

Environment

Play and learning opportunities should be developed further and evaluated to ensure they provided challenge for children.

This ensures that high quality care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that as a child, I can direct my own play and activities in a way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity (HSCS 2.27).

Staffing

To ensure children are effectively supported to progress and achieve their potential staff should develop their skills and knowledge of:

- Observation, assessment and planning
- Effective interaction to support and extend learning

This ensures that high quality care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that as a child, I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their own practice and follow their professional and organisational codes (HSCS 3.14).

Management and Leadership

In order to ensure children receive the right support to meet their care and learning needs and support them to reach their potential the head teacher and staff should develop and implement robust self-evaluation and quality assurance systems.

This ensures care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that as a child I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having a robust and transparent quality assurance processes (HSCS 4.19).

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.