

# Summarised inspection findings

**Drymen Nursery**

**Stirling Council**

**10 September 2024**

## Key contextual information

Drymen Nursery is located within the grounds of Drymen Primary School. The setting is within a purpose-built building which opened in May 2023 following the closure of Croftamie Nursery. All staff and the children from Croftamie Nursery relocated to Drymen Nursery. The setting provides placements for children from Drymen, Croftamie, Balfroun, Milton of Buchanan, Rowardennan, Killearn, Strathblane and surrounding rural area. Children can attend the setting from the age of two until starting primary school. The setting can provide early learning and childcare for 29 children at any one time. Currently, there are 35 children on the roll. Children have a range of attendance patterns across the week. Children attend across the extended year with places offered between 8 am and 6 pm. There is one playroom, and children have direct access to a large outdoor area and a small outdoor courtyard. The headteacher of Drymen Primary School has overall responsibility for the setting. He has delegated the day to day leadership of the setting to the principal early childhood educator (PECE). There is a PECE and two senior early childhood educators (ECE). They are supported by two ECEs and two part-time support worker ECEs.

### 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

- The PECE provides very strong leadership and direction to the staff in the setting. All staff demonstrate very effectively the nursery values of fun and enjoyment, outdoors, kindness, love, uniqueness and included in their actions and interactions with children. Children identify successfully what each value means for them and demonstrate kindness and love as they interact in enjoyable experiences inside and outdoors. Senior leaders identified the need to review the values following the relocation to the new building. They have successfully asked all parents and children for their views on the values. As planned, they should use data gathered to help them refresh the values and aims to ensure they are relevant to the current context of the setting.
- All staff are highly committed to continuous improvement of the setting to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children. The PECE has developed a rolling calendar of activities for quality assurance. This includes observations of play and learning and monitoring of learner journals. Through these activities, he identifies successfully areas of strength and next steps to improve and shares these effectively with staff. This is helping all staff to develop their practice well and is leading to positive outcomes for children. The headteacher recognises he needs to be more fully involved in this monitoring of the work of the setting.
- Senior leaders ask staff, children and parents regularly for their views on the work of the setting. All staff engage fully in regular self-evaluation activities using national guidance. Senior leaders use data gathered well to identify key priorities for setting improvement. All staff meet regularly throughout the year to evaluate progress in development of key areas for

improvement. All staff are making very good progress towards meeting current key priorities and as a result the pace of change is manageable and brisk.

- All staff engage fully in regular professional review meetings with senior leaders. Together, they have identified leadership roles for all staff. All staff say they are empowered to lead change. Senior leaders support practitioners well to lead change by prioritising time for professional learning and development of their allocated area for improvement. As a result of staff leadership, all children benefit from learning to cycle, learning outdoors and developing their understanding of science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM). Children enjoy the leadership roles of wellbeing champions on a rota basis and support their peers well to understand how their actions help them to develop their wellbeing.

## 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

- Practitioners have developed a very warm and nurturing ethos in the setting. They have created highly attractive learning environments, both indoors and outside, where all children access a range of stimulating experiences. All practitioners have engaged very well in professional learning about promoting positive relationships. They use visual prompts and restorative discussions effectively to help children to understand and regulate their behaviour. As a result, all children behave well almost all of the time. There are very warm, respectful relationships between children and between children and adults.
- All children develop their curiosity and sense of wonder about the world successfully as they choose and play with a wide range of natural and open-ended materials. They make effective use of digital technology, such as an interactive board and programmable toys, to support their learning. Almost all children engage well, for extended periods of time, in a balanced range of adult-led, child-led and child-initiated activities.
- Practitioners have a strong understanding of children's stages of development. All practitioners have engaged in professional learning about, and peer video observations of, high-quality interactions. As a result, they use mostly skilled interactions and open-ended questions effectively to help children to develop and explain their knowledge and understanding. All practitioners consider carefully children's needs and interests as they plan provocations and experiences to extend children's learning. Throughout the day all children have opportunities for physical play or to be quiet and calm. This is helping all children to manage their day very well to suit their energy levels at any given time. The daily routines of free flow snack and free play give all children time and space to follow their interests and deepen their learning. For example, children playing outside developed their fine motor skills and understanding of safety in extended play with wood and real tools.
- Practitioners make regular observations of children's learning which they record well in attractive learning journals. They identify mostly the skills children are developing. Parents are encouraged to send in photos and information about children's learning at home to add to the learning journals.
- Practitioners meet senior leaders three times a year to discuss each child's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They make good use of local authority progression pathways linked to track and monitor children's progress. These pathways are linked to Curriculum for Excellence early level experiences and outcomes. Practitioners use data gathered successfully to inform medium and short term plans for children's learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They plan individualised learning for children who require additional support for learning and share these plans with parents. All practitioners respond

well to children's interests, such as, space and transport to plan learning in other curriculum areas which motivates and inspires children well.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners use progression pathways, linked to CfE experiences and outcomes, in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to track and monitor children's progress effectively. They do not link planning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing explicitly to these pathways. However, they use their knowledge of children's progress to plan learning which challenges almost all children and meets the needs of almost all learners. Practitioners need to develop and use clear progression pathways across all curriculum areas, linked to CfE experiences and outcomes. This will ensure all children experience breadth, depth and progression in all their learning.
- Practitioners provide a curriculum that is highly responsive to children's needs and interests. All children enjoy learning indoors and outdoors daily. In the outdoor area and local forest, children are developing their curiosity and problem solving skills successfully using a wide range of natural and open ended materials. For example, children are developing their understanding of risk and safety well as they build dens and have campfires in the forest.
- Children are developing their literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills effectively as they learn across the curriculum. For example, they developed their understanding of sustainability well as they planted and harvested broad beans. They used online search engines effectively to find out how to cook the beans and followed instructions to cook them. They used their numeracy and listening and talking skills well as they visited the local shop and paid for ingredients to make soup.
- Practitioners support children very well as they start nursery and move to primary school. Children benefit from experiences with school staff and primary one children, such as shared outdoor play and class visits.

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

- Parents welcome the range of opportunities to learn alongside their child, such as learning to bake together and sharing books, rhymes and songs. Almost all parents engage well with the support practitioners provide to parents to help their child to learn at home, such as the 'big reading challenge'.
- Practitioners keep parents fully informed about the life and work of the nursery. They provide parents with regular helpful updates on their child's learning experiences through daily interactions, regular email newsletters and children's learning journals. Parents welcome home visits from practitioners before their child starts nursery. They say this helps children to settle quickly as they start attending nursery.
- Senior leaders ask parents regularly for their views on the setting. Almost all parents are confident that senior leaders take their views into account when planning for change and improvement in the setting. Parents identified they would like more opportunities for children to learn about STEAM. This led to an ECE taking a lead role for developing STEAM in the setting. All children now benefit from regular STEAM experiences. For example, they enjoy science experiments to explore how solids and liquids react together. They use programmeable toys well to develop their understanding of position and movement.

## 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

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

- Across the setting, there are warm, nurturing relationships between children and adults and between children. Practitioners encourage parents to share wellbeing information about their child each day as the child enters the setting. As a result, practitioners support children's needs well and children settle quickly to play and learning. Practitioners have a shared approach to resolving conflict between children. They speak sensitively with children and help them to identify how they can resolve issues. As a result, almost all children make good choices when they disagree with others and resolve issues between themselves most of the time. All practitioners make good use of praise to reinforce positive behaviour. Children experience sensitive well-timed support when they find managing their behaviour challenging. As a result, almost all children behave well and maintain positive relationships with each other almost all of the time.
- All practitioners have a strong focus on helping children to understand and develop their wellbeing. Most children refer to child-friendly characters to explain well how they demonstrate aspects of wellbeing. For example, they have identified they are being Healthy Henry when they make healthy choices at snack. All children benefit from unhurried, calm lunchtime and snack experiences. They develop their social skills well as they chat with ECEs and other children as they eat. Most children assess risk appropriately as they climb and run safely outdoors. Most children demonstrate their understanding of including others in their play and a few explain what it means to be included. A few children are beginning to become aware of their rights as practitioners link them to children's wellbeing. Practitioners need to help children to develop their understanding of their rights further.
- Practitioners demonstrate a sound understanding of their statutory duties with regard to keeping children safe and well almost all of the time. They meet with parents and other agencies regularly to develop individual plans to support children who require additional support with their learning. Practitioners need to ensure that the targets they set for individual children are specific and measurable and that children know their targets for learning. This should help practitioners to demonstrate more clearly children's progress against their individual targets. Senior leaders must ensure that all children who meet the criteria are considered for a coordinated support plan, such as care experienced children.
- Children learn and play in a highly inclusive environment. All children are supported well and access a wide range of developmentally appropriate learning experiences which is helping them to make very good progress. Children are learning to sign words and phrases to help them to communicate with others who find aspects of communication challenging. Children do not yet have enough opportunities or resources to help them learn about the diverse nature of the global society.

### 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

- Children aged two to three years are making very good progress appropriate to their developmental stage. They are developing very well their gross motor skills as they climb, jump and run outdoors. Children engage enthusiastically with stories and action songs. They enjoy learning about nature as they explore insects and their habitats outdoors.
- Overall, almost all children are making very good progress in early communication and language. Almost all children are developing well their skills in drawing recognisable figures. A few children are beginning to copy letters and numbers. Almost all children follow simple spoken instructions well. Most children enjoy looking at books individually, in small groups and with an adult. A minority of children need to increase their confidence in speaking to unknown adults as they talk about their experiences in and out of the setting.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. They use natural materials and digital tools, such as the interactive board, effectively to practise their counting and to sort and match. Most children count confidently to ten and a few count beyond ten. Children are developing well their understanding of measure and capacity as they play with jugs and containers in the water.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing their independence skills very well. All children self-serve successfully at snack and most dress independently for outdoor play. Almost all children enjoy developing their gross motor skills and their understanding of their bodies' capabilities as they run, jump and climb outdoors. All children ride balance bikes successfully and a few are beginning to ride two-wheeled bikes. Almost all children share resources effectively and take turns when supported by an adult.
- Practitioners celebrate and share children's achievements in and out of the setting in wall displays and journals. Parents share children's wider achievements from home. Practitioners should develop further strategies to track children's wider achievement and the skills they are developing. This should help them to identify children who are at risk of missing out and provide them with targeted opportunities for wider achievement.
- Practitioners use data gathered through tracking of children's progress well to identify gaps in children's learning. They use this information to provide targeted support for children to help them to make progress. Practitioners are beginning to identify gaps in learning and progress

between a few cohorts of children, such as boys and girls. They use this data to inform their planning of learning to help all children to make good progress.

- Practitioners have a good understanding of the social and economic context in which their families live. They ensure all children have equal access to all learning opportunities. For example, they provide families with resources to support learning at home if required, such as books to borrow, or keep, for sharing stories at home. Practitioners are supported well by a local supermarket to provide a food share for families each week.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced nurturing and compassionate care. Interactions between children and staff were almost always respectful, supporting children to feel safe and well cared for. Children were happy in the care of staff. Staff spoke to children at their level, taking time to actively listen to their views and opinions. This supported children to feel valued and loved.

A few interactions did not always respect children's choice. Staff now need to offer consistently nurturing approaches that ensure all children are enabled and empowered to make their own decisions. We shared this with the manager who took appropriate, immediate action. To ensure children's choices are fully respected, the service should then ensure children's decisions are enabled. See area for improvement one.

Staff worked in partnership with families, involving them in decisions about their child's care and development. Children's personal plans reflected their individual needs, and were supporting children to be healthy, nurtured, included, and achieve. This ensured children received care that was tailored to their individual needs.

Calm, nurturing spaces effectively supported children's emotional wellbeing. A nurture room had been developed with low lighting, soft cushions and mats for children to rest and relax. Children were supported well as they slept. Staff respected children's individual sleep routines, as some children would take a nap at different times. This ensured children were able to sleep safely and supported their emotional wellbeing.

Children experienced relaxed, social mealtimes. Staff thoughtfully asked children when they were ready to eat, allowing children to continue in their play if they chose. This respected their rights and showed their opinions were valued. Children were given time to enjoy lunch with each other in an unhurried, calm environment. Staff sat with children and spoke about their day. Menus were well planned and nutritionally balanced. Children helped plan the menu for snack daily with opportunities to develop their independence skills. Children's mealtime experiences were enhanced as staff valued this time with children.

Medication was managed appropriately and safely. Systems for recording medication were in place, including parental permissions, storage information and records of administration. This ensured children's medical needs were fully well met.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: good**

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children benefited from a high-quality play and learning environment, both indoors and outdoors. They had opportunities for uninterrupted play. They chose where they would like to play, as free flow play to the outside area was available throughout the sessions. This approach valued children's choice and allowed them to become absorbed in their play and have fun.

Children's voice was valued and respected. Staff skilfully listened to children and responded quickly and calmly to their individual needs and requests. Children spoke with staff as they recorded their "big questions" and curiosities. For example, one child had asked, "do ambulances fly". Staff valued this opportunity and used this question to deepen children's knowledge and learn

together with children. This empowered children to lead their own learning and developed their curiosity and problem solving.

Children benefitted from the effective use of loose parts and natural play materials throughout the environment. Children used these materials to develop their creativity and imagination. For example, some children pretended that a sofa was a campervan that turned into a submarine. Staff's questioning and interactions made these experiences fun and enhanced children's learning. As a result, children's creativity was promoted, as they were able to develop their imagination.

Staff discussed children's individual next steps. However, some were not always recorded or specific. We suggested the service continue to develop next steps for children to ensure they are meaningful and specific. This would further support children to reach their full potential.

Planning approaches were child-centred, with children being actively involved in planning. Talking walls and floor books were used effectively to record children's learning. Children's voice was central to all displays of learning. Meaningful conversations between staff and children were recorded in some learning journals. This allowed children to reflect and share their experiences and learning with their families and friends.

Skilled staff added value to children's play and learning through their carefully considered interactions. Questioning from staff encouraged children to think independently and to reflect. As a result, children were respected and valued.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good**

## 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were welcomed into a safe, homely and well organised environment. The rooms were well ventilated, with plenty of natural light and direct access to a large, enclosed garden. The playroom was set out in a manner which enabled children to access resources easily while providing space to move freely. There was considerable consideration given to ensure that resources were well presented and inviting. This gave a strong message to children that they mattered.

Children had access to a new purpose-built nursery. This consisted of a large playroom, a small nurture room, toilets and a large outdoor space. Resources were clean, well organised and encouraged exploration, enquiry, and fun. The continuous provision indoors and outdoors had been very well considered. A wide variety of interesting, open ended, and natural resources were available throughout the spaces. Outside, children explored large loose parts, road bikes and water play. This showed resources enhanced children's experiences and provided challenge.

Spaces reflected children's current interests. Some children explored loose parts inside, as they made their own handbags from a variety of materials. Children's independence and problem solving were extended through these experiences. Staff used attractive displays to encourage children to re-visit their learning experiences and celebrate their achievements.

Infection prevention and control practices were well embedded across the service. Children and staff were seen regularly washing their hands, in line with good practice. The environment was free from clutter and easily cleaned. This minimised the potential for the spread of infections.

Risk assessments were in place and regularly reviewed. These effectively highlighted hazards and appropriate actions to minimise potential risks to children and staff. We suggested that some risk

assessments be updated to reflect the very good practice observed. This would further support children to benefit from risk and play.

Children learned to access risk independently, as staff embraced a risk benefit approach. Children had access to real tools, cooked on open campfires and climbed trees. These real-life experiences helped build children's confidence

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good**

### 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The enthusiastic team were committed to delivering high quality experiences for children and families. There was a shared vision which states, "children and families at the heart". Practice and relationships with families reflected this vision. This meant that children continued to benefit from staff that put them at the centre.

The leadership team was passionate and fully committed to the continuous improvement of the service. They spoke confidently about previous improvements and the positive impact this had on outcomes for children. This showed children's experiences continually improved.

Staff knew the service well, and confidently discussed what they do well, how they know and what they could improve. Planned improvements were led well and impacted positively on the development of the service. There were leadership opportunities throughout the team. Staff took key roles in moving improvements forward. This supported a shared leadership approach to improvement.

The supportive ethos developed by the leadership team empowered staff, who told us they felt well supported. They took part in yearly reviews with the manager to discuss their development needs and celebrate successes. Staff had shown commitment to continuous training and improvements in these discussions. As a result, children benefited from a shared commitment to improving practice.

Self-evaluation of the service was well led and effective in ensuring high quality care. This supported staff to reflect together and develop their practice. Children's and families' views were regularly sought, and clear actions taken based on this feedback. The team were beginning to evaluate some improvements to highlight the positive impact this had on experiences for children. We encouraged the service to ensure all staff are confident to discuss the impact of their improvements. This would mean that improvements continually lead to improved outcomes for children.

Quality assurance approaches enabled consistently high-quality care for children, for example, regular audits of personal plans, the environment and learning journals. Staff had recently taken part in training where they recorded their interactions with children. This allowed for shared reflections on practice and was improving the quality of interactions. As a result, critical, reflective quality assurance was improving experiences for children.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good**

## 4.3 Staff deployment

Positive working relationships had been formed between staff, which meant they were all meaningfully contributing to the inclusive and positive ethos. Children told us they liked the staff in the nursery and enjoyed spending time with them. This contributed to children feeling happy, secure and loved.

Children benefitted from having opportunities to develop relationships with all staff in the service. Staff took a shared approach to ensuring all children were supported to achieve their potential. This allowed children to benefit from the range of skills and knowledge of the whole team. Staff interacted positively with the children and were very supportive, kind, nurturing and caring towards them. The team clearly enjoyed being with children and ensured that activities and play experiences challenged and interested them.

Effective staff deployment across the service meant that the right number of staff were meeting children's individual needs consistently throughout the day. Staff were proactive in recognising any gaps, ensuring effective supervision and quality engagement with children. Staff placed themselves thoughtfully ensured children were able to explore freely. The service told us they planned to further consider staff deployment over mealtimes to allow children to choose when they want to eat. This would further support children to experience uninterrupted play.

Staff were motivated and clear about their roles. There was a shared leadership approach developing. Staff had taken on key roles to develop areas of practice, such as forest school and developing approaches to numeracy in the setting. Staff were confident to discuss their leadership roles. Their values, skills, experience and knowledge resulted in high quality experiences for children.

A wide range of training opportunities was available. Staff spoke confidently and passionately about their recent training. The training that staff had chosen linked closely with the improvement priorities of the service, such as adult-child interactions. As a result, children benefitted from a knowledgeable and committed staff team.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good**

## 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.