

Summarised inspection findings

Culter School Nursery Class

Aberdeen City Council

11 February 2020

Key contextual information

Culter Nursery Class operates from a standalone granite building within the grounds of Culter Primary School. Children attend from Peterculter and the surrounding villages. The nursery provides morning and afternoon sessions and is registered for 40 children at any one time. Currently the roll is 37 with almost all children attending the morning sessions. The nursery operates as two separate classes with a few opportunities for children to come together, for example during outdoor play.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Practitioners demonstrate commitment to the vision, values and aims and use them to underpin daily practice. Practitioners embed the values for children and families through the welcoming, respectful and supportive ethos. They make effective links to the vision, values and aims, wellbeing indicators, children's rights and the class charter by referring to them during relevant learning experiences. This interconnected approach supports children to develop their awareness and understanding of these in a meaningful way.
- The principal teacher took up post in August 2019. In a short time, she has developed a positive relationship with the nursery team. Together, they are implementing a number of changes that need to embed and become integral to practice across both playrooms. Practitioners value the support from senior leaders and feel included as part of the whole school community.
- Senior leaders meet regularly with practitioners to engage in professional dialogue and self-evaluation activity. Practitioners identify what is working well and what needs to improve. They have identified correctly the need to improve planning, tracking and monitoring of children's learning. Practitioners also recognise the need to create environments indoors and outdoors that provide greater challenge for children.
- Practitioners should continue to engage in professional dialogue and professional learning to reach a shared understanding of pedagogy. They need to ensure a more consistent approach across playrooms. Practitioners need to develop further their practice based upon an understanding of current thinking in early learning and childcare (ELC). This is important, particularly in relation to achieving increased choice for all children. Practitioners should look outwards to other settings providing high quality ELC. Strong leadership is required to ensure the pace of change is appropriate, well planned and leads to improved outcomes for all children.
- The improvement plan and subsequent action plan detail important priorities for improvement. This includes raising attainment in literacy and numeracy and improving experiences outdoors. Practitioners have made significant improvements to the outdoor garden area as a result of

working with a variety of community partners. The majority of children can explore and investigate the natural space to develop a wide range of skills. The headteacher has made effective use of the Pupil Equity Fund to improve children's talking and listening skills within the nursery and Primary 1. Practitioners meet with senior leaders to discuss the progress of the improvement plan. They need to undertake robust evaluation of new developments to demonstrate positive impact on improving outcomes for all children.

- Practitioners engage in the professional review process, which is supporting individual's professional development. They need ongoing access to professional learning to build practitioners' confidence, knowledge and skills. As recognised, the headteacher needs to develop leadership at all levels. Practitioners should contribute fully to the continuous improvement of the nursery by taking forward key areas of development.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Children are happy, motivated and enthusiastic to learn. Most children are confident within the play environment to explore the learning experiences available. By the time children start in the setting, almost all have well-developed skills for their age. Practitioners need to build on the knowledge and experiences children bring with them from home to increase the depth and pace of learning for all children.
- Children are developing independence and benefit from free-flow access between indoors and outdoors. Their increased use of open-ended resources across learning spaces supports children's creativity, curiosity and imagination. Practitioners need to develop further the learning environment indoors as a free-flow space across both playrooms providing children with equal access to the outdoors and increased access to play areas. In doing so, staff should bring together their skills to work as one team delivering high quality learning.
- Practitioners are supportive and positive in their interactions with children. They encourage children's interests and ideas. Staff need to employ effective and skilled questioning techniques consistently to support children's progress in learning. They need to provide further opportunities to extend and challenge children's thinking during free-flow play. Children need to influence the direction of and lead their learning, exploring their own ideas and interests in greater depth. Staff should ensure there is sufficient focus on discussions about learning with children to enhance experiences for all. Children need ownership and encouragement to reflect on or lead the direction of learning from the information recorded. In addition, they need increased depth and challenge in their learning to ensure they develop and achieve.
- Children have access to a range of digital technologies including an interactive whiteboard and computers. Practitioners need to develop further, how digital technologies are used to support and extend children's learning.
- Practitioners use observations to assess children's progress. However, they are inconsistent in how they record observations of children's significant learning experiences within interactive learning diaries. Where observations tell a story of learning, this creates an in-depth understanding of the individual child as a learner. Practitioners need to work together to discuss regularly children's learning and ensure that the observations recorded demonstrate significant learning over time.
- Practitioners have begun to identify next steps in learning for children and use the observations they record as part of the assessment process. They should adopt a more consistent approach to identifying children's next steps in learning. As planned, practitioners need to develop progression pathways as part of the assessment process to support a tracking method to monitor children's progress. A planned approach by practitioners to identify the direction of learning across the areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing should support

effective assessment in a more focused way. Practitioners need to review and adapt how they work in partnership with parents to identify learning goals for their child that ensure the best possible progress in their learning.

- Senior leaders should include tracking children's progress in learning as part of planning meetings. Practitioners and senior leaders need a more focused approach to discussing and recording children's progress and achievement. Tracking processes need to be aligned and show progression across the early level.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum rationale supports a whole school approach to learning that includes the nursery class. Practitioners' approach to learning has a clear focus on play and builds upon children's interests. Practitioners implement a range of processes that support the delivery of the curriculum using national guidance. Senior leaders and practitioners need to ensure a consistent approach is adopted for all children.
- Practitioners are at the early stage of becoming familiar with progression frameworks for all curriculum areas. They need to use all available guidance to support them to identify progress and appropriate next steps in learning for all children. Practitioners should ensure a focus on the key aspects of early literacy and language, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. In addition, they should consider the design principles of Curriculum for Excellence to inform the curriculum, in particular, breadth, depth, relevance, challenge and progression for all children.
- Practitioners make effective use of the local community, families and visitors to enrich learning and to extend children's awareness of the world around them.
- During the final term, a programme of activities aims to support children with their transition from nursery to Primary 1. Practitioners and Primary 1 staff need to share children's learning experiences throughout the school year to enhance transition for all children. Across the early level, staff should work together to develop a shared understanding of early level pedagogy to support continuity in the curriculum and learning for children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- As a result of a parental survey, practitioners have taken positive steps to improve how they share planning information with parents. This is now displayed in the nursery entrance along with photographs of children's learning experiences. Practitioners and parents regularly share children's experiences between nursery and home through individual electronic learning diaries. These include useful termly reports from practitioners on the progress children are making in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners should develop further their partnership with parents in identifying and supporting appropriate goals in learning for each child.
- Practitioners provide home link resources such as 'story and maths challenge bags' to encourage parents and children to play and learn together at home. A few parents report that they would like increased opportunities to learn together with their child during the nursery session. There is potential for both children and their families to benefit from these experiences. Practitioners should consider how this can be taken forward. In doing so, they should ensure meaningful consultation with parents and children to gather all views and ideas.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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

- Children are happy, settled and confident within the setting as a result of the positive and respectful relationships they have with practitioners. Children's wellbeing is important to practitioners and has a strong focus within the nursery class. This underpins daily practice. Practitioners use the language of the wellbeing indicators as they interact with children during meaningful learning experiences. Most children have a developmentally appropriate awareness of the wellbeing indicators and relate them to everyday situations at home, in the nursery and within the community. Practitioners should continue to support younger children to become aware of the wellbeing indicators through daily experiences and routines.
- Practitioners model positive behaviour and encourage it in the children through a caring, respectful and supportive approach. Most children demonstrate an understanding of emotions and show consideration and concern for others. They play cooperatively with each other, developing friendships. When necessary, practitioners intervene sensitively to support children to resolve minor conflicts.
- Children are confident to share their views. Practitioners are responsive and overall, take into account children's ideas enabling children to recognise their views are valued and influence play experiences. This includes commenting on learning experiences and voting for preferences in certain aspects of the service. There is scope to develop these opportunities and children's leadership further by giving increased responsibility. For example, practitioners could develop relevant links for children with some of the Pupil Voice Groups within the school.
- Senior leaders and practitioners are fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to statutory duties within ELC. Training on specific areas such as first aid, child protection and food hygiene ensures practitioners have the necessary skills and knowledge to keep children safe and well within the nursery. Practitioners have created useful personal plans to meet effectively children's health, care and learning needs. Parents are involved meaningfully in the review and update of plans on a termly basis.
- Practitioners know children and families well and use this knowledge effectively to reduce possible barriers to learning and to ensure all children are fully included in the life of the nursery. Practitioners have introduced individualised plans for children who require additional support with their learning. As a result of clear, measurable targets children continue to make progress in their development and learning. Practitioners value diversity. Children develop an awareness of a range of cultures and festivals through a variety of play experiences. This includes opportunities for families to talk to children about festivals and celebrations that are important to them.

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

- Most children are making good progress in early literacy and language. Children listen well and most follow instructions. Children talk about their experiences and most have the vocabulary needed to share their ideas and experiences in an articulate way. Children engage in enjoyable and motivating story experiences every day. Most children have good listening skills. They demonstrate a keen interest in a wide range of books and newspapers. Children are developing their love of story and can confidently retell the story of 'The Gruffalo' in sequence. Children are learning about written language and are developing early writing skills through mark-making in a variety of contexts. They explore letters as they copy familiar words and write signs for wall displays. Most children can write their own name with confidence. The line drawings children produce are very detailed. They clearly illustrate individual stories, which practitioners capture from the child's voice. All children should be supported to continue to extend and apply early literacy and language skills across all areas of learning.
- Through play, most children are making good progress in developing their understanding of mathematical concepts. Children develop confidence in counting, with most counting confidently beyond ten. For example, as children add natural ingredients to make magic potions in their outdoor den. Children apply mathematical language appropriately during play experiences. They compare the length of objects in the garden and make use of them to assess the depth of a muddy puddle as they dig. Using timers and a clock, children are beginning to develop an awareness of time. Block play is beginning to develop their awareness of shape and symmetry. A few children are ready to develop more advanced early numeracy skills across the learning environments.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They are independent in personal hygiene routines and when getting ready for outdoor play. Children show care and respect for each other. Most regularly explore and take risks within the safe outdoor area. They are developing an understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe through involvement in risk assessment. All children need to develop these skills in the natural outdoor area.
- Children develop early citizenship skills through engagement with the local community. They are beginning to develop an awareness of how they contribute to the local community. Experiences include recycling and intergenerational work. Parents and carers are encouraged to share children's achievements from outside the nursery. Practitioners need to develop this

further in order to support children's awareness of when they have achieved and how this contributes to the progress they make in their learning.

- Practitioners provide effective support to children and families to minimise barriers to learning. The headteacher makes effective use of funding to provide additional professional learning for practitioners in relation to developing children's early communication and language. As a result, children are making good progress in their listening and talking skills. Practitioners should continue to improve the use of all children's assessment information, tracking and monitoring to evaluate the progress children are making in their learning. In doing so, senior leaders and practitioners need to use this information to measure children's progress over time more robustly.

Choice of QI: 3.3 Developing skills for creativity and skills for learning

- Developing creativity
- Developing skills for life and learning
- Developing digital skills

- Practitioners are taking positive steps to develop further children's creativity. Increasingly, children have access to a wider range of natural and open-ended materials. This supports children's investigative, problem solving and imaginative skills during play. The outdoor garden enables children to learn from and within a natural environment where they can take risks in their play. Practitioners recognise that their own confidence, skills and knowledge need to be developed further in order to provide a wider range of opportunities to develop children's creativity. Commendably, practitioners are accessing currently a series of professional learning sessions to support them with this aspect of their practice.
- Children are confident and eager to learn and most sustain interest for extended periods of time. They are curious and ask appropriate questions to support their learning. Practitioners should begin to involve children at a deeper level in making decisions about their learning experiences and to initiate and participate in forthcoming improvements. Children need increased opportunities to become active members of their community.
- Children use tablet computers and interactive whiteboards to engage in research related to specific learning contexts and to develop early literacy and numeracy skills. They need to continue to develop their digital skills to enhance and deepen learning. Children need to engage in a wider range of real-life experiences to develop their skills in using digital technology.

1. Quality of care and support

Children were happy, confident and motivated and settled quickly in the nursery to their own choice of play activities becoming engaged and engrossed in their play. Children persevered and concentrated well. Children were curious and many were independent in investigating, exploring and finding out for themselves. However, inconsistent approaches meant that some children were more reliant on adult support and direction.

Children engaged happily in conversations with staff who responded appropriately extending children's knowledge and understanding of topics they were interested in. Children were being helped to understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy, how to behave well, to talk to other children with respect, to be kind and considerate and to share resources.

Parents had confidence in the service and spoke highly of staff's care and consideration in meeting children's needs. Children's care needs were documented in detail in newly developed personal plans and regularly reviewed with parents and where appropriate other agencies. As a result, staff knew children's needs well and children's health and wellbeing was well supported. Staff may benefit from more support in meeting children's additional support needs.

Children demonstrated they were making good progress in their learning and development. Staff recognised that assessment and planning to build on children's prior learning needed further development to ensure consistent challenge for all children. Child friendly targets could be extended to all children to involve them more in recognising their learning.

Child protection policy and procedures were clear. Staff had a basic understanding of child protection issues, their role and responsibility to report concerns to the headteacher. Senior nursery staff could take more leadership in this area.

We suggested keeping snack menus light in order that children learn what an appropriate snack is and to make more effective use of staff time. During the inspection staff trialled having one snack accessible to all, this supported better staff deployment. Children had some involvement in making suggestions for menus using pictures to choose from however, children's choice and involvement could be further embedded. Children helped staff with online shopping contributing to their understanding of digital technology.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

We observed that a good variety of experiences and opportunities for children were duplicated in each room; this meant that play areas were quite cramped constraining children's play and distracting their concentration. More literacy and numeracy opportunities could be threaded through the play areas. There was a lack of space for large block play. Better use could be made of the space by making the play opportunities different in each room and giving children free flow access to choose to play in either room or outdoors. This would give children more equality of opportunity and facilitate staff deployment to allow free-flow outdoor play. Staff also recognised that this would better support children's existing friendships made outwith the nursery.

Furnishings and equipment were mostly in good condition. Staff had been working hard to make the storage of equipment more accessible to children and increase children's choice and independence. Through self-evaluation and training, staff were working to develop children's creativity; better use was being made of open-ended and natural materials to develop problem solving. However, staff recognised they are still on a journey to create a richer learning environment. This will better enable all children to lead their own learning.

Children had daily access to the outdoors for physical, energetic play making use of a variety of play areas in the school and locality. The woodland style garden offered children a range of rich contexts for learning. The management team understood the value of this area and wanted to make better use of it. Plans are in place to extend the nursery to provide a larger playroom with direct access to the outdoor area. This will enable children to choose this option for themselves and improve the security during outdoor play. Risk assessments have been recently updated. These include staff positioning and vigilance when children are outdoors. A risk benefit approach may better support current practice. Children were learning about safety through conversations with staff when outdoors and when preparing snack. Not all staff were consistent in their approach to letting children take risks and to learn by experience.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and no recommendations.

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.