

Summarised inspection findings

Buckstone Primary School and Nursery Class

The City of Edinburgh Council

28 November 2023

Key contextual information

Buckstone nursery class is situated in a purpose-built building within the playground of Buckstone Primary School. There are currently 29 children on the roll, aged 3 to those not yet started school. The nursery class has the capacity to accommodate 40 children. Children attend Monday to Friday during term time. The nursery class has a separate cloakroom, large playroom and outdoor area. The outdoor area is accessed from the playroom. The nursery also benefits from a large, wooded area next to the school grounds. All children stay for lunch.

Over the last few years there have been significant changes to the staff team.

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 nursery class shares the same recently refreshed vision, values and aims as the primary school. The senior leadership team and practitioners demonstrate the values well through their daily interactions with each other, children and families. Practitioners should continue to support children to become familiar with the values and how they relate to their nursery experiences.
- Over the last few years, there have been significant changes to the staff team. An early years officer has day-to-day responsibility for the nursery. One of the school's depute headteachers has specific responsibility for the early level. She meets with practitioners regularly and provides regular ongoing support to develop the nursery provision. Senior leaders within the school are very supportive of the staff team. They have established effective ways to seek the views of practitioners to help develop the nursery provision. There is a positive approach to collegiate working across the staff team. Practitioners new to the team feel they have been supported well in their new roles.
- This session, as part of the setting's improvement plan, practitioners are developing their approaches to the way they plan and record children's progress. They make use of guidance materials from Edinburgh City Council. It is important that senior leaders and the staff team evaluate new approaches to ensure that children experience high-quality experiences and make the best possible progress. In taking this forward, practitioners should continue to make use of national guidance including Realising the Ambition: Being Me.
- The staff team engage readily in professional learning. They are committed to improving the setting. Senior leaders encourage and support practitioners to lead areas of improvement within the setting. For example, practitioners each have a responsibility to develop curricular areas within the setting. Following the pandemic, with support from senior leaders, practitioners identified the need to improve different aspects of the nursery provision. To support this work, practitioners had the opportunity to visit other settings to identify and share good practice.

Practitioners also have opportunities to collaborate with early learning and childcare colleagues within the school cluster. The staff team are recording their improvement journey within a floor book. They are developing their understanding of how to demonstrate and measure the impact of any new initiatives. To support continuous improvement, it will be important that senior leaders work closely with the team to develop a more strategic and robust approach to self-evaluation.

- Practitioners in the setting share their understanding of play pedagogy with colleagues in the primary school. They work with and alongside colleagues to develop spaces and improved learning experiences for children. Primary colleagues value the guidance and support they receive from their nursery colleagues.
- Practitioners are increasing the ways for children to support improvement in the setting. This is undertaken as part of responsive planning. Children also have opportunities to take on leadership roles, such as snack helpers and risk assessors. It would be helpful for practitioners to collaborate with colleagues in P1 to explore ways for children at the early level to influence improvement across the school.

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

- There is a welcoming, nurturing and supportive ethos within the setting. Relationships with children and families are very positive and this contributes to children feeling safe, secure and confident within the environment. Children new to the setting have settled well. Children are very well-behaved. All children are caring and kind to each other and play well together.
- Children engage well in a range of spontaneous play activities indoors and outdoors. There is free-flow access to the outdoor play space throughout the day. Children enjoy the opportunities they have for energetic play. Recently, practitioners reviewed play spaces and made some improvements. These are supporting children well to be independent and make decisions as they lead their own learning. Practitioners should continue to review the resources and experiences within play spaces to increase challenge in learning. Children can access an interactive white board and tablet in the playroom. Staff should use a wider range of digital technology more effectively throughout the setting to support and extend learning.
- Practitioners provide children with space and time to lead and direct their own learning both indoors and outdoors. In a few instances, practitioners make effective use of questions and commentary to develop children's thinking and help sustain their interest. For example, children's learning was extended well as they explored water in the outdoor sand area. Practitioners should continue to develop their use of effective questioning so that learning opportunities are maximised for all children.
- Overall, practitioners know children well and understand their needs. They track and monitor children's developmental milestones. Practitioners use online learning journals to record observations about each child's progress. These include photographs and descriptions of children's learning experiences. Practitioners should continue to develop their skills in observing, identifying and recording significant evidence of children's learning. This will help them make more accurate judgements about children's progress and build on their prior learning. It is also important that the staff team capture and analyse children's achievements more regularly.
- Practitioners are at an early stage of introducing a new planning format. As correctly identified, they should continue to review how they plan to take forward children's interests and build on children's prior knowledge and skills as they play. In doing so, it is important that the staff team provide children with breadth of learning across the curriculum. While doing so, practitioners should focus on supporting children to plan and evaluate their own learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide an early years' curriculum based firmly on play. They take steps to allow children to lead and direct their own learning throughout the session. Practitioners are developing the learning environment to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. There is scope to develop this further. Practitioners offer a balance between responsive and intentional planning. They should ensure that current planning approaches enable children to access their entitlement to a broad progressive curriculum.
- The setting supports children and families well as they start in the nursery. As a result, most children have settled well into the nursery. Practitioners collaborate well with primary school colleagues to support children as they move on to Primary 1. Helpfully, each year a member of the nursery staff team moves on with the children as part of a local authority initiative to promote play pedagogy.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Senior leaders and practitioners have fostered very positive relationships with parents. Parents are welcomed into the nursery at the beginning and end of each session. Parents value the opportunities they have to join their children in the playroom as part of 'stay and play' sessions. Practitioners keep parents up to date with nursery information through the use of online journals. The early years officer also sends home a helpful weekly newsletter detailing information about learning and different events in the nursery. Parents spoken to during the inspection report that they find these updates extremely useful.
- The majority of parents engage with children's online journals. As planned, practitioners should continue to seek ways to encourage all parents to contribute to their child's learning journal. The early years officer meets with parents at different points throughout the year to share information about children's progress. Moving forward, it would be helpful for keyworkers to take a greater role in these meetings. Parents and family members are encouraged to visit the setting to share their particular skills and interests. Positively, these are organised to take forward children's interests.
- Last session, practitioners offered parents the opportunity to learn alongside their children in a planned parenting programme. There are plans in place to repeat this programme this session.

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

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 benefit from warm, positive relationships with the practitioners who are kind and care for them. Practitioners know children as individuals and can talk confidently about each child's particular care needs and interests. Children play with and alongside each other in a kind and considerate way. Older children show great care for the younger children and those children who are new to the setting.
- Children's wellbeing is promoted well in the setting. They benefit from their regular access to outdoors. Most children choose to go outdoors for extended periods of time throughout the session. Children enjoy weekly walks in the local area, including in woodland around the school grounds, where they have good opportunities to learn about the changing seasons.
- Children are learning to share how they are feeling when they start in the setting. When children are upset or frustrated, they are comforted by practitioners who support them to talk about their emotions. Practitioners should explore ways to build on this work further. This should help children discuss their wellbeing and understand the range of emotions they may be feeling.
- Children are learning about the wellbeing indicators. Practitioners are beginning to link the wellbeing indicators to children's rights in a natural and helpful way. Older children talk about how to keep safe and be healthy. They can identify different healthy foods. Practitioners should continue to support children to have a fuller understanding of all the wellbeing indicators as part of their nursery experience.
- Most children show high levels of independence as part of established nursery routines. This includes hand washing and making choices at snack time. Positively, children help to prepare snacks for their peers. They are developing important skills as they use real-life utensils to prepare snacks. Children eat their lunch in the playroom and are supported well by early years assistants. Children enjoy a very pleasant, relaxed lunch time experience. Children who may require rest are able to use a dedicated area during the session.
- Practitioners are aware of their statutory duties. Parents and children complete an 'All about Me' booklet when children start in nursery. Practitioners use this information to create a personal care plan for each child. They have undertaken relevant professional learning to help them meet the needs of children in their care. Along with senior leaders they establish, when necessary, additional plans for children who may require additional support for learning. The staff team collaborate well with other professionals for example, the health visitor and speech and language therapists, to meet children's needs.
- There is a very inclusive ethos in the setting and the staff team value children as individuals and include them in all aspects of the setting. They take positive steps to promote equality and celebrate diversity. For example, parents visit the nursery to read storybooks in their home

language. Practitioners ensure that they promote well the particular celebrations and customs relevant to the children in their care. This includes ensuring resources reflect diversity and do not promote gender bias.

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 language and communication. Most children listen to and follow instructions and enjoy talking with other children and adults about their experiences. Children enjoy listening to stories and regularly seek out adults to read to them. They should now be provided with more opportunities to participate in songs and rhymes. Children demonstrate an interest in mark-making but would now benefit from more opportunities to mark-make for a purpose. The majority of children are exploring letters and sounds in their name. Children are capable of making increased progress in literacy that builds on the skills and knowledge they bring to nursery.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They recognise numbers and count with increasing confidence as they play. Children discuss halves and quarters as they prepare items for snack. They are beginning to use appropriate mathematical language as they compare the size and capacity of containers when filling them with sand and water. Children gather information to display on charts. They would benefit from developing numeracy and mathematical skills through a wider range of real-life contexts across the playroom and outdoors.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Children are caring and respectful to others, with most children happy to support one another if they need help with an activity or task. Children's independence skills are promoted well throughout the play spaces indoors and outdoors. Most children enjoy taking part in energetic activity outdoors. Children develop physical skills as they jump, run and climb outdoors. They ride bikes confidently and most children are developing their skills in throwing, catching and kicking balls.
- Over time, children are becoming increasingly confident, resilient and independent in their learning. As already identified and planned for, practitioners need to improve their current processes for documenting and tracking children's learning over time. In doing so, this should help them to demonstrate children's progress over time more effectively. Practitioners' use of learning profiles will help them understand and plan for children's next steps in learning.
- Practitioners use praise well to encourage and support children in their play. They make attempts to capture children's achievements in profiles and on displays and are developing new approaches to do this. Practitioners should continue to develop the consistent gathering of achievement information both within and out with the setting. This will ensure that progress is well understood by everyone, and that prior learning and experiences are built upon effectively.

- Practitioners are aware of children’s individual circumstances. They take positive steps to understand the potential barriers to learning and work with parents and partners to reduce them in sensitive and discreet ways.

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.