

Summarised inspection findings

Monquhitter School and Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

5 February 2019

Key contextual information

Monquhitter Primary School Nursery Class is in the village of Cuminestown, Aberdeenshire. Children aged from three years to those not yet attending school attend for morning or afternoon sessions. The nursery is registered for 25 children per session, at the time of inspection, 28 children were on the roll.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

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

- Across the setting relationships between practitioners and children are warm and caring. As a result, children are observed to be safe and secure in their environment. Children are able to move freely between indoors and outdoors, allowing them to become resilient, independent and confident in their learning. There is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy across the learning environment, which has been developed over time. Most children are observed to engage fully in their learning, inviting practitioners to join them when necessary. Children appear happy and clearly enjoy their time at the setting.
- Children enjoy and are actively involved in learning through free- and spontaneous play experiences. The introduction of natural materials and loose parts is supporting children's curiosity, inquiry and creativity. Children are observed interacting positively with each other, for example, displaying respectful and considerate behaviour to their peers. There is scope to build on children's positive engagement in learning by further developing opportunities to engage all children in planning and leading their own learning.
- Practitioners are very respectful and patient as they carefully listen and respond to children's verbal and non-verbal communication. Practitioners enthusiastically engage in conversations with children to encourage them to talk about their interests and ideas. Most practitioners use open-ended questions well to support children's learning. Practitioners should continue to develop their use of skilled questioning to challenge children in their thinking and build upon their natural motivation and curiosity to learn. Children have opportunities to explore digital technologies, for example, the interactive whiteboard and tablet computer. The use of digital technology supports and extends children's learning well.
- Practitioners know individual children well and make observations of their learning, however these do not always identify the significant learning taking place. Observations are recorded in children's online learning journals, 'blue books' and floor books and are shared with parents. Parents have access to the online learning journals and a few have begun to comment on their child's learning. They have the opportunity to take their child's 'blue book' home once a term, with parent and child comments invited. Practitioners recently participated in training, which had a focus on observations and should continue to develop a consistent approach to this across the setting.

- Practitioners meet regularly to plan for children’s learning using a range of sources to inform future plans, this includes information from children and parents. Planning approaches are not yet fully responsive to children’s interests and ideas. As this develops, it will be important to ensure that planning takes full account of children’s interests. Individual trackers are in place for each child and are shared at the point of transition, alongside the ‘blue books of learning’ which carry on into primary school. We discussed the need to review and refresh current approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring, ensuring processes are streamlined and not overly bureaucratic.

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. An area for development has been agreed with the school and the education authority.

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

- Overall, children are making good progress with a few making very good progress in communication and early language. This is in line with their age and stage of development. Most children confidently engage in conversations with practitioners and peers during free play. During the inspection children confidently approached inspectors and engaged in dialogue about their learning. Practitioners engaged sensitively with children who require additional time to talk and share information.
- Opportunities for mark-making were available across the setting with a few children observed confidently writing their name. Children's writing is displayed on walls for a purpose, for example, the title for 'Children in Need'. Children recognise their own name and are encouraged to post their name as they go outdoors. The recently refreshed book corner is an inviting space with children observed engaging independently in story books and enjoying having stories read to them by practitioners. Children are observed engaging in daily 'ryhme time', with all having fun and enjoying the experience. As planned, continue to embed early literacy across the setting, indoors and outdoors.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Opportunities to count in routines and planned opportunities for number recognition are supporting children to develop their mathematical skills. Most children count to ten, with a few confidently counting beyond ten. In the home corner, children counted the vegetables as they confidently chopped carrots and potatoes. Children displayed a good awareness of shape and other mathematical concepts as they engaged in games on the tablet computer and during construction play. As planned, continue to develop further children's awareness of numeracy and mathematics across the setting.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing, with all children appearing happy and settled in their environment. Children are caring and considerate of each other's feelings, displaying positive engagement with their peers. Children make healthy choices at snack and develop their independence skills as they serve themselves. Opportunities for children to develop their physical skills are available on a daily basis. Children are observed outdoors in the well-resourced garden area, jumping from cable reel to reel and exploring in the mud kitchen. They have planned time in the school gym hall on a weekly basis. Most children play independently across the learning environment and are developing their self-help skills.
- Through inspection observation, information in online learning journals, 'blue book' evidence and dialogue, children in the setting are observed as enthusiastic learners who are making

good progress in their learning. Children's individual achievements are captured and celebrated in a range of ways, for example, on the Star Wall, in the 'blue book' and at whole school assemblies. Practitioners should continue to build on the positive start made to moderation with colleagues across the cluster, supporting them as they make professional judgements on children's progress in learning.

- Equity is promoted across all aspects of the work of the setting. There is a supportive and inclusive ethos, as a result, there is a climate of mutual respect and trust. The setting takes good account of the cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds of children and their families. Practitioners are proactive in identifying and reducing barriers to effective learning for all children.

1. Quality of care and support

Staff were friendly and welcoming and had built close relationships with the families and children in their care. This had a positive impact on working together to help meet children's individual needs and supporting them to settle and grow in confidence. As a result, children were happy to attend, felt comfortable in the service and were keen to interact with staff.

A range of information to support children's health and wellbeing was evident in the children's personal plans. These had been reviewed with parents; however, they did not always record the development and progress made by the children. Staff had worked collaboratively with other agencies to develop strategies to help children who required additional support. This meant children were well cared for by staff who knew their needs well. Staff should now develop systems to ensure children's progress is reviewed and updated with changes in the children's development. This will enable staff to more effectively track children's progress and plan activities to support their individual needs.

Children were able to take part in a range of freely chosen and planned activities centred on their interests and preferences. Skilled staff read stories to the children, engaging their interest and promoting an enjoyment of books. Children took part in singing songs and rhymes and were able to practise these during their play. This promoted early literacy and communication skills.

Staff had attended training to develop their skills in observing and assessing children. As a result, observations of children at play were beginning to become more meaningful and individualised. These were shared with parents through electronic learning journeys and individual blue books.

To safeguard and protect children, staff had attended child protection training and had a good understanding of possible signs of abuse and the correct procedures to follow if concerned. Medication systems and procedures had been reviewed to help ensure the safe administration of medication.

Snack was a very positive experience for the children and provided opportunities for them to develop their self-help skills, socialise with friends and grow in confidence. Children were involved in choosing the snack menu, helping them become more aware of making healthy food choices. They helped prepare snack and were able to serve themselves.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

2. Quality of environment

Parents were able to enter the building via a secure nursery door. This helped keep strangers from entering the building and children safe within the boundaries of the school. The nursery hallway was very inviting and benefited from a cosy corner with a variety of books for children to read while waiting for their siblings. An informative noticeboard ensured parents were kept up to date with new initiatives and any improvements taking place. This promoted an inclusive ethos where all parents felt involved and welcomed.

The playroom was very inviting and welcoming. Staff had successfully used the document 'Building the Ambition' to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the environment on children's play experiences. As a result, the playroom had undergone changes and was a calm and purposeful learning environment. Toys and activities were attractively displayed and promoted

children's choice and independent play. The children were encouraged to be responsible and tidy up nursery and look after their toys. They were very proud of their nursery and were enthusiastic to show us their favourite toys and activities. This contributed to a very positive ethos with happy and motivated children.

In the role-play corner, a selection of real life resources enabled children to learn through familiar play, develop their ideas and explore their emotions. Children enjoyed peeling onions, cutting up vegetables and making pretend soup. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills were evident in the activities on offer and children enjoyed writing menus, playing counting games and creating patterns. The book corner was cosy and inviting and children could choose from a selection of reading and mark-making resources.

The increased hours within the staff team has enhanced the opportunities for children to access free flow indoor and outdoor play. During inspection, the children loved playing outdoors despite the inclement and damp weather and benefited from accessing fresh air and running around. The children were able to play with a range of open-ended and natural materials such as logs, climbing trees, a well-resourced mud kitchen, sand pit, leaves and mud. This helped develop their confidence, self-esteem and creativity as well as keep children fit and healthy.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

3. Quality of staffing

The staff team worked very well together which created a very positive and cooperative ethos in the nursery. This had helped staff confidently bring change to the nursery and led to improved outcomes for children.

Staff interactions with children were warm and caring and as a result, children were confident and comfortable to approach them for help. Staff supported children with their learning by encouraging them to participate in activities, helping to sustain their interest, and cooperate with their peers. This contributed to busy children who were fully engaged with the activities on offer.

Staff were committed and enthusiastic to develop their knowledge and understanding to improve outcomes for children. They had participated in a number of training opportunities to develop their skills in supporting children to achieve and progress. This included training in observation and assessment and this was evident in their improved observations of children at play.

Staff talked very enthusiastically about supporting emergent literacy in the nursery and shared their experience of developing this with the children. They had shared information with parents and had encouraged them to support the children's learning at home. As a result, children were very confident and enjoyed mark-making, stories and rhymes.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

4. Quality of management and leadership

Staff spoke very highly of the support given by the headteacher and felt confident they could approach her for help at any point. The headteacher had worked hard to make the nursery feel a valued part of the school, and they were invited to staff meetings and school training events. This promoted a positive ethos where staff felt valued and as a result committed to make improvements.

The documents 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' and 'Building the Ambition' had been used to support self-evaluation of the service. As a result, the environment had undergone significant changes to support child-led independent play. An improvement plan focusing on improving literacy and numeracy was in place and staff had been very involved in taking this forward. The headteacher and staff were working well together to support improvement and the headteacher was confident in the skills of her team to take the service forward.

Effective monitoring had been undertaken by the headteacher to support improvement and to identify training requirements of the team. She regularly visited the nursery and provided informal feedback to staff. As a result, the staff were skilled and confident in their roles.

There were positive relationships and continued support from parents in the nursery. For example, they were able to take part in stay and play sessions and attend learning workshops and transition meetings for children moving into P1. They were encouraged to become members of The Friends of Monquhitter and become actively involved in supporting the school. They were encouraged to make suggestions for improvement and these were shared on the noticeboard. This meant parents felt very included and informed about the service.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and two recommendations. From these, two recommendations have been met. 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.