

Summarised inspection findings

Thrumster Primary School and Early Learning and Childcare Centre

The Highland Council

21 January 2020

Key contextual information

Thrumster Primary School nursery class was renamed Thrumster Early Learning and Childcare Centre (ELC) when it moved to extended provision in August 2019. It now offers 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, which equates to 30 hours a week during term time, for each child. It is registered for 20 children at any one time. At the time of the inspection, eight children were registered. The setting is located within Thrumster Primary School and shares part of its accommodation with the school. Children have access to a well-developed, secure garden and extended grounds within the school.

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

- The setting developed its vision, values and aims in recent years. It is now planning to review these to reflect better the ELC as a full-day provision. Practitioners should include children, families and partners in this process to ensure their views and vision for the ELC are reflected and are relevant to the setting and its community. This will help to focus the setting on the uniqueness of the ELC in its rural community and support its rationale for the curriculum. The setting's refreshed vision, values and aims should align with those of the school. This will help the setting to become more fully integrated within the primary school.
- The headteacher is supported by the principal teacher to manage the setting. They lead practitioners to self-evaluate using national guidance. Outcomes of practitioners' self-evaluation and feedback from quality assurance visits, inform the improvement plan appropriately. The setting is implementing advice from the local authority to concentrate on fewer quality indicators, to encourage practitioners to have a deeper understanding of specific aspects of their practice. This is resulting in significant changes to pedagogical approaches, learning environments and planning. Practitioners access a range of training that supports their practice. This helps to guide them in reviewing and refreshing the learning environment, planning and profiling and outdoor learning. Senior leaders monitor children's profiles and make comments on their learning. They should continue to work with practitioners to monitor progress with these new approaches, to ensure they impact positively on learning experiences for all children.
- The setting has recently changed from a nursery class to an early learning and childcare centre. Practitioners and children are quickly settling into this new way of working. Practitioners are flexible and work well together as a team. They share responsibility for aspects of the setting's work. Strong leadership in developing the outdoor environment has led to a good variety of opportunities for children to engage in physical, investigative and creative activities. Distributed leadership opportunities should continue to be developed across the practitioner team. For example, having a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing will support practitioners to ensure breadth and balance across the curriculum.

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

- Practitioners and children enjoy warm, mutually respectful relationships. Children happily settle to their play as soon as they arrive in the setting. Practitioners greet each child individually and show genuine interest in them. This helps them to feel valued, safe and secure. Most children engage independently with the activities on offer. They happily play alone or in small groups, often chatting to each other about what they are learning. Overall, the range of experiences provided by staff give children a few opportunities to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy and to engage in creative activities. For example, they explore the inside of pumpkins and squash to discover the seeds inside. Practitioners are developing loose parts play and this is beginning to encourage children's imagination and creativity. There is a developing range of natural materials, which promotes children's interest. Practitioners need to provide a broader range of experiences to ensure learning is better planned across the curriculum. This should include more opportunities for children to engage in sensory play and digital learning. Practitioners should give greater consideration to the presentation of these, to ensure a stimulating and engaging indoor learning environment is provided.
- Practitioners are fully responsive to children's interests and support them well to develop their ideas. In taking this responsive approach, they need to ensure to recognise the learning opportunities and provide sufficient challenge for individual children. There is scope to make better use of the welcome meeting each session, to provide a stronger focus on learning. The setting has access to spacious, well-resourced outdoor facilities. During the session, children have opportunities to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. In the garden, children happily explore water and mud, climb trees and investigate the natural world. They show good imagination when they perform on the outdoor stage and develop their numeracy skills as they hunt for treasure.
- Children's learning is recorded in their profiles. These provide pictorial evidence of children's learning across the curriculum. Children have ownership of their profiles, which are regularly shared with parents. A few are keen to talk about their learning as they share their profiles with adults and each other. Practitioners are developing their skills in observing children's learning. They now need to identify next steps in learning and ensure all children and parents are aware of these. This will help children to recognise what success looks like. In this way, all involved will have a better understanding of how they can help children to progress. Practitioners track children's progress with their developmental milestones at age three and age four. As planned, they need to date these as they are achieved, to track children's ongoing progress. Senior leaders need to develop a simple tool to track children's learning across the curriculum, starting with a focus on literacy and numeracy. This will support progression during children's time in the setting and as they move on to P1.

- Practitioners have recently changed their approach to planning. They use floor books to record children's interests, thoughts and ideas and use these to plan learning by identifying possible lines of development. This responsive approach to planning is leading to a range of interests being taken forward. Whilst continuing to develop this approach, practitioners should ensure there is a good breath and balance of experiences across the curriculum and ensure there are opportunities for children to learn in depth. Practitioners need to be clearer about the focus for children's learning and how they will help them to achieve their next steps.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners take account of children's views and interests when they plan the curriculum. This ensures learning opportunities are relevant for most children. Practitioners link these interests to the national experiences and outcomes in Curriculum for Excellence. Practitioners occasionally take children into the local community to enhance learning experiences. For example, they post letters and visit the recycling centre. Moving forward, it will be important for the team to work with staff in the school, to develop a clear rationale for the curriculum and to continue to support continuity of learning across the early level into P1. There is scope to develop the rationale to reflect the wealth of opportunities in the Thrumster area and beyond, to enrich children's learning experiences.
- The curriculum is based on learning through play. The recent introduction of loose parts play is developing children's imagination, problem solving and creativity. Practitioners provide opportunities for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They need to continue to ensure opportunities for children to develop their skills in real-life contexts as they play. This will require good questioning and dialogue from practitioners to encourage more learning in depth and to challenge children's thinking. As they develop their approaches to planning and tracking, practitioners need to develop a shared understanding of progression across the early level.
- The setting benefits from extensive outdoor grounds, which are attractive and offer considerable potential for rich learning experiences. As planned, visits to a nearby forest will further extend opportunities for children. Practitioners should continue to utilise parents and local businesses to enrich the curriculum further and help children towards an early introduction to skills for learning, life and work.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- The setting places a high value on its partnership with parents. Practitioners have formed close, trusting relationships with families. Parents speak extremely positively about the way their child has settled. Practitioners inform parents of their child's progress through informal chats and parent contact evenings. They share learning folios with parents who are invited to comment on their child's learning. Parents are kept informed of events through newsletters and social media. They share their children's achievements from home. This supports children to gain confidence as they share news with their friends. Practitioners should continue to enhance parental participation in their child's learning, by reintroducing home link bags and sharing children's next steps in learning.
- Practitioners value parents' views and seek their opinions on various aspects of the service. Practitioners are planning to reintroduce 'stay and play', which offers parents a valuable insight into their child's experiences in the setting. There is evidence of parents sharing their skills, which helps children in their early understanding of the world of work.

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

- Practitioners share the responsibility for creating a calm, relaxed learning environment. The nurturing and welcoming ethos within the setting ensures children are happy, secure and confident. Practitioners support children as they arrive, giving them time to relax and settle to their play. They know children very well as individuals and are alert to their feelings throughout the session. All children are kind and considerate towards each other demonstrating empathy and respect. They play very well together and welcome others to join their play. As a result, all children feel included within the setting. Children are familiar with school staff, primary children and the building as they go to the dining hall and play in the playground. There is scope to enhance their involvement further, by being represented on committees and attending appropriate assemblies. In this way, the setting will be more fully included within the school community.
- Children have a strong voice within the setting and they know their views will be listened to and respected. Practitioners support children to be resilient and cope with circumstances they might find challenging. They encourage children to be independent when dressing themselves to go outside. They work closely with families to support children's wellbeing, particularly in terms of patterns of attendance. They take a flexible approach to children's attendance, for example, offering emergency care in extenuating circumstances. As a result, children happily engage with the extended provision and families are confident their children are happy and settled. Children enjoy healthy lunches in the school dining room and cope very well throughout the day.
- Practitioners are aware of the national wellbeing indicators. Children are learning how to keep themselves safe at Hallowe'en and Guy Fawkes celebrations. They are able to talk about how to stay safe on the roads and in a car. Practitioners give them responsibility to prepare snack and tidy away at the end of the session. They carry out simple risk assessments when they go outside. Children are learning about healthy eating through making healthy choices at snack. They brush their teeth and understand the importance of washing their hands. Practitioners should continue, as planned, to make increased use of the wellbeing indicators to develop children's understanding of the language of wellbeing. As planned, they should help children to be aware of their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Practitioners are aware of, and implement statutory duties, to improve outcomes for children. They participate in professional learning about their roles and responsibilities. For example, they have undergone training in child protection, first aid and elementary food hygiene. As a result, they are fully aware of how to keep children healthy and safe.

- Practitioners are reflective about their day-to-day practice and make adjustments where appropriate to meet the needs of children and families. They are particularly mindful of their responsibility to promote children's wellbeing and care. They treat all children with fairness and respect. Practitioners promote children's awareness of aspects of other cultures and traditions in a more meaningful way. This will support them to become aware of the wider world beyond their local community and their role as global citizens.
- Practitioners are aware of the individual needs and circumstances of all children and families. They work with professional agencies to provide additional support, as and when necessary. Regular guidance from a speech and language therapist helps practitioners to support children appropriately. As a result, children receiving support are making progress with communication and spoken language. Practitioners work closely with families where children have particular educational, developmental or health needs.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. The majority of children communicate well, speaking confidently to adults and their peers. Children chat about what they are doing and ask appropriate questions during conversations with adults. They enjoy listening to favourite stories and a few readily choose to read stories by themselves. Most children recognise their name as they register on arrival. Practitioners promote early mark-making skills and a few children can sign their own name. Monthly line drawings and signatures provide evidence children's progress in mark making. To promote early literacy across learning, it will be important for practitioners to enable children to develop and apply their skills in different contexts. In doing this, playful experiences need to be set at appropriate levels of challenge to meet the needs of all children.
- Overall, the majority of children are making good progress in early numeracy. They count naturally through routines and games. A few children are able to confidently count to twenty and beyond. This is evident as children hide twenty coins in the garden and find them during a treasure hunt. They develop mathematical language as they compare who has found more coins. Practitioners should continue to extend opportunities for early numeracy across learning in different contexts. There needs to be more opportunities for children to develop progressive skills in early mathematics. Practitioners should plan opportunities to ensure that children make the maximum progress that they are capable of across all aspects of numeracy and mathematics.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. The majority can communicate their needs and feelings according to their stage of development and are kind and caring towards each other. They are independent in daily routines such as snack, using the toilet and brushing their teeth. Practitioners ensure children have regular, daily access to quality outdoor learning. Children would benefit from more planned opportunities for robust physical play, ensuring progression in the development of their physical skills.
- Children arrive at the setting with a variety of knowledge and experiences from home. Practitioners record children's learning in their learning profiles. They regularly record children's line drawings and mark making. It is clear from these that most children are making satisfactory progress over time. There is scope for practitioners to ensure more challenge for children to help them make the progress of which they are capable.
- Practitioners capture and celebrate children's achievements from within and out with the setting. Parents are encouraged to share achievements from home. Practitioners display

these achievements on the 'WOW wall'. This helps children to experience the pleasure associated with success and encourages further learning.

- Practitioners create a supportive and inclusive ethos in the setting, where potential barriers to children's progress are identified. They have a good understanding of individual circumstances of children and families and identify strategies to support children. Practitioners work with agencies to plan and deliver appropriate support to ensure children's needs are met.

Choice of QI : 2.6 Transitions

- Quality of support for children and their families
- Collaborative planning and delivery
- Continuity and progression in learning

- Practitioners understand the importance of sensitive, meaningful transition arrangements. Children, who are planning to enrol in the setting, visit prior to starting. They have opportunities to become familiar with practitioners and other children ahead of their start date. Practitioners visit children who attend other settings to help them to feel confident about moving on. As a result, almost all children happily and quickly settle into the new environment. Practitioners develop positive, trusting relationships with families. The key worker system helps children and families develop close relationships with practitioners.
- Children in the setting have ongoing opportunities to become familiar with the primary school. They have lunch in the dining hall, play with older children at breaks and engage with the buddy system ahead of moving on to P1. As a result, they are familiar with the building, the playground, staff and children. The buddy system ensures they have someone to support him or her as they move through the school. Increased involvement in the life of the school will support transition further.
- The headteacher and principal teacher are fully familiar with children in the setting and know them well as individuals. The principal teacher's role as P1 teacher ensures she has very good knowledge of children as they move to her class. Practitioners share children's profiles with the P1 teacher, ahead of sending them home. These provide evidence of the child's learning journey. Going forward, more concise tracking will be beneficial to track learning through the early level. As practitioners engage with curriculum progression frameworks, they need to work with senior leaders to develop a shared understanding of progression through the early level. This will support continuity and progression in children's learning and enhance progress.

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.