

Summarised inspection findings

St Mark's Primary School and Nursery Class

South Lanarkshire Council

23 April 2019

Key contextual information

St Mark's Nursery Class is situated within St Mark's Primary School, South Lanarkshire. Since August 2018 the nursery has been part of the local authority's offer of 1140 hours over an extended day session. The nursery has places for 30 full time children. Children aged from three years to those not yet attending school attend across a number of sessions. At the time of inspection, 29 children were on the nursery roll.

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 school has a vision, values and aims, which were refreshed and introduced at the start of the academic year in consultation with stakeholders. The nursery has embraced the vision, values and aims and adapted it in consultation with children to make it more relevant and meaningful to their age and stage. Practitioners and children demonstrate a commitment to the vision, values and aims through their daily practice. As discussed, it will be important to continue to involve all stakeholders in the annual review process.
- The nursery has experienced significant changes since August 2018. This includes an increase in the number of practitioners, changes to children's hours of attendance and the daily routine. The practitioner team has worked hard to implement the required changes to accommodate the 1140 hours in a positive manner. Practitioners demonstrate an enthusiastic and professional approach to their role, displaying a sense of collective responsibility and commitment in taking forward improvements. The team works well together and is ably led by the lead practitioner. The nursery has received support from the local authority in relation to the delivery of 1140 hours.
- Practitioners are reflective in their practice and strive to meet the needs of children and families in their community. The team engages in daily dialogue, ongoing professional learning and development and has access to local authority training. This is supporting practitioners to develop leadership at all levels. We discussed with the team how they could develop their professional learning further through visits and engagement with other local settings.
- There is an overarching school improvement plan with the nursery developing their own sub-improvement plan. This clearly identifies appropriate priorities for improvement. As recognised by the team, the direction and pace of change needs to be delivered in a way that ensures these remain manageable. This will support nursery staff to provide the highest quality early learning and childcare. There is scope to increase opportunities for all practitioners to develop their own skills in taking forward priorities from the setting's improvement plan.
- The headteacher should now take a strategic approach to leading the nursery, this includes monitoring and evaluating the impact of changes on outcomes for children and families. The team should continue to work together to make well-timed changes for continuous

improvement. Building on the positive start made to using 'How good is our early learning and childcare?', the team now needs support to develop a more robust and planned approach to self-evaluation. This will enable practitioners to monitor progress and measure success.

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 interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Practitioners are caring and supportive in their interactions with children. Children are happy and confident within the nursery and are learning to be responsible. Practitioners create a positive, nurturing learning environment and take a genuine interest in all children. They use praise during their interactions, which is helping to build children's self-esteem and confidence in learning. Most children are engaged in their learning as they access a wide variety of experiences within the playroom and outdoors. Practitioners have identified outdoor learning as an area for improvement, with opportunities to flow freely between the indoor and outdoor environment a priority.
- Children have opportunities to engage in a range of planned and spontaneous learning experiences. Overall, children enjoy the experiences offered both indoors and outdoors, for example, as they explored the properties of snow and frost. Practitioners should continue to build on children's capabilities and motivation to learn by providing challenge and depth in their learning. Increasingly, children are becoming independent, for example, getting dressed for outdoors.
- Practitioners have made positive changes to the learning environment. They should continue to introduce a variety of natural and open-ended resources to develop children's interests and enhance their play. Practitioners enthusiastically engage in conversations with children to encourage them to talk about their interests and ideas. In the best examples, practitioners skilfully use questioning to promote curiosity and inquiry learning, however this was inconsistent.
- Children are supported and encouraged to use the interactive whiteboard to support their learning through accessing a number of puzzles and games. They have access to tablet devices to take photographs. Children would benefit from further use of digital technology to enhance their learning.
- Practitioners have recently reviewed the daily routine to support the implementation of extended hours, and continue to reflect on the impact of the longer session. As discussed, children would benefit from fewer transitions in the day. This will help to prevent interrupted play and ensure that the provision continues to meet children's learning needs.
- Practitioners have devised a tracking tool to monitor children's progress across the areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They should now adopt a more consistent approach to using assessment information to plan for children's next steps in learning. This will help practitioners to ensure that children make the best possible progress in their learning. Practitioners should continue to develop children's learning targets in partnership with parents, ensuring these are specific and measurable.

- Children's learning journals record their involvement in experiences. They do not yet fully demonstrate the progress children are making in their learning or their individual interests. Children should continue to have ownership of their journals and have opportunities to share these with their parents.
- A positive start to floorbook planning is supporting practitioners to take account of children's interests and document learning experiences. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop the process of planning, tracking and monitoring.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners take account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes to plan a broad range of learning experiences. The curriculum is based firmly on play. Practitioners are beginning to encourage creativity and curiosity through a range of open ended and natural resources. As planned, practitioners should implement their local authority guidance, 'Together we can and we will'. They will find this helpful as they develop their curriculum rationale.
- The newly adopted system for planning needs time to become fully embedded, allowing practitioners to become more confident in its use. As discussed, lead practitioners should continue to monitor the planned adult-led group activities to ensure they fully support and extend children's learning.
- A key worker system is in place allowing continuity of care for the children, however all staff know all children well. Practitioners have devised a staff information sheet that helps support children transition and settle into the setting. Personal planning targets are set termly. As planned, practitioners should ensure these are discussed regularly with parents and updated when there is a significant achievement or development in learning. This will contribute to parents being well-informed of their child's learning and progress.
- Practitioners work closely with a range of visiting specialists to support children's learning. Further use of the local community could be explored to enrich learning further and promote children's understanding of their world through real life contexts.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnerships with parents are valued well, with relationships between the setting and parents being very positive. Parents are involved through initial visits to the setting, outings and curriculum events, for example Be Safe. Many parents have experience of the setting over a number of years, with several returning with their younger children. Parents receive regular communication from the nursery, which includes daily informal conversation, social media, newsletters and more formal parents meetings.
- Parents who engaged with us during the inspection were very positive and reported that the setting was well regarded within the local community. Overall, pre-inspection questionnaires were positive about the nursery. A few, however, suggested that they would like more opportunities to participate in learning with their child. Children and parents enjoy access to the lending library, taking the nursery mascot home at weekends and completing 'Ask Me' stickers at home and in nursery.

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

- Positive relationships across the nursery are leading to a warm, welcoming and friendly ethos for all children and families. Settling-in procedures include very helpful information shared with children and parents prior to starting nursery. This supports children to develop a feeling of being safe and secure in their new environment. Overall, children's behaviour is positive and in-line with their age and stage of development. Practitioners should continue to promote positive behaviour through positive relationships.
- The principles of Getting it Right for Every Child and the use of national wellbeing indicators are evident in practice. A shared understanding of what it means to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included continues to be developed across the setting. Practitioners have attended training this session to deliver programmes to support children to be safe. The wellbeing indicators have helpfully been represented pictorially and are shared with parents. We discussed with practitioners how developing work on children's rights will further increase children's voice in the nursery.
- Children are happy and confident both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor learning supports children to be healthy and active as they have fun with their peers, for example, playing with sledges in the snow. This supports them to develop confidence and resilience and impacts positively on their sense of wellbeing. The opportunity to share and take turns with their peers is evident, as children develop a sense of teamwork by playing and learning together.
- Children benefit from healthy snack in the setting and enjoy this social experience. They engage well in the recently introduced lunch routine and participate in lively discussions with their peers. Parents and children choose their lunch option on a daily basis, with some preferring to bring a packed lunch. Children continue to develop their personal hygiene skills. Opportunities exist for children to take a leadership role, for example, risk assessing outdoors or preparing and serving snack. We have asked practitioners to continue to build opportunities for children to develop leadership roles across the nursery. As a result, this will support children to develop an increasing sense of responsibility.
- Overall, the headteacher and practitioners comply with statutory duties, in line with current national early learning and childcare guidance. There is a clear understanding of what is required to fulfil statutory duties in order to secure positive outcomes for children. As discussed, it would be helpful to continue to monitor processes and systems to ensure these best meet the needs of all stakeholders.
- Children who face barriers to their learning have effective support plans in place. These are developed with parents and outside agencies when required. As discussed with practitioners, children's targets need to be clear and plans should continue to be reviewed on a regular basis. Practitioners benefit from engagement with the local authority early years specialist support teacher, who visits the setting on a regular basis. Inclusion and equality is promoted

throughout the work of the setting, with all children and families treated with respect. Practitioners treat children fairly and take account of their individual likes and dislikes.

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

- A strong focus on health and wellbeing across the setting has a positive impact on children's learning and development. Nurturing relationships allow children to settle quickly, offering the opportunity for children to thrive and develop at their individual pace. Children are developing their social and emotional skills well.
- Overall most children are making good progress in communication and language. They confidently engage in conversation with practitioners and during the inspection approached inspectors to discuss their learning. Opportunities for 'mark-making' are freely available with a few children writing their name, letters and numbers independently. Self-registering is encouraging most children to recognise their name. They have access to a range of books and enjoy stories independently and as part of a group. Children are observed using non-fiction books, for example, to name a range of spiders and insects. Practitioners should continue to build on opportunities for all children to express themselves vocally and creatively. This will help to allow children to expand their early literacy skills.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Opportunities to count are incorporated across daily experiences, for example, counting and weighing ingredients for baking. A few children confidently count to ten fluently, and beyond. Children use the language of measure as they examine the size of their footprints in the snow. Measuring tapes are available for children to use in the playroom. However their use could be developed further to deepen children's learning. There is scope to extend the use of open-ended resources to provide suitable levels of challenge.
- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing, with children appearing happy and settled in their environment. Children make healthy choices for snack, serve themselves and clear away their dishes. Children display an awareness of responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. They develop their physical skills supported through daily outdoor play, access to the school gym hall and participation in 'Turbo Tuesday'.
- Through inspection activities, records of children's experiences and tracking information it is evident that children are making good progress across their learning. In addition to the good work already in place, there is now scope to enhance progression through providing more challenge and depth across learning. Practitioners celebrate children's individual achievements and share these in a number of ways. This includes, achievement balloons, mini marvels, stickers and rewards. Progress is shared with parents informally on a regular basis and formally through parents meetings twice a year.

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

Choice of QI: 2.6 Transitions

- Quality of support for children and their families
 - Collaborative planning and delivery
 - Continuity and progression in learning
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- Settling-in procedures ensure children and families have a smooth transition into and across the nursery setting. Individual letters ensure children are involved in the transition into nursery, with keyworker photographs, key areas within the nursery and key group information shared prior to starting. The range of transitions across the day are displayed attractively around a large clock. This is beginning to support all children to know what is happening next.
 - An effective transition programme is in place to support children starting P1. This includes buddy visits into nursery, opportunities to meet their teacher and information meetings for parents. Children have opportunities throughout the year to participate in a range of experiences within the school, for example 'Turbo Tuesday' and school assemblies. Enhanced transitions are in place for children who require additional support. This includes developing their own passport to school.
 - Tracking information and transition reports are passed on to the receiving school, supporting continuity of learning. We discussed with practitioners, making contact with the schools after a period of time to enable them to reflect together on the type of information shared. This will help to provide a clearer understanding of what was helpful and where improvements are required. As a result, this will support progression across the early level more effectively.

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.