

Summarised inspection findings

Minnigaff Community Nursery

Dumfries and Galloway Council

4 March 2025

Key contextual information

Minnigaff Community Nursery is a parent-led setting located within the local village primary school. The recently refurbished accommodation includes one spacious playroom with direct access to a large outdoor area. The nursery is registered for 48 children attending at any one time, from two years old to those not yet attending school. Twenty-four children currently attend for 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare. The nursery offers a variety of attendance patterns between the hours of 8.30 am and 3 pm, from Monday to Friday during term time. The full-time manager is very well supported in aspects of leadership by an administrative assistant. Staffing also includes five early years practitioners, two of whom have supervisory roles. An early years principal teacher offers ongoing support, and a local authority early years officer visits the nursery once a month to provide guidance. The parent committee provides a high level of support with fundraising and involvement in a range of activities.

1.3 Leadership of change	satisfactory
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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 has a clear sense of its identity as a parent-led community setting. Practitioners recently revised their vision and aims, involving children and parents appropriately. Practitioners now need to provide a clear statement of the nursery's values. They should continue to refine, share and embed these values so that they are evident across the life of the nursery. The practitioner team has identified the need to raise parents' awareness of the vision and values and involve parents more in talking about these with their children. Practitioners should ensure that the language of the values is fully accessible to very young children.
- The manager and practitioners demonstrate clear commitment to improving the nursery. They have taken positive action to address the findings of a recent local authority improvement visit. The current nursery improvement plan focuses on developing the outdoor area and extending parental partnerships. There has been some progress in taking these priorities forward, but the pace of development could be increased. Targets could be more ambitious. Practitioners are skilled and capable of undertaking important leadership roles linked to the improvement plan, helping to improve the nursery more rapidly. Children undertake simple leadership roles as snack helpers and area tidier. There is scope to extend these opportunities for older children.
- The staff team benefits from regular meetings to share ideas and plan learning spaces. They now need to work together to implement and evaluate improvements collaboratively. The manager makes effective use of a local authority quality assurance calendar. This sets out a range of procedures and policies to be audited each month. The manager should extend monitoring activities to include playroom experiences, learning, teaching and assessment. This will ensure that all aspects of the nursery, including those which improve outcomes for children, are kept under review.

- Practitioners have undertaken a range of professional learning experiences to enhance their knowledge and skills. This has had a positive impact on planned experiences to develop children's vocabulary. The manager benefits from attending local authority 'time to talk' sessions, where nursery managers exchange ideas and take forward shared themes. Recently, this collaboration has resulted in newly introduced approaches to toilet training for young children.
- Approaches to structured quality assurance and self-evaluation are at an early stage of development. Practitioners are reflective in their day-to-day work. They show skill in evaluating play experiences and adapting them to take account of their findings. They would now benefit from using national guidance on early years best practice, to reflect on and improve their skills further. This will help staff identify what best practice might look like in Minnigaff Community Nursery, and how they can work together to achieve this.

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 warmly welcome children and have created a friendly and relaxed atmosphere where children feel safe and secure. Children are excited to see what is on offer each day and are eager to play. A majority settle quickly and show sustained interest in their experiences. They use resources imaginatively and benefit from having time and space to make their own choices. Throughout the day children experience a mixture of free play and planned group times. Practitioners should review group sessions to ensure that they fully meet the needs of younger children.
- Practitioners are attentive and responsive with children in their interactions. Where practice is best, practitioners use open-ended questioning and explanations to enrich children's learning. However, this practice is not yet consistent across the setting. Practitioners provide generally well-resourced play spaces indoors. They could improve further outdoors spaces and opportunities to stimulate and engage all learners. They should also make more effective use of digital technology to enrich children's learning. Practitioners are aware of the need to continue to develop their understanding of early years pedagogy. This will help them to better support, challenge and extend children's learning.
- Practitioners encourage children to play well together and demonstrate kindness and friendship. All staff are good role models and effectively support children to deal with conflict or disagreement. Despite this, a minority of children need a high level of support to become aware of the feelings of others and understand how their behaviour affects their friends. Practitioners are aware of the need to make effective use of strategies to support children to manage their emotions.
- Practitioners know their key children well and are beginning to identify the skills they are learning. They observe children at play and document their progress in recently introduced online learning journals. Most observations are reflective. They successfully capture children's achievements linked to national early level experiences and outcomes. However, information on the children's attainment is not always accurate. Practitioners have correctly identified the need to further develop 'learning trackers' to better understand the progress children are making and identify their next steps in learning.
- Planning for learning has recently become more child-centred with practitioners seeking children's ideas and developing their interests. Children under three years benefit from age-appropriate sensory experiences. Children aged three to five years enjoy documenting their learning in large floor books. The staff team ensures that all learning is tracked for each curriculum area. This supports them well to identify and address any gaps in children's experiences. Moving forward, practitioners should evaluate their planning and ensure that it takes account of the need to develop progression, depth and challenge in children's learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- The curriculum offered is appropriately play based. It takes good account of the developmental needs of children including those under three years of age. Practitioners plan the curriculum taking account of children's ideas and interests. The staff team recently developed a curriculum rationale to ensure that children's experiences reflect the rural village context. Moving forward, practitioners should ensure that the curriculum progressively offers breadth, depth and challenge in children's learning.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a range of visitors who share their skills with the children. For example, a Scots bagpiper and highland dancer visited as part of Scots week. The visit from firefighters with their fire engine helped children understand the dangers of fires and fireworks. Children took part in the village flower show and ran a 'Grand Prix' wheeled toy event for the local community. Practitioners could explore further how to make even more effective use of the local area to enrich the curriculum.
- Practitioners plan transitions into the nursery and on to P1 effectively. Parents and children experience a flexible and nurturing approach to starting nursery. Children settle at their own pace and parents are welcome to stay and play with their children until they feel confident. Practitioners and P1 teachers work well together to ensure children are well supported as they move from nursery into school.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- The nursery has made parental partnerships a recent priority. Practitioners engage positively with parents at the beginning and end of each day. This encourages communication and enables parents to share information with staff. The staff team keep parents well informed of their children's progress in a variety of ways. This includes parents' meetings, where practitioners discuss children's care plans and progress in learning. Parents can track their child's progress and next steps in the online platform. Regular newsletters keep families up to date with nursery developments. Parents appreciate the general information they receive about each day in the nursery. A few parents would welcome individualised observations which are unique to their child.
- Practitioners encourage parental engagement in their children's learning through stay and play events, seasonal celebrations and sports sessions. This helps parents to understand how they contribute to their children's learning. The parent committee provides valuable support through fund raising and organising catering during nursery events. Moving forward practitioners have plans to offer feedback to parents to ensure they are aware of the positive impact their involvement has on their children's learning.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The setting 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

satisfactory

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 are a strength of the nursery. Practitioners have developed trusting, supportive relationships with children and their families. Many parents have long-standing connections to the nursery. The setting is held in high regard by the local community. Practitioners value each child as a unique individual and encourage them to develop their own sense of identity. With support from staff, children are developing a few social skills in age-appropriate ways.
- Children are developing a growing understanding of national wellbeing indicators, and a few can explain the importance of being safe and healthy. Practitioners use stories and puppets well to reinforce children's understanding of wellbeing. Children recently grew vegetables and used them to make a healthy soup. They understand the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy diet. Practitioners are aware of the need to begin to help children understand their rights as defined by the United Nations Charter on Children's Rights.
- Practitioners use snack and lunch times to develop children's self-help skills. However, both snack and lunch time experiences need to be improved. Children should use plates for their snack foods. Lunchtime arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that children are not seated for lengthy periods, waiting for food.
- All staff have a clear understanding of statutory duties and responsibilities for keeping children safe. Recently, staff undertook training on the impact of adverse experiences on children's wellbeing. Practitioners have developed appropriate plans with families in place to ensure that each child's health and care needs are met. The manager is pro-active in seeking advice from a range of professionals when required. This promotes a partnership approach to meeting children's needs and contributes to removing potential barriers to learning. Children who have additional learning needs are making satisfactory progress towards achieving personal targets. Practitioners are at the early stages in planning for individuals. As their confidence and experience increases, they should be better able to meet children's unique learning needs.
- Practitioners have created an inclusive ethos which ensures that all children and their families are treated fairly, equally and with respect. They could work more with children to celebrate diversity and challenge discrimination. The staff team celebrates some seasonal festivals but could do more to promote children's understanding of the wider world. As a next step, children would benefit from developing further their awareness of different cultures.

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

Children aged two years

- Children aged two years are making appropriate progress in their learning. Most are new to nursery and settling into new playroom routines. They have formed strong bonds with practitioners and are showing increasing confidence in exploring new materials. They explore using a range of sensory resources and are developing their imaginative play in the home corner. They use a range of art materials creatively and develop their hand control by fitting shapes together.

Children aged three to five years

- Children aged three to five are making satisfactory progress in early language and communication. A majority are eager to talk to adults and to each other. They are at the very early stages of developing their listening skills at story time. While a few show interest in books, they need experience of a wider range of texts to develop their enjoyment of stories, poems and rhymes. Children use a range of mark making materials and a few are keen to 'write'. To develop children's skills further, practitioners need to provide improved access to alphabet letters, and examples of words and different types of writing including environmental print.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in early numeracy and mathematics. They enjoy simple counting games and are learning how to make sequential patterns. They have access to measuring tapes in the building area and enjoy fitting different magnetic shapes together. To support progress further, children need more opportunities to write numerals, and access to a wider range of mathematical experiences, especially in the outdoor area.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. The majority are learning to share, take turns and play with other children. They show confident independence when selecting materials or collecting their lunch. Children have some opportunities for fresh air and physical play but would benefit from more regular experiences through free access to the outdoor area. A few children can balance and climb but need more opportunities to develop their movement skills and coordination. A few can talk about how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

- Practitioners are at the early stages of tracking children's progress over time. Staff are still developing their confidence in using the recently introduced online tracking system. This improvement will help them to make more accurate judgements about children's learning and achievements.
- The nursery encourages parents to share their children's achievements beyond nursery by including reports in their learning journals. Children enjoy receiving stickers and certificates for successes within the playroom. The staff team should continue with plans to develop a 'wow' wall to celebrate children's wider achievements.
- Practitioners have created a strong sense of community where children and their families are valued, respected and included. They have created a supportive and inclusive ethos that promotes equity. They know the nursery's socio-economic context well and use this knowledge well when planning activities. They helpfully signpost parents to sources of advice to ensure that children and their families are well supported.
- Staff support children who require additional help with their learning. With advice from specialist agencies and local authority colleagues, they have begun to create individual plans which identify clear targets and strategies. This is at an early stage but is developing well. A few children continue to need more detailed plans, and more frequent reviews of their development and 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.