

Summarised inspection findings

St John's RC Primary School Nursery Class

The City of Edinburgh Council

21 July 2020

Key contextual information

St. John's RC Primary School Nursery Class provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for a maximum of 55 children at any one time. Children aged two to five years attend either morning or afternoon sessions. The new, purpose built nursery class connects to the main school building. There are separate playrooms for children aged two-three, and for children aged three-five. Both playrooms have direct access to a secure, shared outdoor area. At the time of inspection, there were 75 children on the roll. The team moved into the new purpose built premises in 2019. The nursery class accesses areas of the school, such as the P1 classroom play area.

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 nursery team developed their vision, values and aims with parents and stakeholders to reflect their new context. An attractive display shares their vision and values with visitors. Their aim of providing a safe, happy and welcoming environment is evident in the work of the team. Practitioners should explore how their vision and values can inform more fully all aspects of their work. Planned work to develop their curriculum rationale could support this. It will be important to ensure that the vision and values are meaningful and accessible to young children, parents and stakeholders.
- The nursery team has worked together through a period of significant change. The team has moved into a large purpose built area, within the wider school campus. The number of practitioners working with children has doubled. The nursery class also offers a new service to families of children aged two-three. Practitioners have improved their teamwork and are now beginning to communicate more effectively. The team discusses improvements at short, weekly meetings and in-service days. Practitioners are beginning to use a range of national guidance, such as *How good is our early learning and childcare?* and *Building the Ambition* to support their reflections. The team is at an early stage of using self-evaluation effectively to identify and drive improvements. The senior leadership team should support practitioners to become more confident in using self-evaluation for self-improvement. Practitioners should improve their skills and confidence in evaluating the impact of any changes on children's learning and development. This should help the team to continue to meet all children's needs. Practitioners, working in partnership with the school staff, should develop opportunities for children to take on leadership roles.
- Through transition and sharing practice visits, the team has engaged well within the cluster, and with local authority officers. Practitioners are enthusiastic about their responsibilities. These include administrative tasks and a few leadership roles. Team members have enjoyed accessing a range of professional learning opportunities to support their interests. Roles, responsibilities and professional learning opportunities do not yet progress improvement priorities. Senior leaders are at an early stage of developing a culture of improvement across the whole team. The development of a specific nursery improvement plan is positive. The

headteacher now needs to ensure that improvement priorities lead to positive outcomes. The senior leadership team also needs to strengthen monitoring and quality assurance arrangements. Practitioners should continue to engage in deeper professional dialogue to reach a shared understanding of pedagogy. This will support a more consistent approach across both playrooms.

- The nursery team gathers the views of parents and carers using questionnaires. Practitioners take some account of the views of parents and children in their work. Parents are aware of, and regularly informed about, improvement priorities. The nursery team should work with children, families and stakeholders to shape, identify, lead and evaluate improvements over time.

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

Children aged two-three

- Practitioners in the 'starfish' playroom are patient, calm, consistent and understanding. The team interacts positively with children and interprets children's actions, emotions and words appropriately. Practitioners are skilled in developing children's motivations and interests and use these to inform their planning of learning. They should now develop further their planning, with a focus on developing children's skills through their interests.

Children aged three-five

- In the 'seahorse' playroom, reciprocal relationships between practitioners and children are warm. Practitioners know children and families well. The majority of children are engaged and motivated as they play in the interesting outdoor space. Practitioners encourage children to play and follow their interests at their own pace. At times, a few children find it difficult to join in or sustain concentration on activities at busy times within the indoor spaces. Practitioners should use their interactions to support all children to engage fully in their learning.
- A few practitioners support and extend children's play, as they position themselves at children's level. A few practitioners use open questions well to engage children in purposeful conversations to support their learning. Most practitioners interact sensitively and responsively to encourage children to try new things and build their confidence. Throughout the session, practitioners need to take every opportunity to develop children's learning in more depth. The team needs to identify the knowledge and skills children require to learn through play, to help practitioners ensure that children's learning is progressive and consolidated well.
- Most children make independent choices from the available resources, both indoors and outdoors. The wide range of resources and flexible spaces in which to learn nurtures children's discovery and creativity. Practitioners need to model the use of a few resources to help children know how they can apply and extend their skills. A few children enjoy using the interactive whiteboard to play simple games. As planned, practitioners should integrate a wider range of digital technology into their daily practice to help enhance children's learning. Practitioners should involve children and engage them more frequently in identifying their next steps in learning and evaluating their own progress. This should support children to better understand themselves as learners.
- Practitioners know children well as individuals. They understand children's stage of development and individual interests. They should continue to improve their observation skills to develop further how they support all children's learning. Key workers record regular observations of children at play in their online journals. Children's next steps do not yet always reflect what children would benefit from learning next. Parents have the opportunity to share these journals at home. As planned, senior leaders should support the team to develop their

skills and confidence in capturing children's progress over time. Practitioners should involve and engage children in identifying their next steps in learning and evaluating their progress more frequently using learning journals. This will support children to understand themselves as learners.

- The team uses local authority documentation to track and monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Through regular assessments, staff identify accurately small groups of children who require focused work in literacy and numeracy. Additionally, the nursery teacher identifies and supports effectively individuals and groups who need any challenge or support. To build capacity across the team, all practitioners should develop their skills and confidence in using assessment approaches to inform their planning, tracking and monitoring of children's learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners provide a curriculum that takes good account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and is based on play. The nursery team provides a good range of play experiences.
- As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should work with children, families and community partners to create a curriculum rationale. This should support the team to work together to develop a shared understanding of their pedagogy. It should also further develop links with the school and wider community, for example nursery children participating in whole school initiatives.
- The nursery teacher has introduced 'curriculum coffee mornings' for families. Parents and practitioners share what children are learning through play at nursery at these events. As planned the whole team should work together to continue and develop further this work.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnerships with parents are a positive feature of practice in the nursery class. Practitioners develop warm, caring and respectful relationships with families. This helps them to get to know children well. The team shares useful information with families through daily conversations. This helps to reassure parents, whilst also ensuring smooth transitions for children into the playroom each morning. The team needs to continue engaging parents fully in children's transition between playrooms and at the end of the day.
- Practitioners share information about children's learning in the nursery using a good range of approaches. These include informal interactions, children's online learning journals and planned opportunities to meet with members of the team. 'Stay and play' sessions and events such as the popular family 'World Book Day' walk encourage parents and children to learn together. Home visits for under threes and fun, informal literacy workshops engage parents and children well in sharing rhymes and stories. Parents and carers show high levels of participation in events and fundraising within the nursery. The team should continue to build on this positive work. As planned, practitioners should develop further a wider range of ways to support parental engagement in 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the setting 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 provide a safe, welcoming and respectful environment for children and their families. Parents say they are happy with the care and support children receive from practitioners. The team are kind and attentive in their interactions with children. As a result, relationships are trusting and open. Practitioners have worked well together to enable children to begin to work more independently between the playroom and outdoor area. Most children interact well with one another and are responsive, inclusive and caring. They support others well to get ready for outdoor play or find resources together.
- Practitioners use the wellbeing indicators effectively to support children's understanding of their wellbeing. Most children have a well-developed awareness of safety. They challenge themselves well to balance, slide and roll down slopes outside. The team needs to work with school colleagues to implement a risk/benefit approach to outdoor learning. Most children demonstrate having a good awareness of how to keep themselves healthy. They have a good understanding of nutrition as they use the 'eat well plate' to plan snack menus. Children are ready for increased opportunities to prepare and serve food to one another. Children enjoy the autonomy of deciding where and when to play. They benefit from daily well-planned activities to develop their fine and gross motor skills. Most children are beginning to understand and explain their feelings. A few practitioners support children to work together to resolve conflicts over sharing resources and space. As planned, closer links with whole school work on rights based approaches should enhance this work.
- Overall, the team has a good understanding of the statutory duties required to deliver early learning and childcare. Practitioners understand the importance of, and their role in, keeping children safe. Overall, snacks are healthy and careful attention is paid to handwashing and hygiene.
- Practitioners know the children and their families very well. They follow advice and guidance from partner agencies, such as speech and language therapists and other health service professionals, to bring about improvements for individual children. They take careful account of the individual needs of children, using home visits for children under three to personalise flexible transitions.
- Practitioners encourage children to develop an early awareness of diversity through learning about a range of celebrations across a variety of cultures and religions. They should continue to explore how they can engage children further in learning about diversity and equality.

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

Children aged two to three

- Children aged two to three are making good progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing. Most children form secure and emotionally resilient attachments as a result of consistently positive, nurturing interactions. They develop their coordination, movement, curiosity and discovery well as they explore the outdoor space. Most children are developing good early communication and language skills as they mirror and listen to others. They have fun with language through song and rhyme. Children are motivated and engaged in verbal and non-verbal interactions, sensory experiences and mark making activities. They are developing an awareness of number in the world around them, as they explore readily cause and effect and mathematical concepts outdoors.

Children aged three to five

- Most children are making good progress in their early language and communication development. Children are confident conversationalists, who articulate their own thoughts, ideas, feelings and preferences. Through daily storytelling sessions, children explore the meaning of stories and make connections between text, illustrations and the spoken word. Children are now ready for a stronger focus on early mark making using a wider range of tools. This should support a few children to challenge themselves to add more detail.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in building numeracy and mathematic skills. All children are encouraged to use numbers for counting during the session, for example whilst selecting snack. Most children have a developing awareness of early information handling as they display results of surveys. A few children name two-dimensional shapes with ease as they play simple games. Most children do not yet count frequently for a purpose, or apply frequently their developing numeracy skills through free play.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Children are confident, and are independent in their own care routines. They have a good understanding of the benefits of healthy food choices, hand washing and tooth brushing. Most children approach adults for help with ease, both within and out with their identified key groups. All children participate in outdoor play where they are developing good control of their balance and movement as they move their bodies in a range of ways. Children require gentle reminders to follow the agreed nursery rules and care for resources. Most children are ready to be more involved in the preparation of food such as cooking and baking. This should provide opportunities for them to be more actively involved and take responsibility.

- Children are successful learners as they invent and play ball games in the outdoor area. Most children are becoming responsible citizens as they raise money for charity and help decide how to spend funds. Children develop their confidence and are proud of their achievements celebrated by practitioners and families in attractive, interactive displays.
- Practitioners have a warm and caring relationship with families. Families are valued and included in the life of the nursery and their children are happy. Practitioners are sensitive to individual families' circumstances and how they can provide support. The team anticipates, and responds well to, changes in children's lives that impact on their learning. Key workers communicate effectively with other agencies to implement appropriate strategies. This effective partnership working supports children to make good progress. Specific targeted work on literacy and numeracy is effective.

1. Quality of care and support

Interactions between children, their peers and staff were warm and respectful. Staff showed an interest in children's experiences and were committed to promoting their wellbeing and development. When invited into children's play, they responded with enthusiasm. Children received support and comfort, for example when they had a fall. This helped them to feel nurtured and respected.

Children and families had positive and trusting relationships with the nursery team. Staff had a good understanding of children's home experiences and valued their individual personalities. This contributed to children being included and respected. Children's personal plans included information about how staff could promote their health, wellbeing and development. The nursery could further develop their approach to personal plans by ensuring any changes or updates are consistently recorded and reviewed with parents. This will help ensure the information remains meaningful and builds a holistic picture of children's care and support needs.

Where children required additional support, staff worked well together to promote children's needs. Partnership working with other professionals resulted in children getting the support they needed in a way that was right for them. Strategies of support were effective and used well by staff to promote children's wellbeing and development. For example, the use of sign-a-long with the younger children was an effective tool to encourage communication and language skills.

Staff spoke confidently about children's medical needs; however, some medication forms did not follow best practice guidance. Some records noted signs and symptoms as 'when required' and did not record the specific symptoms. This meant there was the potential for confusion to occur regarding when a child should receive the medication. We signposted the nursery to the guidance 'Management of medication in daycare and childminding services' and were confident they would address the issue.

Staff understood how to deal with child protection concerns. They had received training to support them in their role. Staff were confident about how and why they would raise concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing. There were some procedures that could be further developed in relation to consistently using chronologies and recording contacts. This would contribute to the nursery having a consistent overview of any concerns and follow up actions. We signposted the Head Teacher to guidance in relation to chronologies to support this area for improvement.

Staff had developed their approach to group story times and children were now enjoying stories in smaller, targeted groups. This was having a positive impact on their engagement and learning. However, children would benefit from staff further reviewing the pace and routines of the nursery sessions, as play was also interrupted to do tasks such as tooth brushing or manage various pickup times. To contribute to children having consistently positive experiences, consideration should be given to managing routines in a way that effectively supports the needs and experiences of all children.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

The environment was bright, comfortable and welcoming for children. The furnishings and equipment were of a high quality and set out in a way that allowed children the freedom to select resources to use in their play. This helped children to engage in experiences and activities that were of interest to them.

The spacious and interesting outdoor area gave children opportunities to be active and healthy. Children used the outdoor space well, playing together and having fun. Staff training had supported the nursery team to consider children's choices and embed a free-flow approach to outdoor play across the sessions. This was having a positive impact on children's play opportunities and wellbeing. However, children's experiences could be further enhanced through staff developing a shared understanding of a risk benefit approach to play. There was potential for children to have greater opportunities to explore, take and manage risks across their play and learning. To enable children to experience appropriately challenging play opportunities, further engagement in best practice guidance would support staff to enhance their skills and knowledge in this area.

Children had some opportunities to use 'loose parts' and open-ended materials. This helped them to explore through their natural curiosity and use their imagination. There was potential to enhance the use of 'loose parts' and open-ended materials both indoors and outside. For example, additional open-ended materials could be provided within areas of the garden to further support children's learning, creativity and inquiry skills. Children would benefit from staff developing a greater understanding of provocation to further support children's use and engagement with resources.

The nursery environment was clean, safe and secure. Accidents were dealt with and recorded appropriately. Parents were informed about how their child had been cared for and comforted. Some accidents and incident require notification to the Care Inspectorate. To ensure the nursery are able to work in partnership with the Care Inspectorate to promote the safety and wellbeing of children the Head Teacher would benefit from developing a greater understanding of their duty to notify the Care Inspectorate of such events.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

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.