

Summarised inspection findings

Dochgarroch Primary School Nursery Class

The Highland Council

12 February 2019

Key contextual information

The early years and childcare setting is located in a small classroom within Dochgarroch Primary School. It is registered for 12 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of the inspection, four children were registered with two attending at any one session.

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 vision, values and aims for the school are the same for the early years setting. Children are not yet able to understand what it means to be responsible, reliable and respectful. Support to help them develop these skills will support their interactions with each other and enrich the ethos within the setting.
- Practitioners are aware of their development needs and take responsibility for their career long professional learning. This includes working towards initial qualifications, which is a requirement for practitioners as members of the Scottish Social Services Council. As a result, they are developing their overall understanding of child development and early years pedagogy. Ongoing training, research opportunities and collegiate working within the cluster schools provide challenge and support to improve practice and support development. Practitioners recognise the need for further training, support and experience to help them improve.
- The acting headteacher recognises the setting needs to improve. She provides valuable support to the setting on its journey of improvement. She encourages practitioners, together with school staff, to lead on aspects of practice across the school. The focus on health and wellbeing is beginning to support children's understanding of wellbeing indicators. Early years practitioners are motivated and enthusiastic and, as a result, know the entire school community very well. Practitioners would benefit from increased guidance to help them deepen their understanding and improve their delivery of high quality early learning and childcare pedagogy.
- Priorities for development within the setting are embedded within the school improvement plan and are beginning to impact positively on children. The focus on health and wellbeing is beginning to support children's understanding of national indicators of wellbeing. Family engagement is at a very early stage of development. Practitioners plan to engage families more fully in their children's learning by regularly sending learning journals home. This will encourage parents to be more fully involved in supporting children to reach their learning targets. Developing the young workforce is being discussed at cluster level. Practitioners are beginning to look at skills development and the use of external visitors to support children's early understanding of possible careers.

- Practitioners are involved in self-evaluation at school and cluster level. Using national guidance, they evaluate what they are doing well and identify what needs to improve. They now need to focus more specifically on the immediate needs of the setting and plan focused support to secure improvement. Practitioners in the setting have produced a helpful guide to share with other settings in the cluster. This reflective practice is leading to improved experiences for children in the outdoor area. It is evident the more creative approach to resourcing using loose parts encourages children's curiosity and creativity. We discussed that a similar focus on the indoor environment is required to improve learning opportunities overall.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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

- The welcoming and nurturing ethos of the setting contributes to positive relationships between practitioners and children within the learning environment. Overall, children appear to feel safe and secure in the familiar surroundings. Due to the small cohort of children, there is a 'family' feel, which supports children to settle. However, this also limits opportunities for children to develop wider friendships. As time passes and the roll increases, there is scope to provide a structure and expectation of behaviour that reflects the difference between home and school. A greater focus on rules and routines will provide clear guidance to children to help them benefit more fully from their time in the setting.
- Children are actively involved in choosing their play experiences both indoors and outside. They show sustained interest when playing outdoors as they explore bubbles and investigate pouring water down pipes. In this small setting most children play alongside each other. Most need support to play happily together. Children have scope to initiate and lead their own learning as they draw pictures to represent their daily plans. The shape of the day-to-day life of the setting is determined by their choices. There is not yet an appropriate balance between carefully planned activities and free play opportunities. As they grow and develop, children will benefit from more focused opportunities to engage in planned activities. Learning activities need to be more challenging to extend children's interests and support them to reflect on their learning. We discussed that the playroom would benefit from a review and refresh to ensure learning opportunities are thoughtfully presented to encourage rich learning experiences. More natural and heuristic resources will help to open up the learning. With support from practitioners, children will be encouraged to engage more fully in learning opportunities that are designed to meet their needs and interests.
- Interactions between practitioners and children are friendly and supportive. A few children respond to simple questioning that supports their thinking. Practitioners support learning in a variety of ways and take advantage of real life opportunities to engage children. For example, counting the number of pieces of toast at snack. We discussed with practitioners the need to enhance children's learning further through more challenging questioning and discussion. They need to have higher expectations for children in terms of promoting learning, planning high quality experiences and ensuring literacy and numeracy rich environments for learning.
- Practitioners know each child as an individual. They are at an early stage of reviewing children's learning profiles. Observations are used to document children's engagement in experiences across the curriculum. Children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing is tracked. We discussed that next steps in learning should be agreed with children and parents so that all involved have a clear understanding of children's targets and how they can help them make appropriate progress. The setting is at a very early stage of tracking

learning across the curriculum. As it develops, this will support progression during children's time in the setting and as they move on through the early level.

- Planning is designed around Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and takes account of children's interests and ideas. The current interest in owl babies provides a stimulus for learning that is meaningful to children. Practitioners record what children know on mind maps. They now need to take a more focused approach to planning small steps in learning to meet the needs of individual children. As they plan together, there is scope for practitioners to help children develop their use of the language of learning and becoming more aware of the skills they are developing. This could be built into the routine of the setting to support children to understand their progress in learning and decide what they want to learn next.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- There are plans to revisit the rationale for the curriculum to reflect the unique nature of the setting. It will be important for practitioners to revisit national guidance and work closely with senior leaders to ensure a shared understanding of what is required to develop a curriculum framework that meets the needs of the children in the setting.
- The outdoor environment has been improved to provide opportunities to promote curiosity, inquiry and creativity as a key feature of developmental pathways. This approach now needs to be developed further to provide similar learning experiences indoors. Children will benefit from more natural and real life materials to help them to think for themselves as they play.
- Health and wellbeing is a key feature of the curriculum and children are supported to learn about ways to keep safe, healthy and active. Children's interests and ideas are used to help plan their learning and practitioners are flexible in their approach. Mind maps and floor books capture children's thoughts and document their experiences over time.
- Practitioners make use of the local environment. Walks to observe boats in the nearby Caledonian Canal, and visits to the Jacobite by Loch Ness shop, enhance children's awareness of the attractions in their community. A few former parents are invited to share the skills required for the jobs they do.
- The setting enjoys close relations with the P1-3 class, which results in transition arrangements being fluid and flexible. As a result, children are fully familiar with the early years class before moving to P1.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- There is good evidence of the positive partnerships between families and the setting. They are welcomed in to the playroom where they can have informal conversations that support children. Parents are kept informed of their children's experiences through the helpful weekly blog. Parents spoken with during the inspection felt their views were respected.
- Practitioners are very keen and understand the benefits of encouraging parents to support their children's learning. They plan to send learning journals home for parents to share children's achievements and eventually to share next steps in learning. In this way, parents will be more fully involved and be able to support their children's learning and experiences. There is scope to engage parents further by introducing planned stay and play sessions. This will encourage children and families to have fun as they play together and give families further insight in to life in the setting.
- A few parents share their skills and this should be encouraged to enhance children's learning experiences overall.

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

- Practitioners warmly welcome children and their families into the setting. They value children as unique individuals and have a growing understanding of family circumstances. Mutual respect and trusting relationships underpin all aspects of the work of the setting. Close liaison with school staff and regular visits from pupils ensures the setting is well embedded within the school. As a result, children and practitioners are secure as members of the setting and the entire school community.
- Practitioners have an understanding of the wellbeing indicators of 'Getting it right for every child' and work to ensure that children are safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. Children are developing their own understanding of the wellbeing indicators through a range of play and planned experiences. These include preparing snack, daily tooth brushing and through daily outdoor learning. Emotional check in is designed to help practitioners to appropriately support children to manage their emotions. There is scope to talk to children about their feelings as the session progresses. This will help them to understand how their behaviour affects others. The setting is working towards achieving daily ten minutes of physical activity, which encourages an awareness of keeping fit and having a healthy heart.
- Regular visits to the outdoor area and the nearby woods help children to understand the benefits of fresh air and appreciate the beauty of the natural world. Practitioners should continue, as planned, to develop this work of exploring the wellbeing indicators. This will support children in building appropriate vocabulary to talk about their feelings and to develop independence and resilience. This will help to meet better children's emotional needs.
- Children attend the setting in a variety of patterns resulting in only two children attending at any one time. Whilst this arrangement can help children to settle, a few still find sharing and taking turns extremely challenging. Practitioners should raise their expectations of children's behaviour to promote wellbeing and progress overall. It will be beneficial for all when more children join the group after the Christmas break. This will encourage children to develop friendships and learn to play with a larger group of peers. Children in the setting join primary children for music lessons and in their playroom. They also enjoy positive experiences of interacting with the children in the primary during learning visits and learning outdoors. These activities help them to feel included within the school community.
- Practitioners understand the statutory duties and responsibilities in relation to the provision of early learning and childcare. Professional learning is used to guide practice in supporting children's care and wellbeing. We discussed that reference to national guidance will ensure healthy, balanced snacks. Practitioners are aware of children who require additional help with their learning and work with external partners to provide appropriate support. This is beginning to have a positive impact on children's development and learning.

- All children are fully included in the setting. They are developing an awareness of the needs of children in other parts of the world by fundraising for the charities. Practitioners should continue to promote children's awareness of equality issues and of the diversity that exists within the wider community.

3.2 Securing children's progress

weak

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

- During the inspection, children were observed to be at a very early stage of making progress across the curriculum. Children's learning journals and floor books provide some limited evidence of their progress. Next steps do not yet include personalised, manageable targets for children. These should be developed to influence planning for individual children to ensure the best possible progress.
- A few children are developing their vocabulary and a few communicate more confidently. A few children require more opportunities to develop their listening skills further. They need focused interactions that encourage conversation and listening to instructions. A few children are beginning to make marks to express themselves in writing. Fewer than half are drawing with increasing attention to detail. All children would benefit from more encouragement to 'write' for real life purposes as they play. A few children show an interest in stories. All children would benefit from more access to books and storytelling sessions in line with their development needs and interests.
- A few children are at the very early stages of counting and beginning to recognise numerals up to three. A few can name basic shapes. A few are beginning to use mathematical language during play, for example, when comparing size and weight. Ongoing, focused opportunities to develop these skills as they play will support children to make appropriate progress. We discussed with practitioners that access to more natural or everyday materials will motivate children and provide more varied learning opportunities. Practitioners should continue to plan real life opportunities to take this forward.
- As the majority of children are relatively new to the setting, they require support from practitioners before they are ready to settle. There is considerable scope to develop further emotional check-ins to explore children's feelings in more depth. At times, the majority of children require significant support from practitioners to share, take turns and resolve issues. A few require more challenging learning opportunities to capture their interest. Children need to be encouraged further to develop self-help skills when they dress themselves to go outside. They often give up when zipping up suits and need to be given more time to achieve their goal. Children are learning the rules of personal hygiene when they use the toilet and wash hands before snack. They enjoy the benefits of fresh air and exercise during daily excursions outdoors. They are learning to run, climb and balance in the playground, the field and the forest. Practitioners record these skills and now need to plan how they will help children to make further progress.

- There are limited examples of children’s achievements in the setting being recognised and celebrated. Practitioners are keen to encourage parents to share children’s achievements from home. Further work is required to encourage parents to recognise that small achievements mean a lot to children and help them build their confidence. Involving children and parents in identifying developmentally appropriate targets for individuals will promote further parental engagement in recognising and supporting children’s learning. This will help to ensure that children’s achievements at home and in the community are built upon in the setting.
- The setting requires support to ensure equity for all children. Children present with different socio-economic, educational and development needs. Careful planning for individuals is required to support all children to make the best possible progress.

Choice of QI: 3.3 Increasing creativity and skills for life and learning

- Developing creativity
- Developing skills for life and learning
- Developing digital skills

- Children are encouraged to be active in leading their own learning through play. They make choices in order to explore their own ideas. Outdoors, children have access to a wider range of open-ended resources that promote creativity skills and imagination. Children show increased levels of interest during these outdoor learning experiences and are keen to explore the natural world. Practitioners should now continue to develop children's skills and interests by offering more creative learning contexts indoors. As these develop indoors and outdoors, there is scope for children to plan, design and evaluate solutions as they apply these skills across different learning contexts.
- Practitioners ensure that wellbeing is at the heart of their work with children and families. Children need support to express their positive ideas and feelings with increasing confidence. As this develops, they may begin to use the suggestions of others to extend their play and work together. Children are beginning to develop perseverance in the outdoor area. They demonstrate a willingness to help with simple roles such as helping with snack. They could be encouraged to develop this further by taking more responsibility such as risk assessors or ECO warriors. In this way, they will become more involved in roles of responsibility and to participate in the life of the setting.
- Children have access to digital technologies such as a computer, tablet and remote controlled toys. However, there was little evidence of these being used during the inspection. There were missed opportunities to encourage children's use of positional language when playing with a remote controlled toy. There is scope for greater planned use of digital technology to enhance children's experiences. It would be of benefit to establish a clear rationale for developing children's digital skills based on self-evaluation and the curriculum rationale. This will help practitioners to have a clear understanding of the direction of development and to evaluate impact on children's progress over time.
- Developing the young workforce is being discussed at cluster level with practitioners beginning to look at skills development and external visitors to support children's early understanding of the skills required for possible future possible careers.

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.