

Summarised inspection findings

Lochardil Primary School Nursery Class

The Highland Council

8 November 2022

Key contextual information

Lochardil Primary School Early Learning Childcare (ELC) is located within the grounds of Lochardil Primary School in Inverness. The setting has three playrooms and an enclosed outdoor space, as well as having access to the wider school grounds. The ELC has had changes to the staff team and leadership model, with the recent addition of a senior early years practitioner. The setting is open from 8 am – 6 pm during term time and currently has 72 children aged from three to those not yet attending school.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 strategic leadership of the headteacher supports the setting to integrate fully with the school, ensuring consistency of message for children, staff, parents and the community. There is a blend of leadership roles across the ELC, which helps achieve a consistent approach to delivering positive outcomes for children and families. The team has implemented successfully a well-established vision, values and aims. Practitioners support children in their understanding and meaning of the values using age appropriate resources, such as 'values pebbles'. Children talk confidently about the values, building on the language used in daily conversation by practitioners. Attractive displays share the values between the setting and home, with parents encouraged to share children's successes in relation to demonstrating the values.
- Practitioners demonstrate a professional approach to their early learning and childcare role. They embrace enthusiastically the opportunity to develop their leadership skills and welcome the various roles afforded to them. Senior leaders know practitioners very well through effective support and supervision and as part of annual professional development reviews. They use this knowledge to develop practitioners' skills through a model of leadership at all levels. Practitioners are encouraged to lead particular areas both within and out with the setting. They actively seek out career-long professional learning (CLPL) to ensure they are meeting the children's individual needs. This is having a positive impact on children's outcomes. Practitioners share their learning effectively among the whole staff team. They access a wide range of CLPL through The Highland Council, alongside national and local professional learning opportunities. The leadership team have and continue to access additional professional learning in relation to their own leadership development.
- The headteacher and practitioners, identify key priority areas as part of a whole school approach to improvement planning. They take these forward collectively. Practitioners welcome engagement in professional dialogue and actively seek opportunities to take this forward. Weekly opportunities to meet ensure the practitioner team have time to reflect on and evaluate their practice. Regular peer-to-peer playroom observations and audits by the leadership team highlight areas that are working well and areas, which need further improvement. An appropriate pace of change is realised within the setting. The team should continue to contribute to identifying relevant priorities as part of the wider school team.

- Effective approaches to develop continuous improvement are evident within the setting. A robust quality assurance calendar highlights key areas of focus throughout the year, ensuring engagement of all. Senior leaders have embedded self-evaluation within the setting, with engagement from practitioners, children and families. The team should continue to engage meaningfully with the wealth of data gathered.

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

- Children are happy, secure and respectful within their spontaneous play. They accommodate each other and include peers whom they recognise as being at an earlier stage of their development. While most children engage well in play, at times a few children move from area to area without becoming involved meaningfully in their play. Practitioners should review the frequency of learners in transition inside and outside and the potential impact of this. The ethos of the setting communicates a strong understanding of children's rights and participation. Practitioners could make better use of the learning environment to provide more opportunities for children to have greater opportunity for authentic life experiences. This could include real tools, natural materials and loose parts play to enable greater scope for children to demonstrate creativity and innovation.
- A key feature of the setting is the very positive and nurturing relationships. Practitioners' interactions are warm, trusting and meaningful and are carried out in an unhurried manner. The climate for learning is rooted in an understanding of participation of young children and the importance of listening to them. A few children demonstrate an understanding that the practitioner can help them to lead their learning and extend their thinking. Practitioners should give consideration to the rhythm and flow of the nursery day. This will give practitioners greater opportunity to scaffold children's thinking without interruption.
- Practitioners communicate very well with each other to share observations about individual children. They create visible individual learning pathways by gathering evidence over time. They use the pathways alongside developmental overviews to identify personal learning steps for children. They invite parents to contribute to these on an on-going basis and at regular points across the child's nursery life. As planned, there is scope for practitioners to consider further the design of the core environment and breadth of opportunity for learners. This will support them to gather a range of evidence over time to reflect depth, challenge, and application for all learners in a manageable way.
- Practitioners continue to support each other as they build their confidence in planning to support children's learning across different timescales. It is clear that practitioners take account of the views and interests of children within short term responsive planning. They continue to build their understanding of their role within child-led inquiry and how to scaffold effectively to sustain children's engagement over time. Alongside this, the team should consider how they could offer more focused learning opportunities. This will ensure individual learners are supported and challenged to realise their potential and fully utilising their time in ELC. Practitioners have begun to consider more widely how they can best use data from developmental overviews to understand what learners need from the environment and adults around them to support them in their learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and opportunities, which afford learning about citizenship and sustainability, are evident within the environment. There is a clear sense of the environment belonging to children. However, practitioners could make better use of the environment to support children to lead their own learning. Children sustain their engagement and work with others more effectively when learning outdoors. There is potential to think more closely about the duration of opportunities to learn outdoors within the grounds and off-site in local forest.
- Practitioners should now consider more closely the core, holistic environment inside and outside, taking greater account of the breadth of curriculum and design principles. This will support learners to experience greater flow and connection in learning. In doing so, the team should review how well individual learning spaces offer appropriate support and challenge to learners, for learners at an earlier stage in their development, this should include well-considered opportunities for schematic and sensory exploration.
- Local authority developmental overviews are very helpful to practitioners. Practitioners use these to support planning for all learners including those who are at an earlier developmental stage. They offer a framework for collaboration for practitioners, parents and partner agencies as children progress through the setting. In the same way, local authority literacy and numeracy progression pathways and national guidance, 'Realising the Ambition' continue to be helpful to practitioners in supporting their professional learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnerships are a strength within the setting. Practitioners have developed strong relationships with parents. A family engagement calendar provides opportunities for parents to engage in events, which allow them to share in their child's learning. The team regularly share children's learning pathways with home, allowing children to share their progress and achievements. A few parents note that they would like more engagement in their child's learning and the setting have plans to address this.
- The setting's communication with parents continues to evolve following COVID-19. The team effectively used digital platforms, emails and telephone calls to support children and families. Opportunities for parents to feedback their views include during stay and play sessions, questionnaires, pathway folders and daily at drop off/collection. There are two formal parents' meetings per year to share children's progress and achievements.
- Partnerships within the community support children to enjoy opportunities to develop their inter-generational links. The ELC plans to re-establish links with the local care home and day care facility. Practitioners continue to actively seek opportunities for meaningful and relevant partnership working.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very 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 are a key strength of the setting. As a result, children settle quickly and are safe, secure and ready to learn. The values and rights-based approach within the setting underpins the focus on wellbeing for children and families. Practitioners nurture and support children to develop their understanding of their own emotions. A daily emotional check-in supports children to discuss their feelings confidently and those of others.
- Getting it right for all children is central to everything within the setting. Practitioners have a clear focus on wellbeing using the wellbeing indicators and children's rights. Children develop their understanding of the wellbeing indicators through daily language, fortnightly focus and effective displays. They contribute to the playroom charter with a sense of pride and responsibility, which focuses helpfully on positive behaviour and a commitment to children's rights. All children have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through being the 'special helper' and 'snack helper'. The development of further 'champion roles' should continue as planned.
- Children have a very positive lunchtime experience. They choose their lunch daily using visual clues. Children have lunch in the school dining hall, with children confidently carrying their tray to the sitting area. Practitioners sit with children and engage in social conversation, while allowing children the opportunity to engage with their peers. Children are continuing to develop their independence skills through the lunch routine.
- Outdoor learning supports children's wellbeing, developing resilience and a sense of freedom to explore and take risks. Children have daily opportunities to be outdoors in their engaging and inviting outdoor space. They confidently run, ride bikes and scooters. Planned opportunities to continue to the local woodland and forest area within the school grounds will allow children time to explore their wider environment.
- Senior leaders and practitioners are knowledgeable in terms of fulfilling their statutory duties. The setting follows all local, national guidance and advice. All practitioners engage in regular training, which has a focus on safeguarding and child protection. The setting has a range of policies and procedures in place, which support improved outcomes for children. Practitioners know their individual children very well and capture relevant and meaningful information to improve outcomes for all. They continue to take the lead in initiating dialogue with professionals from outside agencies. As a result, this collaboration supports children and their families well.
- The staff team promote inclusion and equality throughout the setting. There is a strong focus on children's rights and values led practice. Practitioners support diversity and challenge discrimination, ensuring they treat all children and families fairly. They engaged in Gender Neutral Language training and identified areas for improvement. As a result, practitioners have

created a setting where all children access gender-neutral play. The team also ensure they use appropriate language to reflect this ethos. Interventions are in place to support children with recognised barriers to their learning. Moving forward, practitioners should continue to tailor their approaches to meet individual children's needs.

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

- Within the setting, practitioners place a strong emphasis on supporting the health and wellbeing of children. This includes their understanding of emotional literacy using a range of resources. Practitioners are consistently available and accessible for children and are effective in their response to children. The outdoor environment affords children opportunities to exercise their gross motor movement. The impact on children's wellbeing of time spent outdoors is clear to see. Individual children know themselves increasingly well as learners and take action to self-regulate as they learn outdoors.
- Overall, practitioners support children well to make good progress in their literacy skills. Practitioners use meaningful dialogue with children, which in turn supports the development of children's listening and talking skills. They target support via a local authority intervention. The majority of children using resources within the environment for story making. Children represent their thinking using a range of materials including mark making and modelling. Practitioners notice carefully the progression of children's line drawings over time. Children are encouraged in their understanding of writing for a purpose and invited to create signage within the nursery environment.
- Overall, children make good progress in their numeracy skills. This was most notable within observations of children's engagement with number across the environment and in their exploration of water outdoors. A few children were talking and thinking about big numbers while others appear to be interested in the passing of time. The role of 'snack helper' offers meaningful opportunities to explore quantity, measure and fractions. Practitioners should continue to ensure that all children meet appropriate challenge when accessing software via a smart board. This will maintain their motivation in learning. This should include consistent opportunities for children to develop further their early numeracy and mathematical skills through real life contexts.
- The achievements of children are visible within their learning pathways and personal learning steps. Practitioners display children's achievements on a wall within the welcome area. It would be helpful for practitioners to highlight connections in the learning pathways of individual children encouraging them to recognise how they are learning.
- Practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the particular needs of learners is supporting them to channel their professional learning to implement appropriate interventions. These universal and targeted approaches are supporting the development of early communication skills and promoting equity for all children.

- As recognised by senior leaders, there is a need to ensure that children’s learning targets are specific and measurable to support them to build consistently on their prior learning. A number of children talk about their learning. There is scope for the team to develop ways for children to have greater opportunities to revisit and talk about their learning. This will help children to understand the progress they are making

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.