

Summarised inspection findings

Meethill Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

4 February 2020

Key contextual information

Meethill Nursery class is located within the playground of Meethill School. It is registered for 75 children aged two years to those not yet attending primary school with no more than ten children aged two years. At the time of the inspection, 59 children were enrolled. This includes two children, aged two years old, who attended in the afternoon. Children attend either morning or afternoon sessions. The setting has recently been refurbished ahead of moving towards 1140 hours of early learning and childcare in 2020.

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

- Practitioners engage children aged two years fully within the nursery class. They follow the same routines as older children and have the same opportunities for learning through play. The children cope well in the environment and enjoy their play. Three smaller rooms offer opportunities for rest and sensory play. Practitioners should ensure these rooms are continuously available to the youngest children to allow them time and space to follow their interests in a developmentally appropriate way. Practitioners should continue to revisit Pre-birth to three guidance and Building the Ambition to review practice and ensure they meet children's needs fully.

Children aged three to those not yet attending primary school

- Practitioners create a welcoming environment where children eagerly engage in their play. They greet each child individually and ensure one to one attention when children require support to settle. This helps them to feel valued, safe and secure. Most children independently engage with the variety of activities on offer that support their learning across the curriculum. They happily play alone or in small groups choosing their favourite place to start the session. The setting has very recently seen significant changes to the layout of the learning environment. Practitioners appropriately use the different rooms for open ended, quiet, creative and sensory play. Practitioners plan a workshop approach where children select from the resources that are available to them. This enables children to make choices and lead their learning. Practitioners should develop further the core provision in the indoor environment. They should build on the resources on offer to target appropriate learning experiences that deepen children's skills and understanding across the curriculum. Practitioners should continue to develop the good start made to extend the use of sensory, natural and open-ended materials, to promote curiosity, inquiry and creativity.
- The majority of children choose to spend much of their time outdoors where they have freedom to explore the extensive, enclosed garden. This offers opportunities for physical, imaginative and sensory play. Children explore appropriately the natural world as they splash in the mud, balance, run and climb. Practitioners ensure outdoor play is a strength within the setting as

they skilfully support children to be creative, curious and confident taking account of their physical wellbeing.

- Across the setting, practitioners demonstrate care and support as they interact with children. They know them well as individuals and understand the particular needs of children who require support with emotional and social development. They take a clear and consistent approach to helping children manage their emotions. Overall, practitioners use skilled questioning and dialogue promoting curiosity to support learning. Practitioners support children to use tablets to research and extend their interests.
- Practitioners plan learning that takes forward children's individual interests. These approaches ensure an in-depth focus on a child on a termly basis and includes children and parents in the process. As a result, all those involved have a better understanding of how to support the child's learning at that moment in time. This, together with environment planning and 'wow' moments, helps practitioners to plan learning further. Building on this positive work, practitioners should plan, undertake observations and identify next steps for children more regularly. This should ensure they provide individual support and challenge.
- Senior leaders have developed approaches to check children's progress in learning across the curriculum. To enhance progression through early level, practitioners need to understand and use progression pathways to support their professional judgement.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

3.2 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

- Practitioners know children well as individuals and are aware of their social and emotional needs. As a result, children are making appropriate progress in health and wellbeing. The majority of children make positive friendships and are kind and caring towards each other. The majority of children are able to communicate their needs and feelings, according to their stage of development. They show an understanding of how to keep themselves healthy including knowing how to wash their hands, prepare the table for snack and brush their teeth. Most children are developing their self-help skills as they dress themselves to access the outdoor space. All children have daily access to outdoors for fresh air and exercise and develop physical skills by jumping, climbing and running. They demonstrate developing fine motor control, for example, as they paint, cut with scissors and use tongs to pick up fruit.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in early communication and language at their own developmental stage. The majority of children listen well and communicate confidently with adults and their peers. Practitioners seek advice from speech and language therapists to support identified children. The majority of children are keen to share books with each other and engage well when listening to stories. The majority of children are making marks and a few children are able to produce recognisable drawings. A few older children can write their name. Practitioners should plan progressive opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills in early communication and language across the learning environment.
- In numeracy and mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress. The minority of children are beginning to count and recognise numerals that are important to them. A few children are beginning to understand the value of number and can recognise number patterns. Children explore mathematical concepts such as shape and measure. Practitioners extend their mathematical vocabulary as they interact during play. Practitioners should continue to extend early numeracy and mathematical experiences across the setting to build more depth, challenge and progression to children's learning.
- Children are developing a range of skills across the curriculum. There is not yet enough evidence to show clearly the progress children are making in early communication and language and numeracy and mathematics. Practitioners should ensure that they use their observations to demonstrate the progress children are making over time. Practitioners need to focus on learning across the curriculum and promote challenge and progression for all. They should increase expectations for all children to support and challenge them to make the best possible progress as they move through the early level.

- Practitioners show an understanding of the individual circumstances of children. They work closely with support staff to improve opportunities for identified children. It is important to measure the impact of strategies used to ensure equity and inform decisions about future interventions.

1. Quality of care and support

A warm, nurturing and inclusive ethos had been successfully established. Children experienced kindness and responsive support from staff. Holistic care plans, structured around the well-being indicators, supported children well. As a result, children were well behaved and considerate to others. They self-regulated their own and others behaviour; modelling staff expectations. Staff understood the procedures for safeguarding children well.

Children were able to learn through their natural curiosity as they explored the basic possibilities of sensory materials in a range of ways. Children played cooperatively in imaginative role-play making good use of the real-life equipment. They were learning about balance and shape constructing in the block play area. They expressed their creativity individually in the craft area and their work was displayed well, respecting their achievements. Children independently took responsibility for organising work they wished to take home. 'Wow' moments were celebrated with children to recognise work they were proud of which were regularly shared with parents. Ensuring these recordings are consistently focussed on significant learning will better contribute to summative assessments of children's progress.

Children were independent in choosing from the easily accessible resources. Free flow access to the outdoors encouraged children to be physically active and have plenty of fresh air. They explored the natural environment and enjoyed splashing in muddy puddles as they went on their bear hunt. Musical instruments and loose parts were used to explore sounds and to beat out rhythms. Children were learning number recognition and sequencing through a hopscotch game.

Staff were skilled in storytelling. Children enjoyed lots of stories individually and in small groups in the quiet room. Story groups at the end of the session successfully enthralled children where their stages of development had been well considered. At the end of the day, staff should consider how to reduce interruptions in stories and rhyme time.

Health and wellbeing was promoted positively through healthy snack choices and toothbrushing. Children enjoyed a relaxed snack time and took responsibility for getting the tables ready. They could have had more involvement in snack preparation to help develop their skills.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4. Quality of management and leadership

The nursery team were now experiencing more consistent support from the senior leadership team and valued this. Group and individual meetings with managers were supporting staff's learning and development well. Staff were more involved in self-evaluation and had begun to make more use of national quality indicators. These practices need to be continued and embedded. Improvement plans had resulted in significant improvement in the nursery environment and had a positive impact on children's health and wellbeing.

The staff team were experienced and worked together well, making the most of their individual strengths. They were enthusiastic in striving to provide a service, which promoted quality experiences and outcomes for children. Individuals were confident in taking on leadership roles. Supporting their colleagues to take forward new initiatives meant practice was evolving and refreshed. More responsive planning had been introduced to enable child led learning. As a result,

staff interaction was consistently well judged, supported children's engagement and extended children's learning in health and wellbeing.

Staff now need to build on these strengths taking more account of what children can already do. Knowing children as learners will enable staff to further differentiate their approaches and further extend children's literacy and numeracy skills. They should continue to develop the richness of the learning opportunities and plan deeper learning provocations based on children's inquiry. Aspirations for children's achievements need to be raised making better use of national guidance. This will support children to reach their full potential.

Parents were involved well, which meant parents understood the work of the nursery. Changes were made as a result of consultation. Parents were invited to share their questions and hopes during their child's focussed observation week.

While children were able to take the lead in their own learning there was scope for them to be more involved in talking about what they were learning, what they want to find out and how they might work towards these goals.

Through self-evaluation and monitoring, the senior leadership team knew the strengths of the nursery and had identified areas where they could improve. The nursery was well placed to continue their improvement journey.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and two recommendation. Both recommendations have been met. As a result of this inspection, there are no further recommendations.

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.