

# Summarised inspection findings

**Whitehills Primary School Nursery Class**

Aberdeenshire Council

19 December 2023

## Key contextual information

Whitehills Nursery Class is situated within Whitehills Primary School. The school is set within a coastal and rural location within the small fishing village of Whitehills, Banffshire. The nursery offers 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) for children aged from three until starting primary school. The current roll is 23 which is expected to increase throughout the year. The nursery is registered to take a maximum of 32 children at any one time. Children attend from 8:45 am – 2:45 pm during term-time. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery class. Daily responsibility is delegated to a peripatetic senior practitioner who shares her time with another ELC setting. Staffing consists of a full-time lead practitioner, four part-time early years practitioners and a recently employed support worker. In the past two years the setting has experienced high levels staff absence.

### 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 welcome children into the setting in a warm and friendly manner. Most children settle quickly into their nursery day. They engage well with the range of stimulating experiences both indoors and outdoors. The majority of children sustain their play for extended periods of time. They are interested, eager to learn and increasingly independent.
- Practitioners have worked hard to improve the quality of learning spaces and experiences for children. They make effective use of natural and open-ended materials to promote children's curiosity, inquiry, and creativity. Children use these materials imaginatively and enthusiastically during pretend play. Practitioners make effective use of the local community and businesses to enable children to learn through real-life contexts.
- Overall, practitioners' interactions with children are supportive and positive. They are continuing to develop their understanding of early years pedagogy. Practitioners should work with senior leaders to ensure there is a shared understanding of pedagogy across the team. They should revisit national guidance Realising the Ambition: Being Me to help them in this process. Practitioners need to work as a team to ensure greater consistency in the quality of their interactions. Most children would benefit from greater levels of depth and challenge in their learning.
- Practitioners use digital technology effectively with children to research topics of interest and to play games that will support children's early numeracy skills. They should develop this further to build children's skills in using digital technology independently in a range of contexts.
- Practitioners observe children at play and record these observations within children's electronic learning journals. They are continuing to develop their skills in observing and recording children's significant learning. Practitioners are making improved use of progression frameworks to help them to identify and record the skills children are learning. They now need

to ensure that children's next steps are relevant to their stage of development. This will help practitioners to demonstrate clearly the progress children make over time. Senior leaders should ensure they have robust procedures in place for monitoring children's learning journals and assessment information.

- Practitioners have correctly identified that they need to develop further the approaches used to plan for children's learning. They have very recently changed how they plan for children's learning, however, the new process is not yet embedded. Senior leaders and practitioners should ensure the new planning process involves all practitioners working within the nursery. Children who require additional support with their learning have individual support plans. Senior leaders should support practitioners to identify specific and relevant learning targets that will help children make the progress of which they are capable. This should also include support for more able children.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

### 3.2 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 come to nursery with knowledge and a range of skills. Practitioners now need to ensure they build on children's prior learning more effectively. This should help children continue to make progress over time at a pace appropriate to their stage of development. The majority of children could be making better progress in their learning, particularly in early communication and language and numeracy and mathematics.
- Children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They play together well and are developing friendships. Most children develop a range of gross motor skills as they navigate different terrains and climb trees during woodland visits. They develop their fine motor skills well. Children confidently talk about foods that are healthy and help them grow. They demonstrate independence as they get ready for outdoors and serve themselves at snack time.
- In early communication and language, children are making satisfactory progress. The majority of children are confident to engage readily in conversation with known adults. They listen well to stories and can answer simple questions. A minority of children are ready to create their own stories. A few children need consistent use of support resources to ensure they develop the necessary skills to communicate in their own way. The majority of children recognise their name around the playroom. A few children attempt to write their name with recognisable letters. Children are ready to develop early writing skills further in a variety of contexts.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Most children rote count to five. A few children count beyond ten, recognise numerals and can identify missing numbers within ten. Children are developing the skill of identifying quantities up to five. The majority of children use relevant mathematical language in correct contexts. Overall, most children are ready to develop a wider range of skills in early numeracy and mathematics. This should include, developing their understanding and use of money and exploring the properties of shape.
- Practitioners celebrate children's successes within and outwith the nursery well. They display these on their achievement wall and celebrate them at school assemblies. Children demonstrate early citizenship skills as they explore and contribute to their local community.
- Senior leaders and practitioners know families very well. They take account of differing circumstances and offer relevant support to ensure all children can access learning experiences. Practitioners now need to make better use of the information they gather on

children's learning to identify where children could be making better progress. Currently, individualised planning is not robust enough. Targets and strategies should be relevant to children's stage of development. Senior leaders and practitioners should monitor closely the impact of strategies to make decisions about future interventions and ensure equity for all.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children and their families benefitted from the positive relationships built with staff. Staff were warm and welcoming on arrival, and used this opportunity to chat and engage with parents. Parents were able to enter the nursery and help their children get dressed ready for outdoor play. Whilst this provided good opportunities to share information and support a continuity of care, a few parents said they would like more feedback at the end of the day.

During inspection, children were cared for with nurturing and caring approaches which supported their health and wellbeing. Children were treated with kindness and patience and were encouraged to be caring and helpful to their friends. A few children enjoyed sitting with staff for a story after lunch which provided them with opportunities to rest.

Children were familiar with hand washing routines and understood the importance of washing their hands to keep them safe and well.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported by information collated in their personal plan. Information had been reviewed by parents to ensure it was current and up to date. Staff knew children's individual, needs, interests and preferences well. A few children had an additional support plan; however, these did not contain clear strategies to show children's progress. We suggested making small, achievable targets which could be easily understood by staff. The manager agreed to action this.

Children experienced positive snack and mealtimes which were unhurried, relaxed, and supportive of their needs. Lunch was served in the school dining hall and although it was very noisy, this did not impact on the children's experience. Children enjoyed an appetising and nutritious lunch with many having second helpings. They were encouraged to be independent and were provided with opportunities to pour their own drinks and self-serve dessert.

Children were kept safe and well by knowledgeable staff who understood the importance of safe administration of medication and in safeguarding and protecting children.

**Care Inspectorate grade: good**

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun and were happy, engaged, and enthusiastic learners. There was a busy atmosphere and children were engaged on tasks. Children benefitted from opportunities to play outside helping to support their emotional health and wellbeing.

Staff interactions were positive to engage and support children's interests. Praise was used well to help raise children's confidence and self-esteem. There were some missed opportunities to extend children's creativity and learning. For example, when a few children were excited to find insects outdoors, their learning could have been extended further using exploration, research and drawing.

Planning approaches were child-centred and responsive to children's interests. As a result, children were happy and confident learners. Some observations to support children's progress did not make clear the learning which had taken place. This impacted on the quality of next steps and meant some children were not challenged to reach their full potential. This was identified by the leadership team and ongoing support was being provided to staff.

Routines were in place to support transition at key times such as lunch. Most children enjoyed listening to a story which was read in an engaging way by staff. Children were encouraged to listen and look at the pictures.

Children benefitted from some opportunities in language, literacy and numeracy development. Children read books and listened to stories in the comfortable story corner. The well-stocked writing area provided opportunities for early mark making and writing skills. There were some opportunities for numeracy when making playdough or when playing in the construction corner.

Children were supported to feel part of their community and opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections and regular visits to local amenities. These included weekly trips to the local woods, visits to the beach and connections with the local shops.

**Care Inspectorate grade: good**

### **3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well**

The service had undergone a number of changes, causing some instability within the setting. Ongoing support and training to build relationships and promote team working resulted in most staff who were beginning to feel more positive.

The nursery shared the vision, values, and aims of the school. These included providing a friendly, aspiring, welcoming and fun learning environment. This meant staff and parents knew what to expect from the service.

The setting acknowledged the importance of working with children and their families to support continuous improvement. Parents had been asked for suggestions on how to improve the service and some changes had been made as a result. Parents were encouraged to attend play and stay sessions and coffee and chat sessions. This contributed to an inclusive and welcoming environment.

Most staff were enthusiastic to influence positive change within the setting. They were involved in making changes to the environment based on their strengths, interests and experience. They had been supported in this role by the leadership team and Aberdeenshire Council. This had contributed to good learning outcomes for children. To support further positive changes, the 'Quality Framework for day care of children, childminding, and school-aged childcare' and 'Realising the Ambition' should be utilised.

An improvement plan was in place and focussed on key areas such as planning, learning and assessment. The improvement plan also focussed on building staff confidence and ensuring staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Quality assurance processes and procedures were in place to support good outcomes for children. A quality assurance calendar included audits of medication, accidents and incidents and infection and prevention and control measures. Monitoring of children's learning journals had highlighted where a more consistent approach was needed and staff training had been undertaken as a result.

Some monitoring of staff practice and of service provision had been completed. This helped promote consistent care and good outcomes for children.

**Care Inspectorate grade: good**

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and no areas for improvement.



## 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.