

Summarised inspection findings

**Bun Sgoil Strath na h-Apainne - Strath of Appin Primary School
Nursery Class**

Argyll and Bute Council

22 August 2023

Key contextual information

Bun-sgoil Srath na h-Apainne - Strath of Appin Primary School Nursery Class is situated within the primary school. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the setting. Fewer than ten children attended the nursery at the time of the inspection. As a result, some general statements have been made to avoid identifying individuals.

Children can access their entitlement to the free funded hours during the school term. The playroom has recently been refurbished. Children have free access to an enclosed play area in the outdoors, as well as access to the wider school grounds and local environment.

All children learn some Gaelic. Children have an option of progressing into learning through Gaelic or English at the primary stages. All children in P1 to P7, in English Medium learn Gaelic as an additional language. Senior leaders have experienced challenges recruiting staff for the nursery.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Bun-sgoil Srath na h-Apainne - Strath of Appin Primary School and nursery is warm and welcoming. Children, practitioners, parents and partners work well together. They enjoy positive relationships with each other. Practitioners in the early learning and childcare setting are aware of the values. Parents are soon to be consulted on the values and vision to ensure they remain current. The headteacher should ensure that the values underpin the ethos and life of the nursery.
- The headteacher had been in the post for four weeks at the time of the inspection. She is the lead for early learning and childcare. The headteacher has worked well with a promoted postholder to glean an evaluative overview of most aspects of the nursery. The headteacher has started to meet regularly with staff in the nursery to support improvement. Her professional advice is starting to make a difference. She is encouraging practitioners to engage in open-ended dialogue with children. Children are beginning to lead their learning and be more independent. The headteacher should continue to lead change to ensure positive impact for children.
- Practitioners are taking forward some day-to-day improvements in the nursery. They are at an early stage of evaluating culture, partnerships and playing outdoors. The headteacher recognises that she needs to establish robust and effective quality assurance arrangements. The school improvement plan includes early learning and childcare. Practitioners and stakeholders robust use of self-evaluation would assist in making meaningful links between self-evaluation and improvement planning. Practitioners should make much more use of the

published quality assurance framework, 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?', as well as 'The Advice on Gaelic Education' (2022), and 'Realising the Ambition' (2020). Senior leaders and practitioners should continue to work together to develop shared priorities for improvement across the whole establishment. This is while also responding to the needs of individual aspects of the nursery's provision.

- The additional 1140 hours of free childcare is being implemented well. As a result, practitioners are getting to know children better. They are aware of any barriers to learning and development that children may experience. Practitioners have been encouraging children to engage even better in their play. They are measuring how well children are improving their concentration while playing.
- Children in the nursery were involved in developing golden rules for their playroom. They follow these rules very well and get on well as a group. Practitioners should continue giving children an opportunity to express their views.
- All children in the nursery are learning Gaelic. The teacher of Gaelic Medium Education at the primary stages delivers a weekly lesson on Gaelic. Children also get fortnightly singing and reading sessions with a partner. Senior leaders should continue to maximise the delivery of the curriculum through Gaelic.
- Parents need more information on bilingualism, total immersion and the Scottish approach to Gaelic Medium Education. Senior leaders should continue to plan strategically with the education authority so that children, who are choosing Gaelic Medium Education, maximise the benefits of early language acquisition through total immersion play.
- The headteacher is reinstating professional review and development. Staff should continue to be supported and empowered to lead improvements. They should have access to professional learning on early learning and childcare, as well as Gaelic.

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

Learning and Engagement

- Practitioners create a welcoming ethos, where all children are valued as individuals. Children and adults' relationships are nurturing and supportive. As a result, children feel safe, secure and enjoy their time in the setting. Almost all children are happy and relaxed as they play independently and make choices, both indoors and outdoors. Children enjoy purposeful play, which covers most of the curriculum areas. Practitioners need to monitor that children are choosing to access all areas of the curriculum, with learning initiated as required.
- Practitioners are working towards creating an ethos that demonstrates a commitment to children's rights. Children are starting to learn about The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) articles during floor-book time. Practitioners should continue helping children understand the UNCRC articles.

Quality of Interactions

- Practitioners' interactions with children are positive. They use a variety of questions to support and challenge children's thinking. Practitioners promote curiosity during play and adult-directed activities. They develop children's resilience and responsibility by encouraging and guiding them to use approaches to resolving difficulties independently.
- Children are given some opportunities to develop independence in real-life experiences. For example, children are encouraged to dress for the outdoors with minimal support. Children help prepare snack by cutting up fruit, laying the table and tidying up. Children should be encouraged to be independent in play activities, beyond routines.
- Children's learning is enriched by some digital technologies. Children use tablet technology to take images of their activities. Adults share these images on an electronic app. Children occasionally use electronic apps to extend their learning. Children engage in yoga and dance using videos on an interactive board. This is part of their routines for exercising and developing co-ordination. Children should extend their use of digital technology with less adult direction.

Effective Use of Assessment

- Practitioners are using progression frameworks in literacy and numeracy to assess and plan for individuals. Practitioners use the local authority's developmental milestones, with an assessment tool, to measure children's engagement. Practitioners should now make planned use of the health and wellbeing outcomes and experiences. The headteacher should continue with her plans to provide effective moderation and peer assessment opportunities to develop a shared understanding of progress and share effective practice.

Planning, Tracking and Monitoring

- Practitioners use a balance of adult-directed and responsive planning. Assessment data is gathered in profiles, developmental milestones and in floor books. Practitioners should streamline planning and assessment to assist with reducing bureaucracy. They should identify clear areas where children need further experience and need to make better progress. Practitioners should develop clear targets to measure progress of children. It will be important that all available information is used to support children in their learning as they transition into P1.
- Practitioners should track literacy and Gàidhlig and Gaelic (Learners) using the experiences and outcomes, as well as track across the curricular areas.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The headteacher and school community are reviewing the curriculum rationale to reflect more fully, Curriculum for Excellence. They are particularly reviewing how well the four contexts of learning are a priority in the curriculum. The headteacher and staff have identified the improvement of total immersion as part of the rationale of the curriculum.
- The curriculum is based on play, children's interests, learning in the outdoors, and the experiences and outcomes of the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. There is a particular emphasis on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Commendably, all children learn Gaelic. As practitioners plan learning with children, they maintain an overview of coverage of experiences and outcomes. Children need to be aware of the skills and capacities they are developing within the curriculum. Practitioners should continue planning adult-led and adult-initiated learning in line with Curriculum for Excellence.
- Children have opportunities to learn some vocabulary and phrases in Gaelic through rhymes, action songs and stories. This should now be enhanced further through a more strategic and integrated approach to immersion. This will particularly benefit children who are transferring to Gaelic Medium Education.
- Staff, children and parents work collaboratively to support children's learning. They make regular use of the outdoors and the local community. As a result, children are developing confidence and wellbeing. As planned, senior leaders and staff should embed progressive planning for outdoor learning across all stages.
- The nursery works well with partners to deliver meaningful learning opportunities. For example, there are close links with a garden centre where children experience planting and identifying flowers and use the climbing equipment.
- Children join their peers for some activities at the primary stages. This includes transition activities and assembly. Practitioners should re-engage with the playgroup for under threes to support transition.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents are supportive of the nursery. They appreciate the very caring and supportive approach of senior leaders and all staff. Families benefit from the range of strategies used to maintain communication, such as the school newsletters and an app.
- Parents enjoy having access to their child's personal learning profiles, with some parents commenting on their children's learning journey. A few parents would like to be more informed about their children's learning and their progress.
- Parents and the community welcome opportunities to engage with the school. They are looking forward to the reintroduction of open afternoons.
- Parents need to be advised better of the approaches to Gaelic Medium Education from the beginning of children's education journey. More information on the benefits of bilingualism and Gaelic Medium Education should be a regular and accessible feature of communication with parents.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

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

- Children experience very strong, caring relationships in the nursery. Practitioners model kindness and respectful interactions that promote wellbeing. Children in turn show respect towards their peers. Practitioners encourage children to be considerate and responsive to the needs of others. They know each child and their personal circumstances well. As a result, practitioners provide appropriate and sensitive support for children. Practitioners should continue to engage with parents and plan family learning activities for children transitioning into the Gaelic Medium Education. This should include experiences to help to support Gaelic fluency at home.
- Practitioners are aware of the link between children's health and wellbeing and successful learning. They support this through encouraging children to play outdoors at different times during the day. Children feel safe in the well-resourced outdoor area where they learn about the natural world. Children benefit from regular walks along the cycle path and to nearby woods. These experiences promote children's understanding of the importance of exercise to their health and wellbeing. Practitioners should develop more regular and meaningful use of the wellbeing indicators. This will ensure children know how to improve their wellbeing.
- Practitioners value the views and opinions of children. They involve children in school committees and in the whole school's rights-based approaches. Children are developing an awareness of diversity as they recognise and celebrate a range of events in the calendar year. Practitioners now need to develop a greater awareness of diversity and equality through planning age-appropriate experiences.
- Children enjoy positive social experiences and develop their independence skills during snack times. Children offer to help practitioners as they set up, prepare snacks and help to tidy things away. They are developing their skills in hygiene, for example, by hand washing prior to snack. Children learn about the importance of healthy eating during their snack and lunch experiences. Practitioners promote table manners and reinforce the importance of sharing fruit at snack. They involve children in choosing weekly fruit options to have for snack. Practitioners should continue to develop children's leadership skills in other duties within the nursery.
- Practitioners are clear about their statutory duties and understand the importance of keeping children safe. Practitioners have attended appropriate training to ensure they understand procedures and policies. They should ensure that personal plans for all children are kept up to date, with these reviewed regularly with parents. Practitioners are aware of procedures to follow where a child would benefit from support with their learning and development.
- Children join in whole-school events. They engage in weekly activities with children during the term prior to moving to P1. Staff should look at ways of extending further these opportunities across the school year. Similarly, practitioners should develop wider links with local playgroups to support children moving into the nursery.

- Senior managers need to establish further ways to support staff in professional learning for Gaelic within the nursery. This is to ensure greater inclusion and equality. Practitioners should look at ways of increasing play experiences through the medium of Gaelic within their 1140 hours of learning. Their more formal use of Realising the Ambition (2020) and the Advice on Gaelic Education (2022) would help them in this process. This would assist in improving practice and increase children's pace of learning in Gaelic at the early level.

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

Progress in Communication, Early Language, Mathematics and Health and Wellbeing.

- Children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. Children enjoy books and listen well to stories. They choose books to read and explore independently. Children communicate their needs well. They can take their turn and respect that others are speaking. Children are developing very early writing skills. They would benefit from using their early writing skills in different contexts through play, both inside and outdoors. Children should be encouraged to use key phrases and songs during the day to develop Gaelic language skills. Children engage with outside agencies, such as speech and language therapy, when required to help meet children's learning needs.
- Children are making good progress in early mathematics. The older children count to 15 and use some numbers beyond that. They apply their skills when making play dough as they measure ingredients and estimate. Children recognise shape and increasingly the colours. Children explore measurement regularly through a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. Children demonstrate an important level of interest in the world around them. They explore early mathematics in outdoor learning experiences, and while enjoying the expanse of the community. Children can talk well about exploring science and technology. They do so through reflecting on their profiles and the floor book.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. Children show care and consideration for their friends. They demonstrate confidence in trying new experiences. Children are developing good resilience and skills in restoring difficulties. They develop well their fine motor skills through experiences both indoor and outdoor. Children select snack. They should now be encouraged to discuss why certain foods and practices are healthy.

Children's Progress Over Time

- Practitioners monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy and aspects of wellbeing. They use digital apps, profiles and planning books. Practitioners should continue to extend the curricular areas for which they record children's progress over time. This will help practitioners to be clearer about the progress children make, and where they require additional challenge in their learning. Parents should now be encouraged further to contribute and engage in supporting children's progress in learning.

Overall Quality of Children's Achievements

- Children's age-appropriate achievements from home are celebrated on the 'Shooting Stars' wall. Parents add achievements from home to the wall display. Children enjoy contributing to the life and work of the nursery and school through whole-school activities.

Ensuring Equity for all Children

- Practitioners endeavour to be inclusive and ensure fairness across the curriculum. They know families very well. Practitioners have a sound knowledge of factors that help build a picture of the whole child. Practitioners identify quickly potential barriers to learning and put effective support in place for all children.
- Practitioners are beginning to encourage children's use of Gaelic to count. They should continue integrating Gaelic into more situations. To complement this, practitioners should try to use common Gaelic phrases in daily routines. This would extend children's language. This is pertinent for both Gaelic (Learners) and Gaelic Medium Education, but particularly for the latter. Senior leaders' further planning of the curriculum will ensure better outcomes for all. This should include increased activities, such as the visiting teacher of Gaelic and the Bookbug sessions.

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.