

Summarised inspection findings

Arduthie Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

14 January 2020

Key contextual information

Arduthie Primary School Nursery Class is situated in the lower floor of Arduthie Primary School in Stonehaven. It consists of two rooms which are separated by a corridor. Children work in discrete classes, coming together in the compact outdoor area. The setting is registered for 40 children at any one time, aged between three years old to those not yet attending primary school. The setting is staffed with two lead practitioners and two early years practitioners. They are supported by a centrally-based teacher and a depute headteacher. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the setting.

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 and the ELC reflect the ethos of the setting. The vision 'to best we can be' is clearly displayed. Children are encouraged to demonstrate the values, for example, to be respectful, resilient and determined. Practitioners carefully track all children's progress in demonstrating these values to ensure each child's attributes are celebrated.
- The setting has recently experienced a period of considerable change. This includes in the support and management it receives from the senior leadership team in school and from education authority centrally-based staff. A second depute headteacher, has this session, assumed responsibility for the setting and is taking the lead in planning for improvement. Practitioners appreciate the support they receive from her. The staff team works together well on a day-to-day basis, led by two early years lead practitioners who are reflective and keen to improve children's experiences. Practitioners currently lead developments on aspects of provision, such as information technology and outdoor learning. They are keen to take on further leadership roles and to develop the work of the setting.
- Practitioners work together well as a team. They are reflective and informally evaluate their practice, identifying what is working well and what needs to improve. There is some evidence that they have engaged in self-evaluation activities using national guidance. There is limited evidence that this has impacted yet on practice. The priorities in the improvement plan reflect those of the school. It is important that the ELC team focus their energies on taking forward the priorities that will directly affect the setting. They should continue to take advantage of the training and development opportunities on offer, to share practice and improve pedagogy.
- Practitioners have not yet been made fully aware of the outcomes of quality assurance and support visits carried out by those in management and leadership roles. They have received mixed messages about what 'good practice' looks like. As a result, the team has lost confidence and practitioners are unsure about the way forward with some aspects of their work. They require continuity and consistent guidance and support going forward. There will be further changes to the senior leadership team with both a new headteacher and depute

headteacher, with responsibility for early years, soon coming into post. With major changes to the setting ahead with the expansion of ELC in 2020, it will be important for practitioners to be fully confident in the service they provide to children and their families. Senior leaders and central support staff need to have a focus on support and challenge, ensuring consistent advice. They need to regularly monitor improvements to ensure continuous and timely progress.

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

- Relationships between children, practitioners and families are a positive feature across the setting. Children are welcomed individually when they arrive each day. As a result, children feel safe, secure and are settling well into their nursery experience. They are developing positive relationships with each other and are enjoying their time in the setting.
- The two playrooms indoors are spacious and provide children with opportunities to take part in a range of planned learning experiences. Currently, the two rooms are used separately with the shared space outdoors being a free-flow area. Senior leaders and practitioners need to review the use of the nursery space, so that children have a wider range of experiences available to them by using the entire space more flexibly. There are loose part resources which children can access freely. However, across both playrooms, general resources and equipment need to be renewed as many are old and in need of repair.
- In free play, most experiences are targeted at a similar level for all children. As children attending the nursery are at a variety of developmental stages, a more appropriate balance of child-led and adult-initiated learning is needed. This will ensure that all children are challenged at a level that supports them to make the very best progress in their learning. There is value in the staff team reflecting on the timing and organisation of the daily session. In particular, group time needs to be reviewed to better meet the needs of all children. Younger children who are new or who require additional time are not able to engage within the larger group. Similarly, children who require more challenge are not gaining enough from group times. Practitioners should provide a more flexible and responsive approach to meet all children's needs.
- Practitioners have made a positive start to taking on board children's views and what they want to learn. Although children are happy to take part in what is planned for them, there is potential for children to learn through more spontaneous child-led experiences, and given time to follow their interests. Practitioners should raise their expectations and aspirations to ensure that all children access appropriate challenging experiences.
- Interactions between adults and children are kind. This supports children well in their learning. There are some positive examples of practitioners using questions well to extend children's levels of understanding. Staff need to allow children time to persevere in their thinking and inquiry learning and to test their thinking in different contexts. There are missed opportunities for staff to extend children's learning. Practitioners should build on their skills to develop further children's levels of concentration in play. The use of digital technologies is developing. Children use the computer and interactive board with increasing confidence.

- Practitioners observe children during free play and use this information to discuss children's individual needs and progress. Practitioners' observations describe children's participation in learning activities and form the basis of children's learning journals. Children's next steps in key aspects of their learning are not yet well enough followed up by practitioners through. Moving forward, this area should be addressed as a priority.
- Practitioners are developing systems for tracking and monitoring children's learning. They use a child development resource to help them make more accurate judgements about children's individual progress. A range of national and local guidance is also used by practitioners to make judgements in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners would benefit from more professional learning opportunities in assessment and moderation to increase their skills and confidence in making judgements of children's progress. This will support and inform the identification of clear, measurable next steps in learning and provide more accurate evidence to support the tracking of progress in the setting and as children transfer to P1.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners take account of children's views and interests when they plan the curriculum. Across the two playrooms, practitioners have implemented national guidance including Curriculum for Excellence and aspects of Building the Ambition. They use additional local authority guidance to supplement early literacy and curricular pathways. Practitioners take children into the local community to enhance learning experiences. There is scope to develop this further to make the best use of the rich resources in and around Stonehaven.
- Developing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing is a priority for practitioners. All team members share responsibility for delivering the core areas of the curriculum. They follow the school's three year curriculum plan. There is scope to develop a more flexible approach to planning, whilst ensuring breadth and balance across the curriculum. When working with children of different age groups, the staff team would benefit from developing a shared understanding of progression across the early level. Moving forward, it will be important to work with the school to support continuity of learning across the early level into P1.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- The setting places a high value in its partnership with parents. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through informal chats and twice yearly parent contact evenings. The children's learning journey folders are shared with parents, who are invited to comment on their child's learning. The home link book encourages children to share their stories from home. This supports their talking and listening skills, as they share news with their friends. The life of the setting and the children's experiences are also shared with parents through a range of social media.
- Practitioners value parents' views and seek their opinions on various aspects of the service. Parents are invited to 'stay and play', which offers them a valuable insight into their child's experiences in the setting. There is scope to offer these sessions more frequently. There is evidence of parents sharing their skills, which helps children in their early understanding of the world of work. Parents provide valuable support when children are taken on outings in the local community. For example, visits to businesses, the woods and the beach help to enrich children's learning.

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

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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

- Practitioners demonstrate positive, respectful interactions with parents and carers, children and each other. Relationships between practitioners and children are warm, caring and empathetic. Most children are settled in the nurturing environment. Most confidently engage in a range of play experiences by themselves or with friends. A few children are less confident and require extra support from practitioners to help them to settle and interact with other children.
- Practitioners value children as individuals and are caring in their interactions with them. They welcome children as they arrive and use their home link notebook to support discussions. Practitioners listen carefully to children and engage with them as they play. This helps children to feel valued and included. Overall, most children behave well as they play together. They are learning to compromise and negotiate and most support each other well during play. A few children are developing friendships. Overall, practitioners work sensitively with children to help them to understand how their actions can affect others.
- Practitioners take time to get to know children and their families well. As a result, they have a good knowledge of each child and are alert to circumstances that may affect a child's wellbeing. They seek advice from external agencies before deciding on appropriate levels of intervention for any child for whom they have a concern. Children for whom English is an additional language are supported in developing their communication skills through visual prompts. There is scope for practitioners to support groups of children more specifically by carefully planning interactions that will improve their progress. Currently, records of children's specific needs lack detail. There needs to be more detailed recording of children's needs, planned interventions and next steps to ensure maximum impact and progress.
- Practitioners work with the national wellbeing indicators and there is evidence throughout the setting of children being supported to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. Practitioners strive to develop children's understanding of their own wellbeing in their daily practice. As a result, children are beginning to understand what it means to be healthy and safe. Further engagement with stories, role-play and real-life experiences will help children to understand the other indicators of wellbeing. Practitioners actively encourage children to understand their rights when they plan activities with a focus on the right to play, to have a name, to have fresh water and food. They use a 'cup of kindness' to encourage kindness towards others.
- Children demonstrate independence as they help to prepare, serve and clear up after snack. They risk assess the outdoor environment and take turns to do this. The outdoor area provides children with daily opportunities to enjoy the benefits of fresh air and exercise. There is scope to continue to develop the outdoor area to provide a broader range of stimulating activities for children to be active and take risks. This will help them to gain confidence in physical tasks and build resilience.

- Practitioners are fully aware of and implement statutory duties. There is a range of relevant policies and procedures which clearly outline the expectations of the setting and inform practitioners' practice. The focus on keeping children safe and healthy is very effective. The majority of children attend more than one ELC setting across the week. Practitioners are aware that they need to develop stronger links with these settings to support children's wellbeing overall.
- All children and families are welcomed and treated with respect. Practitioners are respectful of families religious and cultural differences. They appropriately celebrate festivals and customs that are important in Scotland and others such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. There is potential to broaden these experiences further to encourage children's awareness of the world beyond their local environment.

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

- Overall, most children are making good progress in developing their literacy skills. Within the playroom, there is a strong focus on early literacy, with most children interested in stories. The majority of children speak confidently about their favourite story and readily choose to read stories by themselves. Children chat about what they are doing and ask appropriate questions during conversations with adults.
- Practitioners promote early mark-making skills and knowledge of environmental print and a few children are attempting to write their own name. A few children recognise their name in print and other familiar letters. Practitioners should refocus on encouraging children firstly to draw their thoughts and real-life experiences to aid their conversations. This would then lead more naturally to children wishing to extend their pre-writing skills and own stories, in a developmentally appropriate way.
- Practitioners should consistently promote early literacy across learning to enable children to develop and apply their skills in different contexts. In doing this, playful experiences need to be set at appropriate levels of challenge to meet the needs of all children.
- Overall, most children are making good progress in early numeracy. They count naturally through routines and games. A few children are able to count on one and two confidently. This was evident as children naturally used appropriate mathematical language to compare the length of building blocks in their play and spots on pictures. Children should have more opportunities to develop early numeracy across their learning in different contexts. Practitioners should raise their expectations to ensure that children make the maximum progress that they are capable of across all aspects of numeracy and mathematics.
- Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. The majority can communicate their needs and feelings according to their stage of development and are kind and caring towards each other. They are independent in daily routines such as snack and brushing their teeth. Practitioners ensure children have regular daily access to outdoor learning. Attention needs to be given to the range and purpose of outdoor experiences to ensure children not only enjoy being outside, but also benefit from a focus on meaningful learning.
- Practitioners use a range of resources to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. It would be helpful for the nursery team to have more support from

senior leaders to confidently show children's progress over time. It is not yet clear how individual children are building on their prior learning to make sustained progress over time.

- Practitioners capture and celebrate children's achievements from within and out with the setting. Parents are encouraged to contribute to achievements through their child's home link books. Children's wider achievements are recorded and celebrated appropriately.
- A supportive and inclusive ethos is promoted across all aspects of setting, where equity for children is recognised. There is scope to widen children's opportunities within their own community and as emerging global citizens.

Choice of QI: 1.1 Self-evaluation for self-improvement

- Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
- Evidence based improvement
- Ensuring impact of success for children and families

- Practitioners in the setting are reflective and are keen to improve their practice. They seek advice from senior colleagues through quality assurance and support processes. However, as such advice has been inconsistent over time, this has not always led to improvement. Practitioners involve parents by seeking their feedback, for example when they have been in to 'stay and play' or escorted children on outings. Children and parents have a strong voice in the setting and their views are taken into account by the staff team.
- Practitioners have engaged with national documents such as How good is our early learning and childcare? (HGIOELC) and Building the Ambition to evaluate their practice against national expectations. There is limited evidence of this impacting on practice. Senior leaders need to lead practitioners in a more systematic approach to self-evaluation. This will enable them to identify and set manageable targets or next steps for improvement.
- There is considerable potential for the setting to improve. The new senior leadership team will be instrumental in taking the service forward through a period of change. Practitioners recognise and are keen to develop their practice further in line with current approaches to early learning and childcare. The pace of change needs to be accelerated to ensure the staff team are fully included and confident ahead of the expansion to the service in August 2020.

1. Quality of care and support

- Children and their families were warmly welcomed into the nursery. Staff were kind, compassionate and nurturing. They supported most children to settle well and feel secure. Staff's gentle encouragement and appropriate use of praise supported children to build their confidence and self-esteem.
- Staff had a very good knowledge of children's care needs, personalities and preferences. They were able to describe the strategies they used for children requiring additional support. However, for a few children these were not consistently used, resulting in some missed opportunities to effectively support progression. Information had been sought from parents and other agencies and this was reviewed to ensure it reflected children's current needs. However, clear strategies had not been developed and recorded to encourage consistent support for children. (See recommendation 1).
- Information to enable staff to safely manage medication was recorded. In some cases, this would benefit from being reviewed to ensure clear information was easily accessible. A few staff were not confident in understanding each child's medical needs. There was no record of some medication being regularly reviewed with parents to ensure it reflected children's current needs. Lifesaving medication was in a locked cupboard. This could result in delaying staff's access to it in an emergency. (See recommendation 1).
- Effective procedures were in place to safeguard children. Staff had a good knowledge of the potential signs of abuse and the procedure to follow in the event of any concerns being raised. We suggested that having chronologies more easily available would support staff in assessing children's wellbeing needs.
- Snacks were nutritious, supporting children to be healthy. Snack helpers had fun preparing the food; this provided good opportunities to develop children's self-help skills. Children's independence was promoted by serving themselves. The quality of experience at snack time was variable. Sometimes staff interacted well with children, encouraging social skills and language development. However, this was not consistent, with some children receiving very little interaction from staff.
- Children's progression was supported with regular observations undertaken. Their achievements were celebrated and shared with parents. Staff had identified the need to work more closely with other settings for children with shared placements. This would enable them to share meaningful information to support children's progression.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

- Children independently selected from a range of activities and experiences. Some natural resources had been added, providing opportunities to explore and investigate. Staff had altered the environment to meet the needs of individual children who were struggling to settle.

- The dated décor, fixtures and resources meant many areas appeared tired and uninviting. An increased use of neutral colours and natural materials would create a more welcoming environment. The interruptions from the school bell were not conducive to creating a peaceful and relaxed atmosphere and was unsettling for a few children.
- Some experiences captured children's interests including exploring the range of open-ended resources and printing with paint. However, many experiences did not sustain children's interest. These should be developed to provide more challenge and better opportunities for children to problem solve, investigate and be creative. (See recommendation 1).
- The service operated from two rooms, with children only accessing the resources in their own room. This limited the opportunities to provide a wider range of activities and more in-depth and challenging learning experiences.
- Due to staffing constraints free flow access to outdoors was not always available, limiting children's access to outdoor play and learning. Children clearly enjoyed their time outdoors. They were developing their gross motor skills on wheeled toys in the school playground. In the garden children had fun in the water tray, making a den and exploring the large cardboard boxes. There were limited opportunities for children to access a wide range of experiences to support their progression in thinking and problem solving and to develop their imagination. There was scope to better plan outdoor experiences to support children's learning. (See recommendation 1).
- Children enjoy visiting the library, beach, woodland, care homes and allotments. These visits supported children to develop a sense of community and to access different types of experiences, including exploring a natural environment.
- Staff demonstrated a good knowledge of how to keep children safe in the service. Risk assessments should be updated to reflect the hazards and control measures identified by staff.
- Effective procedures were not in place to reduce the risk of spreading infection. Many children did not wash their hands properly before eating. Children's hands and faces were often not cleaned after snack.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

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

Recommendations

1. To ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met the provider should ensure:
 - Personal plans are developed and implemented for children requiring additional support that reflect their current needs and provide clear guidance to staff on how they will meet each child's needs.

- Medication information is regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects children’s current needs, is easily accessible and that all staff are knowledgeable and competent about children’s medical needs.
- Lifesaving medication is quickly and easily accessible.

This ensures care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state “My care and support meets my needs and is right for me” (HSCS 1.19).

The following resource may be useful to meet the recommendation:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1549/management-of-medication-in-daycare-of-children-and-childminding.pdf>

2. To ensure children receive high quality early learning and childcare, the provider should ensure:
 - a. activities and experiences are sufficiently challenging and motivating and effectively support children to achieve their full potential.
 - b. opportunities for children to access outdoor play independently are improved.

This ensures care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that “As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling”. (HSCS 1.30).

The following resources may be useful to meet the recommendation:

<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/201173/national-practice-guidance-on-early-learning-2014.pdf>

<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/603624/our-creative-journey-aug-17-master-combined.pdf>

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/my-world-outdoors/>

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.