

Summarised inspection findings

**Ardgour Nursery Class (Primary School
Nursery class)**

The Highland Council

SEED No: 5130220

27 March 2018

Key contextual information

The nursery class shares the same building as the school. Currently five pre-school children attend the nursery class. The children access 4 x 4 hour sessions from Monday to Thursday. They join older children from the school for lunch each day.

1.3 Leadership of change

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.

- As the school plans to review their vision, values and aims, it will be important that practitioners, children and parents from the early learning and childcare (ELC) setting are involved in this process.
- Practitioners are very reflective and keen to improve their practice. Over the course of the inspection week they have been very receptive to ideas and guidance, taking swift action to immediately make changes and introduce new approaches to improve children's experiences. They lead improvements in the nursery class, making good use of their professional learning and research, as well as areas they have identified as part of self-evaluation activities. Commendably, they have used their experience of developing 'loose parts' play in the nursery class to extend this worthwhile learning context across the school. Older children report that they find this play exciting, challenging and enjoyable.
- Practitioners have established a support network for ELC colleagues to enable them to share good practice across the cluster. In addition, a closed social media group also been set up to allow practitioners to engage in professional dialogue with other colleagues. They make use of this group to pose challenge questions to generate discussion. For example, practitioners in the setting recently asked for advice in ways in which the setting can increase mark-making opportunities. Practitioners also regularly visit other ELC settings which is helping them to improve aspects of their provision, for example, outdoor play.
- Practitioners readily attend and access different professional learning opportunities which are having a positive impact on children's learning experiences. They also seek out additional training events to support nursery developments. As planned, it is now necessary for practitioners to undertake professional learning in supporting children's communication and early language skills.
- Practitioners have made a positive start in using national guidance and self-evaluation frameworks. They now have a sharper focus on specific quality indicators to help them identify more clearly their next steps for improvement. They report that national guidance,

Building the Ambition, has had a considerable impact on their practice and understanding of early years pedagogy. They recognise that they should continually reflect on this document to secure continuous improvement.

- Due to changes in how the setting is supported by the local authority they no longer have access to a designated Early Years Principal Teacher although retain access to an Early Years Support Officer. A new arrangement is now in place with the principal teacher from the partner school providing support on a fortnightly basis. This is at early stages, but consideration should be given to how this is delivered to ensure appropriate challenge and support is provided. It is important that the headteacher maintains a strong strategic overview of the setting which involves systematic monitoring and evaluating of the outcomes for children in the nursery class.
- Children have opportunities to support improvement within the setting. Their views are sought when developing new play contexts. They have opportunities for leadership but there is scope to develop this further. To enable them to have a stronger voice within the whole school community, it would be helpful for them to be represented on pupil improvement groups.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences 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.

- Within the nursery class there is a very positive and supportive ethos. Children clearly feel safe and secure. The small number of children attending the setting allows there to be a strong sense of family within this context. For most of the session, children are engaged and motivated by the learning experiences on offer. There are good examples of spontaneous play opportunities leading to deeper learning experiences, for example use of cars and track. Practitioners support children to engage with each other in a sensitive way. They plan and adapt the learning environment to enable children to lead their own learning as much as possible. This also allows children's interests to be developed and sustained.
- Practitioners are developing their outdoor learning space to promote more investigative play as well as providing a more exciting area for energetic physical play. While children are able to lead their own learning there is scope to involve children more in talking about their learning and what they can do next. The use of digital technologies to support children's learning is at an early stage.
- Practitioners have fostered strong, positive relationships with children. They have a good understanding of child development and this informs how they support and scaffold learning. Overall, skilful use of questioning allows practitioners to extend and develop children's thinking. Children's successes and achievements are celebrated and there is genuine pride demonstrated by children and practitioners when a child achieves something for the first time.
- Practitioners make use of their observations to track children's progress. Making use of The Highland Council developmental overviews also support practitioners to have a clear picture of what children are able to do. We have asked practitioners to ensure there is a greater focus on identifying children's next steps in learning.
- Practitioners are developing new approaches to planning based on local authority guidance. They plan in a responsive way to motivate learners. This takes good account of children's interests which can be fleeting or more consistent. Practitioners are developing ways of involving children more in planning including the use of mind maps. We have discussed ways in which this can be taken forward in a more regular way to enable children to plan and reflect on their learning better.
- Practitioners need to continue to develop approaches to assessment so practitioners have a robust picture of children's progress.

- Practitioners are aware of the individual circumstances of the families attending the setting and make good use of this information in order to secure equity and positive outcomes for all.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners have improved how they plan and provide outdoor play. Due to building constraints children cannot access free-flow outdoor play, so instead practitioners provide children with half of the session to learn outdoors. This is proving to be very successful. Helpfully, practitioners have organised a stay and play session outdoors to allow parents to observe first-hand how and what their child is learning in this context. In this space, children have greater opportunities to problem-solve, be creative and engage in energetic play. Practitioners are developing the opportunities children have to develop their literacy and numeracy skills outdoors.
- The setting is situated in a beautiful natural setting. Practitioners have taken good account of this in promoting children's keen interest in the natural world.
- Children learn about the world of work as they engage with people in their local community. Practitioners now need to engage with Career Education Standard 3-18 to help them to develop this further.
- Practitioners recognise that they need to become more confident in planning for children's learning which builds on children's knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy in a progressive way. Working with colleagues across the early level needs to be encouraged to support this. Practitioners need to have a clearer and shared understanding of standards and what children can achieve as they progress through the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families - parental engagement

- Families are made to feel very welcome in the nursery class. Practitioners organise a number of events throughout the year which encourage parents to find out about and join in their child's learning. These include stay and play sessions, coffee mornings and parent meetings. Parents and extended family members value very much the way the setting supports their children.
- The daily nursery class online profiles are greatly valued by parents as a way of receiving up to date information about their child's progress and learning. This also provides parents with opportunities to replicate and extend learning at home. Practitioners are developing new learning journeys to involve parents more in their child's learning.
- Parents are encouraged to share children's successes and achievements from home. These are documented in their folders and on wall displays.
- Home link sheets are distributed to enable parents to learn along with their child. Library books with book reviews are taken home by children to share with their 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

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 promote a strong ethos which values the importance of relationships and of feeling safe and secure. Interactions between practitioners and children are warm and encouraging. Children have formed positive relationships with each other and familiar adults. They also benefit from being situated in close proximity to older children in the primary classes which allows them to become familiar with them also. This will help children as they move into the multi stage composite class next session. They also eat their lunches alongside older children which also supports this well.
- Practitioners are positive role models for children in supporting them to deal with different emotions and to resolve disagreements with each other. They consciously stand back to enable children to work through disagreements by themselves. Practitioners actively support the wellbeing of all children and can articulate how they promote this in the nursery class. There are good examples of children developing independence, for example getting ready to play outdoors in inclement weather and helping to prepare snack. Children's ideas and suggestions are valued and used, for example to make changes to the imaginative play area.
- It is evident that practitioners ensure children's wellbeing is at the heart of what they do. Practitioners now need to explore how they share and exemplify the indicators with children in an appropriate and meaningful way.
- Children are learning about food and can explain which foods are healthy. They enjoy daily outdoor play in all weathers. They can identify their emotions and use a 'check in' chart to record these.
- Due to the small number of children attending the setting, practitioners have a very good understanding of what interests and motivates individual children. They support children well who may require sensitive interaction or encouragement. This is supporting a few children to engage more with their peers.
- Practitioners are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to statutory duties. They work with other professionals to support children to make the best possible progress. They liaise with school colleagues to ensure they are providing appropriate challenge for children who require this.

- Practitioners organise joint play sessions with other settings in the cluster to enable children to learn and develop their social skills within a wider peer group. This also enables children to learn about equality and diversity in meaningful contexts.

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.

- Across the setting, children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. Most children are keen contributors to group discussions. They enjoy sharing their experiences with familiar adults and visitors. Most follow instructions well and demonstrate a developing vocabulary as they play and converse with each other. A few are able to display subject specific vocabulary as they play. Most children enjoy looking at books and listening to adults telling stories. Children take home library books to share and review with their parents. We have discussed ways in which a love of and engagement with books can be further promoted. There are opportunities for children to mark-make on occasions but this is not yet a strong feature of the core provision. Overall, children are not yet confident in making marks. Commendably, practitioners have acted swiftly to take forward suggestions and ideas offered by the inspection team.
- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. They count in the course of their play or as part of their daily routines. They are not yet using a range of mathematical language in their play. They need more opportunities to develop their understanding of shape and data handling. Making use of a progressive learning pathway should be considered as a way of supporting children's progress in this area.
- Children are developing well their understanding and skills in health and wellbeing. They have regular discussions about being healthy through various activities such as preparing snack, growing vegetables and dental hygiene. Emotional health and wellbeing is supported well by practitioners, particularly when intervening to support individual children and their families. Practitioners support various opportunities for physical activity through use of the setting's own outdoor area and visits to the local wooded area.
- Practitioners maintain an overview of children's progress over time in different ways including children's learning journals, personal target booklets and developmental overviews. It is not clearly evident how they are progressing across key areas with curricular areas. Practitioners are developing new approaches to record and highlight progress over time more effectively.

- Children’s successes and achievements from home are celebrated and displayed on a playroom display. Children are proud of what they have achieved. We have discussed ways in which children can be supported to talk about their successes and learning more.

School choice of QI : 2.6 Transitions

- Arrangements to support learners and their families
- Collaborative planning and delivery
- Continuity and progression in learning

This is a joint QI with the school.

- The school's arrangements to support learners and their families at key points of transitions are well planned to ensure children's mental, emotional and social needs are met. The school actively seeks opportunities in an ongoing way for children to develop friendships with their peers in other local schools. Examples include joint drama work, participating in sporting events and P7 residential trips. These events are supporting children to develop their social skills as well as creating a more holistic identity as an associated school group.
- Nursery practitioners work together with parents to support smooth transition from home to nursery. Practitioners have developed a range of approaches to support children and parents including a phased settling in period. They have effective approaches in place to gather key information from parents which helps to promote continuity in care and learning. A main focus for practitioners is fostering positive and respectful relationships with children and their families. Careful consideration is given to individual children's care and support needs. Practitioners provide good support to children who may need more time and help to settle and become confident in the setting.
- Due to close proximity of the P1-3 class, children in the nursery have many different ways to become familiar with the school and staff. This is supported throughout the year as children join primary classes for different events. In the final term of nursery, this transition is more structured and includes time in the P1-3 class. Nursery children also join the whole school for lunch in the hall. Last session the P1 children created a video for nursery children to share their experiences of transition. Information about prior learning and tracking is also passed on to help support continuity in learning. We have discussed with the school ways in which this can be strengthened further, including involving nursery children in the school's improvement groups and having joint play and learning sessions across the early level.
- The school works effectively with its associated high school to support transition for all children in P7. In addition productive partnership working has supported both schools in planning learning activities to ensure individuals receive an appropriate level of challenge in their learning. For example, work is currently underway with the associated high school to support individual learners in numeracy and mathematics.
- There are effective transition arrangements in place for children with additional needs. For example, where required, the school works with parents, partners and children to provide enhanced transition. Last session, this was very well supported by the headteacher facilitating additional visits to the associated high school and regular visits to the class from high school staff. The school should continue with its plans to develop a transition focus on developing resilience for its P7 children.
- Staff across the school use tracking booklets, shared access to digital information and professional dialogue sessions to share individual learners' progress at points of transition.

Children in the middle and upper stages are beginning to contribute to this through their individual blogs which profile some of their strengths and achievements. In taking forward transition, staff should build on their existing arrangements to ensure they are planning effectively to ensure continuity and progression in learning to enable all learners to build on prior learning and make the best possible progress. Planned improvements to curriculum progression pathways and new approaches to electronic tracking will support this work. It will be important, however, the staff consider carefully the implications of teacher workload in developing new systems.

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.

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