

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Leonard's Nursery School**

The City of Edinburgh Council

19 September 2023

## Key contextual information

St Leonard's Nursery School is linked with Sciennes Primary School. The nursery accommodation is located approximately two miles from the main school and reopened in January 2023 after an extensive refurbishment. The nursery is a detached building with two bright playrooms, both of which have direct access to a well-established garden area. The nursery is managed by the primary school headteacher. However, day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the nursery is delegated to a depute headteacher who spends two days each week on site and is assisted by the senior early years officer. Staffing includes an early years officer and five early years practitioners. The nursery is registered for 60 children aged three to five years attending at any one time. There are currently 35 children on the roll. A high percentage of children have English as an additional language.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**very 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 interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Staff know children very well and are extremely caring and compassionate. They have created a nurturing, positive learning environment which is based firmly on children's rights. The nursery's values are underpinned by its work on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Staff take a close interest in children, making sure their voices are heard clearly and placing a high value on their thoughts and ideas. This active listening results in staff being highly responsive to children's needs.
- Almost all children are highly motivated and engage well with a range of experiences both indoors and outdoors. Staff show a sound understanding of how young children learn and develop. They use open-ended questioning and explanations very effectively to support children's thinking skills. Children are given a key role in leading and reflecting on their learning and talk confidently about their next steps.
- Staff work together as an effective team to plan interesting learning spaces and experiences for children. Resources and play materials are readily available for children, who make choices confidently and follow their own ideas and interests. Staff provide natural open-ended resources which encourage children to use all their senses to observe, explore and investigate. Staff make good use of the local environment and community to provide meaningful experiences for children on aspects of sustainability.
- Staff offer spontaneous play opportunities in balance with planned activities. All planning is linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) early level experiences and outcomes while remaining highly responsive to children. Staff show skill in adapting activities as they develop, building on children's ideas. They document children's learning very well in informative floorbooks to which children contribute. Staff give careful consideration to providing opportunities for literacy and numeracy through play. For example, they provide notepads and

scales in the home corner. They value the diversity of children and families and offer a range of useful opportunities for children to engage in a variety of cultural festivals.

- Staff observe children at play and track their learning and progress in online learning journals. These are shared regularly with parents. Staff monitor effectively children's achievements through progress with their developmental milestones. This personalised information on each child enables staff to plan specific, targeted interventions to support groups and individuals. Through quality professional learning, staff are becoming increasingly confident in writing observations which confirm children's depth and progression in learning. Staff have recently undertaken training on a project designed to develop children's skills in listening and talking. The nursery is working to achieve gold accreditation for this important work. Staff have begun to gather and analyse data over time to ensure children are making the best progress possible.
- Staff work very effectively with parents and a range of partners and agencies. This collaboration ensures that all children who require targeted support are fully included and receive the best possible provision. Where appropriate, children have detailed individual educational plans, care plans or health care plans to guide staffs' work. Staff review these plans regularly with parents to ensure they feel fully involved and consulted.

## 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

very 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

- Children make very good progress in communication and early language. They listen well to stories and instructions and are confident in expressing themselves to adults and friends. Staff offer a range of 'wooden spoon characters' and puppets. Children use these expressively to act out stories, traditional tales and rhymes. Almost all children show interest in books and story characters. A few children understand story sequences and create small books of their own successfully. Children show a keen interest in mark making and most can identify and write their name.
- Children are making very good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. They are developing a range of skills as they play and recognise numbers in real life contexts. Children's exploration of shapes, grouping and matching numbers are displayed in floorbooks. Children refer to these confidently. Children use number lines and tape measures to develop successfully their understanding of how numbers are sequenced. They use mathematical language accurately in the block area, such as taller than and shorter than. Children show high levels of interest in constructing mathematical structures.
- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is very good. Staff use emotional wellbeing check-ins to support children to talk freely about their feelings. Staff plan useful opportunities for children to develop their physical skills in the outdoor area, including climbing, balancing, jumping and engaging safely in risky play. Children are highly independent throughout the day and show familiarity with routines such as handwashing and toothbrushing. Staff use snack times and lunch times well to support children to develop a range of social skills. Children benefit from regular exercise, frequently outdoors, and can explain their healthy food choices.
- Children are developing an understanding of the wider world as they take part in 'Woodland Wednesday' to explore the wonders of nature. They use digital technologies very well as a research tool to identify plants and minibeasts in the nursery garden. Children can identify wild animals and simulate their habitats using natural materials. Their understanding of early science is developing well as they observe weather patterns and explore the properties of materials such as sand, bark, clay and playdough.
- Staff know children and their families very well and have built up trusting relationships to support their needs. They have a deep and well-informed understanding of children's family circumstances. Staff work very effectively in partnership with other agencies to ensure children make the best possible progress in their learning.

## 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.