

Summarised inspection findings

Firth Primary School Nursery Class

Orkney Islands Council

28 May 2024

Key contextual information

The nursery class is situated in Firth Primary School. The nursery has two adjoining rooms and a large outdoor area accessible from the playroom. The nursery class operates during term time from 9:30 am till 3:30 pm to align with school hours. The nursery class is registered for 28 children at any one time. At the time of the inspection, there were 24 children on the roll. Most children attend on a part-time basis. Only a few children use their full entitlement to 1140 hours. Over the last few years, there have been significant changes within the staff team.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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

- Most children present as settled and content in the nursery. They enjoy positive relationships with other children and familiar adults. Older children show care and consideration for younger children. Most children are familiar with nursery routines and display well-developed independence skills as they get ready to play outside and serve themselves at snack. The stimulating learning environment supports children well to enquire, be curious and creative. A few children require adult support to make full use of the learning opportunities on offer. A few children require more adult direction to sustain their play in different areas of the setting.
- Practitioners work well together to develop a shared understanding of high-quality early learning and childcare. They have a good understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement. Practitioners help to create a very positive ethos that supports children well. They are responsive to children's needs and interests. Practitioners have developed attractive environments for learning, indoors and outdoors, which provide good opportunities for children to lead and direct their own learning. Most children engage very well in their play indoors and outdoors. Children make effective use of the outdoor space to explore open ended resources. They enjoy exploring and transporting water to the mud pit.
- Children benefit from practitioners' kind and supportive interactions. Most practitioners use their knowledge of individual children well to offer sensitive support. For example, practitioners provide effective one-to-one support when a child is upset or is tired. Most practitioners use effective commentary and questioning to respond to children's interests and extend learning well. However, there are missed opportunities to build children's early literacy and numeracy skills. Children make use of digital technologies to explore areas of interest such as tablets for research purposes, for example, to find out what post boxes look like. They could make increased use of digital technologies as an integral part of their learning.
- Practitioners observe children as they play and learn. They record their observations in children's individual learning journeys and on an online platform. They gather information effectively on 'peedie notes' across, numeracy, early language, health and wellbeing and curiosity, enquiry and creativity. Their observations have a focus on the significant learning of

individuals, including children who require additional support. Now there is a stable staff team, there is a need to ensure practitioners capture more regular observations of children's play and learning. This will help to build a fuller picture of children's progress over time and enable practitioners to identify relevant next steps in learning.

- Practitioners plan for children's learning using intentional and responsive approaches based mainly on children's interests. They make effective use of a 'planning board' to document the incidental and planned learning taking place in the setting. As planned, this should now be made more accessible for children and parents. Key workers plan for their groups. These plans take good account of children's interests. The team should plan more explicitly the contexts they will use to promote progressive learning in literacy and numeracy. This should include more regular opportunities for children to hear stories and rhymes and explore numeracy and mathematics. Practitioners track the progress children are making and record the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes they have explored. Practitioners and the headteacher meet regularly to discuss and review children's progress. Together, they identify those children who may benefit from additional support and take action to support them.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

- Overall, children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They benefit from kind, nurturing relationships with adults. They talk about keeping healthy and describe the importance of eating well and being active. Most children are developing gross motor skills well through opportunities for daily physical play indoors and out, and through visits to the school gym hall. They are learning about wellbeing indicators with the majority of children being able to talk about keeping safe.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in developing communication and early language. The majority of children are keen to communicate with other children and familiar adults. Older children enjoy sharing previous learning experiences with visitors. The majority of children create detailed drawings and most recognise their name. A few children choose to mark make as part of their play and a few choose to look at books. Children would benefit from more opportunities to develop and apply their literacy skills to consolidate their understanding.
- In early numeracy and mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress. The majority count as part of their play. A few children can count down from ten and identify different numerals. The majority use mathematical language as they fill buckets with water and when weighing objects. Children are learning about the concept of time as they use sand timers to support turn taking. Children need more opportunities to develop their skills further in number and exploring shape, money and data handling.
- Children are developing their creativity skills well. They enjoy making models and structures using natural materials and junk. A few children worked well together to make their own post box. A group of children increase their understanding of space as they explore different planets and stars.
- The headteacher meets with the team regularly to discuss children's individual progress and possible barriers to learning. They identify children who need further help in their learning. A few children receiving targeted support from their key worker are making good progress in their learning. There is a need for the team to make more use of all available data to measure children's progress over time. This should help them to accelerate children's progress including those children who require more challenge or support in their learning.
- Children's achievements in nursery are celebrated and documented in their learning journals and on an online platform. Parents share readily children's achievements from home. The team acknowledge that they could improve how they record children's achievements from home.

Children have a few opportunities to take on leadership roles within the setting such as, snack and lunchtime helpers. They also help to tidy up the playroom regularly throughout the session. Practitioners regularly seek children's views when planning learning. Children contribute well to the local community, for example, they helped to plant trees in the community gardens. Children would benefit from being involved in the pupil voice groups within the school.

- Practitioners have a very good understanding of the individual circumstances of children and their families. They take positive steps to ensure children are not at risk of missing out. Practitioners foster supportive and respectful relationships with parents. As a result, parents feel comfortable asking the team for advice and support.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children and their families were greeted by friendly and welcoming staff. Parents were encouraged to enter the playroom at drop off and pick up times and an online tool, See Saw, was used to send photographs of the children playing. This promoted a continuity of care and helped reassure parents their children were well-looked after. Parents felt that despite changes to staffing, this did not disrupt or impact on children's experiences.

Children were cared for with nurturing and caring approaches. Staff took time to listen to the children and responded to their cues for help or support. Cuddles and comfort helped children feel safe and loved. Staff were patient and gentle when supporting children to go to sleep.

Children were supported in their personal care. The newly built nappy changing area promoted children's dignity and privacy. Staff interactions were kind, helping children to feel at ease and comfortable.

Children's overall well-being was supported through the use of personal planning. Most personal plans contained current and up to date information to help staff meet children's individual care needs. A few children benefited from an additional support plan with key strategies to support their progress and development. This led to consistent care and a nurturing approach. Parents strongly agreed staff knew their children, including what they liked and what was important to them.

Children experienced positive snack and lunch times. Snacks and meals looked appetising and followed the nutritional guidance Setting the Table. Lunch was calm and unhurried. Staff sat and ate with the children, modelling good eating habits, and keeping them safe. Children were able to self-serve and pour their own drinks. A few children chose to bring a packed lunch which was well presented on a plate. Fresh water was available throughout the day, helping to keep children hydrated and well.

Systems and procedures to protect children and keep them safe could be improved. Some information recorded in chronologies had not been appropriately actioned to ensure children and families were provided with the support needed. These were highlighted to the manager of the setting who took immediate action.

Area for improvement

To help safeguard and protect children from harm and abuse and provide families with the support they need, the provider should at a minimum ensure the manager and staff have the required skills and knowledge in relation to recognising and responding to child protection concerns.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am protected from harm because people are alert and respond to signs of significant deterioration in my health and wellbeing, that I may be unhappy or may be at risk of harm.' (HSCS 3.21)

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun and were happy, engaged and enthusiastic learners. They benefitted from a well thought out learning environment, rich in high quality play experiences. For example, the role play corner looked inviting with a variety of real-life items found at home. The construction area was spacious with accessories to help develop children's imagination and creativity. Children enjoyed mixing colours in the water tray, painting pictures and rolling playdough to create shapes.

Children enjoyed playing outdoors. Procedures were in place to help staff know where children were playing, reducing the risk of children leaving the setting unsupervised. Some children built a moat in the sandpit, transported containers of water, drew and made flags. This promoted learning opportunities through co-operative play and problem solving. A few children had fun on the bicycles, always wearing a helmet to keep safe. Children enjoyed planting seeds and discussing the things needed for them to grow.

Children were well supported in their learning by the skilled interactions from staff. Staff responded to the children's requests for help, knew when to intervene and when to stand back. Children benefitted from a balance of organised and freely chosen play experiences. This meant children were engaged and their play and interests were sustained.

Planning approaches had improved and supported children's progress and development. Observations of children were individualised, meaningful and showed clear progression in children's learning. Children's learning was recorded in their learning journals and shared with parents. This supported parents to further develop children's learning at home. Next steps were identified to support the individual learning needs of the children. However, it was not always evident how these had been used to plan play experiences. The manager of the setting advised monitoring of learning and assessment was ongoing.

Learning in language, literacy and numeracy was evident in the nursery environment and in some play experiences. Wall displays and signage provided opportunities for children to recognise and become familiar with letters. Some children enjoyed listening to a story, and vocabulary was encouraged through discussions. There were some opportunities for mark making when painting and drawing. There were less opportunities embedded in play experiences for numeracy development. We suggested further developing these opportunities through staff interaction, messy play and choice of resources.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager of the setting demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and development of the setting. Since previous inspection, they had undertaken professional development in early years and leadership. This led to improved outcomes for children which were now embedded in practice. However, significant changes to the staff team had made it difficult for ongoing continuous development. The priority for the manager was to ensure previous changes were sustained. A new staff team were beginning to evaluate and make positive changes.

The manager and staff recognised the importance of family engagement to support improvement of the setting. Parents were involved through the parent council and information was shared through newsletters, See Saw and interactions with staff. However, some parents felt unsure if they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the setting. This was part of the nursery improvement plan.

The shared vision and aims of the school and nursery were embedded in the friendly and respectful ethos. These were revisited with parents and staff to ensure they knew what was important for the service to meet the needs of the children and families.

Self-evaluation of the service was supported through findings from previous inspection and guidance including 'How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare' and 'A Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding, and School-aged Childcare'. As a result, staff had undertaken training in supporting quality interactions and effective questioning to sustain children's play and extend their thinking. This was evident in staff practice and in improved learning outcomes for children.

Staff were enthusiastic to initiate well informed change and share responsibility for improvement. They had visited other settings and as a result had made positive changes to mealtimes. Changes to positively impact on provision for children were detailed in the service improvement plan.

A shared quality assurance calendar between the nursery and school supported the manager in their role both as nursery manager and headteacher. A few things identified on the calendar had not been completed and were ongoing.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

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.