

Summarised inspection findings

South Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class

The Highland Council

27 November 2018

Key contextual information

South Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class is an early learning and childcare setting that offers flexible attendance to children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. Families have flexibility in how they choose their funded hours and may access additional hours, which they pay for. The nursery class is registered to provide a service for a maximum of 34 children. At the time of the inspection there was an average of 13 children attending at any one time. The setting is staffed with early years practitioners.

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 have been refreshed with the involvement of practitioners, children and parents. Aims have been developed that reflect the expectations of early learning and childcare (ELC) provision. Practitioners work with children to ensure their understanding of the vision, values and aims. They have created rules for expectations of behaviour which children understand and that are reflected in practice.
- Practitioners feel well supported by the headteacher. He regularly attends weekly meetings to keep abreast of developments and any issues that may arise. A number of practitioners have had individual meetings to review their practice. All practitioners would benefit from this opportunity to support them in ongoing improvement.
- The school improvement plan details priorities for the setting. For example, a focus on profiling and reporting has been identified as a key priority for this session. Improvements to the outdoor learning space are also a focus. Practitioners have made a start to evaluating practice using helpful support materials issued by The Highland Council. We discussed with practitioners how this positive start to self-evaluation should be developed further, to include the impact on children's learning. Practitioners have engaged in peer evaluation, which they found useful. Led by senior leaders, practitioners now need to engage in a more systematic and rigorous approach to self-evaluation. Using national documentation such as *How good is our early learning and childcare?* and *Building the Ambition* will ensure their practice develops further in line with national expectations. Regular input by senior leaders to monitor the impact of change more closely will support the setting on its journey of improvement.
- The peripatetic ELC manager and the early years graduate teacher joined the team in August 2018 making an important contribution to the established team of practitioners. The team work together well to establish a positive environment for learning. Practitioners are reflective and strive to improve the learning environment and approaches to learning and teaching to reflect the changing needs of the children. Building on this positive start, they

need to continue to plan with a focus on providing rich learning experiences for children. We discussed with practitioners how extended use of more natural, open-ended resources would stimulate children's interests in their learning and promote creativity further.

- Practitioners would benefit from focused opportunities to look outwards to observe practice. They will also benefit from working with others to moderate their expectations of children's learning across the curriculum. As the ELC manager and the early years graduate teacher work in other settings, they will have a key role in facilitating these opportunities. Practitioners access professional learning and development sessions, which support them to improve their service for children. The team individually and collectively lead developments in the setting, utilising their skills. We discussed with practitioners that, building on this energy and enthusiasm, a more strategic approach to devolving leadership roles could be developed over time.

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

- Most children engage in a range of spontaneous experiences, which encourage the development of their independence and creativity. There are also opportunities for children to benefit from adult directed learning for example, at story time, in the library and in gym sessions. However, we discussed with practitioners to keep this under review to ensure an appropriate balance of adult directed and child led learning.
- Children's voice is evident throughout the setting. Practitioners record what children know and what they would like to learn on mind maps. As this develops, the 'learning wall' approach will provide opportunities for children to revisit and build on their prior learning. Practitioners are responsive to children's interests and this helps to shape the direction of learning. For example, following the current interest in bears, practitioners plan appropriate experiences to develop children's skills in literacy and numeracy. In order for children to play a greater role in leading their learning, practitioners are beginning to introduce the language of learning. Practitioners now needs to develop this further. Helpfully, practitioners' notes outline what learning should take place are displayed throughout the setting. This helps practitioners to focus on intended learning as they support children as they play. There is scope for practitioners to develop learning conversations. This will enable children to make a connection between what they are doing and what they are learning, alongside the skills they are acquiring and applying.
- Overall, practitioners are caring and supportive as they interact with children. They know them well and understand the particular needs of children who require support with emotional and social development. They take a clear and consistent approach to helping children to manage their behaviour. There are positive examples of skilled questioning and dialogue promoting curiosity to support learning. During the inspection, there were no examples of children using digital technology to support learning. Evidence demonstrated that previously, practitioners had used the interactive board with children to research bears in their habitats. In order to enrich learning further, practitioners should broaden the use of digital technology as a tool to support and extend children's learning.
- Children have daily access to outdoors where they explore their garden and take part in energetic play. They enjoy weekly visits to nearby woodland where they experience the excitement of the natural world. We discussed with practitioners that there is scope for the indoor and outdoor environments to be reviewed and refreshed to enrich children's experiences further.

- Practitioners have regular planning meetings where they share knowledge of children's progress and plan future learning. They plan core-learning experiences to support children's development of skills and knowledge. Practitioners are working to improve observations. They need to have a sharper focus on the learning that is taking place and identify next steps, as appropriate. To be of maximum effect, profiles should continue to be developed as a tool for children to recall their previous learning and to talk about their own progress and next steps. Practitioners carefully track children's skills development as they progress through the setting. It would be helpful to develop a simple tool to track their learning across the curriculum. This would support progression during children's time in the setting and as they move on to P1.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Children engage in a range of experiences to support their learning across the curriculum both indoors and outdoors. Planning is underpinned by the core areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners plan the curriculum based around children's needs and interests. In this way, practitioners encourage children's engagement. For example, the current interest in bears is linked to work on comparison and research into bears' habitats.
- Where possible practitioners make use of the local community to enhance learning. There is evidence from last session of a visit to the fire station, the farm and the local post office. As the rationale for the curriculum develops, it will be good practice to take more account of the local context. For example, practitioners spoke with enthusiasm about taking children to visit cruise ships when they are in port and making more use of the local shops.
- There is scope for the setting and the primary one class to work more closely together as they are in close proximity to one another. This would allow opportunities for children to learn together. It would also improve continuity and progression in learning as children move through the early level and enhance transition.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents and carers are warmly welcomed into the setting. They report feeling very comfortable speaking to practitioners about any concerns they may have. They are welcome to stay in the setting until their children are settled. As planned, opportunities for parents and carers to 'stay and play' could be made available. By participating in this way they will have a better understanding of how and what their children are learning.
- A helpful notice board details key policies and procedures. The weekly plan is also available. We discussed with practitioners the value of reinstating the tips for parents as to how they can help their children at home. Children's profiles are available for parents and carers to share learning with their children. Social media is popular and helps to keep parents informed. Parents enjoyed working with their children on Decoration Day. Many parents and carers are looking forward to the teddy bears picnic, which is a good opportunity to have fun with their children in the woods.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

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

- Within the setting, there is a welcoming and friendly ethos. Practitioners know children and families well. They have established positive relationships with children. They respond to them in a direct manner whilst giving attention to their emotions. This is helping children to begin to develop their resilience and understanding of their own feelings. Practitioners have an understanding of the wellbeing indicators. The current focus on nurturing is wholly appropriate at this early stage in the school year. This supports children who are new to the setting to settle well. Practitioners are confident that through their work with them, children experience what it feels like to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. We have asked them to continue with this work to help children develop the language with which to express their experiences and feelings. There is scope for practitioners to maximise opportunities to enhance children's understanding. For example, to place an even greater focus on road safety when walking to the woods.
- Practitioners promote positive behaviour well by encouraging children to develop respectful relationships and be aware of the needs of others. As a result, the majority of children are able to play together co-operatively or alongside each other. They are supported to share resources fairly and to negotiate this independently, where their stage of development allows. Overall, practitioners intervene in a way that is restorative and is respectful of children's feelings.
- We discussed with practitioners that the key focus for snack is that it is an opportunity to engage in quality conversations with children. Children's independence is encouraged as they spread their toast and pour their drinks. They are learning to help to tidy the playroom. There is scope to develop children's leadership skills further. For example, this could include responsibilities such as preparing snack and risk assessing aspects of their play.
- Children enjoy the benefits of fresh air and exercise when they play outside in the garden and on weekly visits to the woods. They have regular visits to the school gym hall where they are developing skills in running, balancing and climbing. They show perseverance as they climb and balance on the climbing wall.
- Practitioners keep up to date with important developments in early learning and childcare in order to fulfil their statutory duties. In particular, they are mindful of their responsibility to promote children's health, safety and wellbeing. Practitioners are aware of children's particular needs. Overall, they make links with the relevant external agencies to support them

across their development. In a few cases, practitioners need to be more proactive in approaching parents to discuss their concerns to ensure early intervention as appropriate. As discussed, there is scope to improve the recording of concerns and interventions to ensure evidence of progress.

- Care plans for all children now include records of communication with parents and agencies. As planned, where there are concerns about a child's welfare, chronologies of concerns should be carefully documented. The setting shares concerns with the local health visitor to support children and families. Practitioners should continue to support families to engage with other agencies as appropriate. When necessary, the inclusion support worker could make links with the families in need of support.
- Practitioners are aware of their responsibility to promote inclusion. Equality and diversity are celebrated. Practitioners support families in a non-judgemental, inclusive, and appropriate way. There is scope for children to extend their knowledge of diversity in the wider world. The challenging of discriminations should include the explicit challenge of potential gender stereotypes for example, previously gender specific roles such as female fire officers or male nurses.

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

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in early communication and early language. Most children converse with each other during play and can communicate their needs. The majority confidently speak to practitioners and visitors and listen well to stories that are read to them. A few are ready to explore further the language and structure of books. The majority of children show an interest in making marks. They are developing their skills in early writing as they create pictures and pieces of artwork. As planned, practitioners should continue to extend opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills in early communication and early language.
- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children are beginning to count. A few recognise numerals that are important to them. The majority can name colours and simple shapes. Children are developing their understanding of mathematical language as they sort bears according to their size. They explore the concept of full and empty as they play at the water butt. We have asked practitioners to continue to plan progressive opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills throughout their play.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. Children are encouraged to share their feelings as they self-register when they arrive. There is scope for practitioners to consider how to build on children's understanding of emotions to support those who find this more challenging. Children are developing their understanding of how to make healthy choices and show confidence in routines such as brushing their teeth. Most are developing self-help skills when they dress themselves to go outside. They are learning the rules of good hygiene. Children are developing their physical skills well through planned sessions in the gym hall, the garden and the woods.
- There is little evidence of children's achievements from home being celebrated within the setting. There is scope for this to be developed and displayed to give children the experience of feeling successful. Children would benefit from more opportunities for leadership and achievement. For example, they could with adult support, plan, resource and look after areas

within the learning environment. This will also help children to develop a sense of responsibility and apply their decision-making skills in relevant and meaningful contexts.

- We discussed with practitioners the need to be aspirational for children. There is scope to promote more challenge and depth across learning, to enhance progression for all. Practitioners should continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of national benchmarks for the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. This will lead to a better understanding of children's progress in line with national expectations.
- Practitioners understand the circumstances of individual children and families and use this knowledge effectively to help them to engage with the setting. They now need to ensure equity for all children and plan targeted interventions to support them to make improved progress in their learning. As this develops, it will be important to evidence over time the link between improved approaches and the progress of particular groups of children.

Setting choice of QI: 2.5 Family learning

- Engaging families in learning
- Early intervention and prevention
- Quality of family learning programmes

- Practitioners know children and their families' individual circumstances well. They quickly establish positive relationships with families and encourage smooth transitions into the setting. Open days are planned to introduce children and families to the setting. However, not all families take up the offer. Parents and carers are encouraged to stay until their child is settled. The setting values the contributions parents and carers make to children's learning. Practitioners plan to reintroduce their 'ways to help at home' advice to weekly planning. This will encourage families to engage more fully in their children's learning. Practitioners plan to offer stay and play opportunities when parents and carers are welcome to stay and join children in their learning through play. This will help parents to understand early learning practices and support closer professional relationships with practitioners. Practitioners need to encourage families to engage with children's learning profiles to understand better their children's learning and progress. The setting is successful in engaging families through social media.
- Early intervention is a key feature of supporting families. The setting works with external agencies and endeavours to organise support for families as and when required. A more proactive approach to universal support would benefit all families and reduce anxiety when a more targeted support is necessary.
- The new graduate early years teacher has family learning as part of her remit. She is to receive training in delivering a parenting programme, which aims to support all families to engage with their children's early learning in an enjoyable way. This opportunity will start in January 2019 with a view to engaging all families over time. It will be important to evaluate the success of this programme and the impact on children and families.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.