

Summarised inspection findings

Towie Primary School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

23 April 2019

Key contextual information

Towie Nursery Class is based in a classroom in Towie Primary School. Children attend from three rural communities that are in the school's locality. The setting is open mornings only which results in almost all children attending together for their 600 hour entitlement. The setting is registered for 20 children at any one time aged from three years old to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of the inspection there were 21 children enrolled. The headteacher has overall responsibility while an early years lead practitioner manages the day to day running of the setting. She is supported by two early years practitioners.

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

- Practitioners have developed a positive identity for the setting that is evident in practice. As a result, children can talk about the importance of sharing, caring and making friends. The current vision, values and aims for the setting are the same as those for the school and have been in place for a number of years. They were recently reviewed however, it would be helpful for them to be refreshed with current children, families and the local community. In doing so, it will be important to ensure they are relevant, meaningful and more aspirational. They should take account of current and on-going developments in early learning and childcare.
- The headteacher takes a very active role in supporting the setting and planning improvement. The Early Years Lead Practitioner (EYLP) has day-to-day responsibility for leading the work of the setting. She skilfully plans and models good practice and provides clear guidance to practitioners. Practitioners in the setting work together very well as a team. As a result, a positive ethos has been created. The headteacher monitors the work of the setting and gives helpful feedback on teaching and learning and other priorities. Outcomes from monitoring visits are formally recorded and offer practitioners guidance on how to take practice forward.
- Practitioners have begun to evaluate the work of the setting using national guidance. This is helping them to identify what is working well and what needs to improve. They have correctly identified that they should continue to review and develop their skills in observing and tracking children's learning and to develop the curriculum further. These priorities were also identified last year, as part of the local authority quality assurance visit. As a result, the EYLP has worked with her team and school staff to devise a new system to track children's progress. This includes children's progress in communication and early language, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. This is at an early stage of tracking children's learning and development. Priorities in the setting's improvement plan are appropriate. For example, for practitioners to develop a more consistent approach to managing children's behaviour. As a result, they are developing strategies that are impacting positively on children's wellbeing.

- Practitioners engage in a range of professional learning that supports them to continue to develop their practice. The EYLP is a good role model for the team and is supporting practitioners well. This is impacting positively on their practice. Practitioners share responsibility for various aspects of the setting. There is scope for them to take on even greater leadership roles as their confidence increases. Practitioners need to be more outward looking by visiting high quality settings to observe, reflect on and then implement good practice as appropriate.
- Regular professional dialogue is enabling practitioners to reflect on children's learning experiences and identify what they need to do to take children's learning forward. There is scope to regularly review the learning environment to ensure it meets the changing needs of children. Practitioners engage with national guidance to support improvement, for example, How good is our early learning and childcare? and Building the Ambition. They should continue in this way to regularly evaluate their practice and consider how they will measure the impact of change in improving outcomes for children.

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

- Practitioners have created a welcoming environment where children are eager to learn through their play. They greet each child individually and ensure one-to-one attention when children require support to settle. This helps them to feel valued, safe and secure. Most children independently engage with the variety of activities on offer that supports their learning across the curriculum. They happily play alone or in small groups, often chatting to each other about what they are learning. Overall, the range of experiences give children the opportunity to be creative and engage in meaningful real-life contexts. For example, the current interest in the pretend shop is helping to develop children's understanding of the purpose and value of money. There is scope to develop further the core provision in the indoor environment by reviewing and refreshing the resources on offer. In doing so, the team should consider how they can increase the space children have to learn. This should include an increased focus on using sensory, natural and open-ended materials, which promote curiosity, inquiry and creativity.
- Practitioners carefully plan activities that focus on children's interests and intended learning. They sensitively support children to think about what they are learning, often providing more challenge as required. During the session there is a mix of group activities and free-flow learning. Overall, this works well however, at times some children are unable to sustain concentration. We discussed the need to review the balance of time spent in adult-directed activities and those led by children to ensure all needs are met. In the best examples, practitioners encourage children to reflect on their learning. As a result, children are beginning to have conversations about what they are learning as they play.
- Children's learning is recorded in their learning folders. These provide evidence of children's learning across the curriculum. Children have ownership of their folders and most are keen to share their learning. The EYLP summarises learning every term and shares these reports with parents. At these times, they identify next steps together. Practitioners are at the early stages of tracking children's progress in communication and early language, mathematics and health and wellbeing. They use trackers to evidence progress and identify next steps in learning. There is scope, as discussed, for shorter term next steps to be identified also and shared with children and parents. In this way, all involved will have a better understanding of how they can help children to progress.

- Practitioners have developed a cross-curricular approach to planning that identifies proposed learning across the curriculum. Children’s involvement in this planning is evident in floorbooks. As a result, intended learning through planned activities is clear and is evidenced in practice. We discussed that practitioners must take care that planning should not be overly prescriptive. They need to ensure flexibility is built in for children to creatively lead their own learning based on their individual interests. There is scope to develop the ‘learning wall approach’ to make learning even more visible. This will help to involve children and parents further in sharing learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum is based on Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. Practitioners plan specific topics around what children know and what they would like to learn. This overarching approach ensures a focus on developing children's knowledge and skills. As discussed, planning needs to be flexible to ensure it is also responsive to children's interests and needs. There is scope to develop an overview of coverage of experiences and outcomes to ensure breadth and depth of learning across all curricular areas.
- Developing communication and early language, mathematics and health and wellbeing is prioritised in the curriculum. All team members share responsibility for developing and delivering the curriculum. Practitioners continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of national guidance, Building the Ambition and the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. Moving forward, it will be important to work with the school to develop a clear rationale for the curriculum. This should include supporting continuity of learning across the early level into primary one.
- The setting benefits from extensive outdoor grounds which are attractive and offer considerable potential for rich learning experiences. Access to an area of local riverbank will extend further opportunities for children. On-going development of the outdoor space will more fully promote real life opportunities for children to develop their curiosity, inquiry, creativity and problem-solving skills.
- Due to the rural situation of the school there are limited opportunities for children to interact within the local hamlet. However, local farmers and parents visit the children to talk about their work and enrich the curriculum.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have established positive relationships with children, parents and carers. This encourages families to feel part of the setting's community. Parents keep up to date with their children's progress through informal daily discussions and through their children's learning folders. At the end of the session, a practitioner helpfully gives parents and carers a brief update on their child's morning. Parents share some of their children's achievements from home in the learning folders. Visits from 'Tartan Ted' also help to create shared links between home and the setting. As discussed, more involvement of parents in their children's next steps in learning would help them to support their children further.

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

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 communicate sensitively with children in a way that promotes mutual respect and trust. The nurturing and welcoming ethos within the setting ensures children are happy, secure and confident. Practitioners support children as they arrive, giving them time to relax and settle to their play. They know children very well and are alert to their feelings throughout the session. They intervene timeously when children need help to modify their behaviour. Practitioners have been working on developing a shared and consistent approach to positive behaviour management. This is helping to support children to manage their emotions and to help them resolve any minor disagreements that may arise. As a result, almost all children play together well and are developing their empathy and respect for others.
- Children are aware of their rights. They are clear that they are in the setting to care, share and make friends. Practitioners place a strong emphasis on teamwork amongst children. As a result, children are beginning to understand the importance of playing together co-operatively and caring for each other. Practitioners support children to be resilient and to cope with circumstances they might find challenging.
- Practitioners are aware of the nationally recognised indicators of wellbeing. Children feel safe and included. They are given responsibility as helpers when they prepare snack and tidy away at the end of the session. Children are learning about healthy eating through making healthy choices at snack. They brush their teeth and understand the importance of washing their hands. There is scope to make increased use of the wellbeing indicators to develop children's understanding of the language of wellbeing.
- Practitioners are aware of and implement statutory duties to improve outcomes for children. They participate in professional learning about their roles and responsibilities. For example, they have undergone training in child protection, paediatric first aid and elementary food hygiene. As a result, they are aware of how to keep children healthy and safe.
- Practitioners are reflective about their day to day practice and make adjustments where appropriate to meet the needs of children and families. They are particularly mindful of their responsibility to promote children's wellbeing and care. All children and their families are fully included in the life of the setting. They are treated with fairness and respect. Diversity is celebrated and practitioners ensure all children learn about aspects of other's cultures and traditions in a meaningful way. They celebrate relevant cultural events that are important to individual children and families. As a result, children are becoming aware of cultures and customs in other parts of the world.

- Practitioners are aware of the individual needs and circumstances of all children and families. They work with professional agencies to provide additional support as and when necessary. They work closely with families where children have particular educational, developmental or health needs. Care plans are documented and agreed to ensure all relevant parties are aware of children's needs and how they may be supported.

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

- Children are making good progress in their communication and early language. Most children are confident in engaging in conversation. They are able to talk about their experiences with adults and other children and make good use of their developing vocabulary. Most children listen well to stories and are learning to follow instructions. They have a good knowledge of traditional tales. There is scope for practitioners to challenge stereotyping as they revisit traditional tales and rhymes. Children show a keen interest in books and stories. They ask adults to read to them and a few read stories by themselves. Children would benefit further from access to factual books to help them to research areas that interest them. Most children are developing appropriate awareness of the patterns and sounds of spoken language through participation in songs and rhymes. Almost all children can find their name as they self-register. Most children are experimenting with mark making. The majority of older children are beginning to write their own name and a few are becoming more assured in doing so. Practitioners should continue to develop writing and reading contexts to encourage children to extend and apply their early literacy skills in play and real life contexts.
- Children are developing their early mathematical skills through adult-supported experiences and play. The current focus on why numbers are important to us and what we use them for is helping children to count and recognise numbers. Most children can count in sequence to ten and some can count beyond this. A few children recognise and sequence numerals beyond five. They are beginning to use counting skills in their play and real-life contexts. For example, they count the children in the line and subtract from the total as children leave to go home. Children are developing their understanding of concepts relating to money as they sort coins and play in the shop. They use mathematical language in construction play and explore volume when they are playing at the sand and water. Children are developing an awareness of time. They identify the days of the week and can talk about the changing seasons. Practitioners should consider how they can support children to apply early numeracy and mathematical skills more to enrich play, solve problems and make judgements.
- All children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They are beginning to think about how simple rules help everyone enjoy play more. Children are benefitting from fresh air and exercise when they play outside in the garden. There is scope to continue to develop their gross motor skills through more lengthy periods for energetic physical play indoors and outdoors. Children are developing their fine motor control through play with construction materials and tools. They are becoming adept at using tweezers and chop sticks as they pick up an assortment of ingredients for a Chinese meal. Children willingly help to prepare snack

and set the table. They are given responsibility for looking after and tidying resources. There is scope for children to take more responsibility around the setting, for example, as risk assessors in the garden or older children buddying children who are new to the setting.

- Overall, children are making good progress over time in their learning and development. The focus placed on learning through play is helping children to progress. Most children are motivated learners with a keen interest in all that is happening in the playroom and beyond. They are confident in trying new experiences and enthusiastic about learning. As discussed, a stronger focus on identifying next steps will support all children to make the best possible progress.
- Practitioners are aware of individual children's circumstances. They work closely with children, parents and agencies to ensure equity for all children. Practitioners recognise the importance of celebrating and building on children's wider achievements. Parents share achievements from home in the learning folders. There is scope to share and celebrate achievements further so that all children are encouraged by their success.

2.5 Family learning

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

- Practitioners run a weekly lending library that encourages parents to read new stories to their children. We discussed opportunities such as shared, 'play at home bags' which could be useful in helping parents to enhance children's learning at home. Parents and carers are given regular opportunities to stay in the setting to play and learn. This gives them an insight into the learning their child experiences during their morning. A few parents visit the setting to share their experiences and occupations. For example, children recall their excitement when a tractor was brought to the playground. Another parent made a snack of noodles for the children to try whilst others visit to read stories. These varied experiences help to enrich the curriculum. It will be important to build on these opportunities in the future.
- Parents are encouraged to share their views through a range of strategies including questions on the setting's practice which are displayed on the notice board. There is scope to continue to expand the range of ways that parents and children can lead and shape improvements. Practitioners should then share the positive difference this involvement makes to children's learning and the work of the setting.
- The setting has formed respectful, trusting relationships with families. They are aware of individual circumstances and strive to support them as needs arise. They work together with families and agencies as appropriate to secure positive outcomes for children.
- In this rural location there are few opportunities for families to engage in family learning programmes. The local authority is planning to train practitioners on how to deliver a programme where parents and children can enjoy stories together. There is considerable scope for families to engage in parenting programmes and other relevant activities should time and resources allow.

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.