

Summarised inspection findings

Beattock Primary School and Nursery Class

Dumfries and Galloway Council

26 June 2018

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

Key contextual information

Beattock Primary and Nursery Class is part of an all through 2-18 cluster with Moffat Academy in Dumfries and Galloway. The school roll is currently 35 with two composite classes. There are 19 children in the nursery which operates mornings only. Almost all children live in SIMD 6 or 7. The rural nature of the school's catchment area means that SIMD deciles do not accurately convey the extent of the socioeconomic deprivation within this largely rural community. In 2017, 28% of children in the primary classes were entitled to free school meals this has been as high as 48% in recent years. A very high proportion of children have additional support needs. Attendance levels are in line with the national average. There have been no exclusions in recent years. The headteacher and the depute headteachers have been in post since 2013. The bespoke management structure has been in place since 2013 following a period of significant senior staff changes.

- Practitioners strive to do their best for children and their families. Working with practitioners, parents and the community, the school has developed a clear rationale and vision for the improvement of the whole school, which incorporates the development of the early learning and childcare (ELC) class.
- Practitioners report they are well supported by the depute headteacher. Relationships based on mutual respect and trust have been developed. The ELC team are reflective practitioners and are keen to develop and improve their practice. For example, they research early communication development, engage in training to build their capacity and share ideas and experiences across the school to take improvements forward. This collaboration has helped to develop the ELC class and improve outcomes for children and families.
- The senior leadership team have responsibility for developing and monitoring the work of the ELC class. we have suggested that management continue to implement procedures to formally monitor the work of the ELC class and children's learning and progress. This session practitioners have started to review how they evaluate and monitor the quality of the work of the ELC class using national indicators of performance. This approach could continue to be developed with all practitioners to support a more focused approach to improvement, which will allow aspects for change to be monitored more effectively.
- Regular meetings are used to evaluate the quality of provision and children's learning. Parents are asked to provide feedback at events, meetings and through regular informal contact with the ELC class. These processes support the development of the setting's improvement agenda. The views of children, families and other partners could be further reflected through this process.

- The school improvement plan includes priorities which impact on the nursery class. Practitioners are involved in reviewing the overall quality of the curriculum and developing approaches to family learning. They confidently assume responsibility for taking forward aspects of the school's improvement agenda. There is a need for them to continue to be involved in sharing developments in the nursery with school staff to ensure continuity and progression for children in learning.

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

- Individual children receive a warm welcome into the ELC class. They are very well supported by practitioners who know them well and recognise their emotional and developmental needs. Children are happy, safe, secure and developing confidence within the setting. They are engaged and enjoy learning through child-led play. They are developing their independence and beginning to take responsibility for aspects of their learning. Children make choices and select materials to develop their creativity and play from the quality resources both indoors and outside.
- Outdoor learning is a key priority of the ELC class, with a focus on the development of high quality learning experiences. Children confidently access the outdoor play space as well as the school playground and actively engage in learning activities across the curriculum. Effective use is made of the local community during 'Woodland Wednesdays'. Practitioners should consider using forest kindergarten approaches to provide further challenge for children outdoors. Good use is made of computers and digital cameras to support learning indoors and there is scope to explore how to use similar resources when children are playing outside.
- The ELC class is structured to provide rich learning experiences that which reflect children's enquiries and help to challenge and sustain their interest. Children's views are listened to and support the development of the playroom provision. This provides them with opportunities to develop curiosity, deepen their learning and make play more purposeful. There is an appropriate balance between time children spend choosing activities and time spent in adult-directed tasks. Practitioners are sensitive to children's engagement in their play and use a flexible approach to avoid disrupting quality play for more adult-led activities.
- Practitioners engage effectively with children using high quality questioning skills and building on children's prior knowledge. Children share their knowledge and experiences, talking confidently to practitioners and each other. They are well supported to find out more about topics that interest them and develop their ideas. In a few activities children would benefit from increased challenge.
- Individual children's learning journeys include detailed observations tracking a week in a child's experience of nursery, photographic evidence and a few samples of children's work. Children enjoy looking at their learning journeys and are invited to make comments. Practitioners now need to continue to develop this approach to ensure it more closely reflects progress of individual children and links to consistently planning appropriate next steps in learning. Parents are beginning to contribute to children's learning journals and with further support from the school could be more involved in sharing children's learning and achievements from home.

- Practitioners use a variety of planning formats, including big books, to plan and record children's learning. There is scope to build on this approach, ensuring they focus more clearly on developing the child's voice. They could also continue to develop how they plan responsively to take forward children's interests as they play. Practitioners engage in regular professional dialogue to discuss the progress children are making in their learning. They monitor and track children's progress through their learning journals and this useful approach could continue to be developed.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Across the setting there is a strong and appropriate focus on nurture and wellbeing. Planning takes account of national guidance and delivers all essential aspects for early learning including an emphasis on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The approach to recording planning now needs to continue to be responsive to children's interests and capture their voice more consistently.
- Practitioners plan for daily outdoor learning experiences and continually evaluate how they use this space to support learning across the curriculum. The environment is inviting to children and engages them purposefully in varied learning experiences. Effective use is made of a range of visitors to the class and planned community visits to support children's opportunities to learn about the world of work. Children make effective use of the digital technologies available to extend their learning. We have suggested that practitioners consider how these could be used across a wider range of experiences to help children develop their digital skills.
- Transitions from home into the setting are managed very well. For younger children, this is further supported by developing early relationships through home visits. A range of effective activities including sharing of information on children's learning, visits to P1 classrooms, a buddy system and shared projects ensure a smooth transition from nursery into primary 1 for children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- There are varied, appropriate and flexible strategies in place to support and encourage parents to engage in the life of the setting. These include home visits for the youngest children, stay and play sessions, 'tea and toast' mornings and regular daily dialogue. Communication using regular newsletter updates is ensuring parents feel well informed about the many ways they can engage in the life of the setting. Positive, welcoming and encouraging relationships between practitioners and families support a good level of engagement.
- Parents of children in the ELC class as well as those from the wider community benefit from the 'Little Acorns' group. This provides a supportive environment for parents to engage with their children in play as well as opportunities for planned activities such as baby massage. As discussed, the team will continue to work with all stakeholders to celebrate and evaluate the impact of this work on children's progress.

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 **very 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

- Relationships across the setting are built upon mutual respect and trust, leading to a warm, welcoming ethos for all families. The leadership team and keyworkers know their children and families very well, resulting in continuity of care within the setting. Parents we spoke with felt that they could easily approach practitioners if they had any concerns. Practitioners have created a climate of mutual trust, honesty and respect. They recognise the needs of the local community and work hard to break down barriers and reach beyond the immediate setting to include children and families from the wider area.
- Children were observed to be happy, confident and increasingly secure in an environment which is safe and supportive. Children's behaviour is positive and in line with their age and stage of development. Practitioners are patient and supportive of children's emotional and social needs. As children move about the playroom they are sociable and confidently share their views and make their wishes known. Children are given clear guidance about how to respect equipment and put toys away when they have finished playing with them. They are encouraged to share their views and are developing an awareness of the wellbeing indicators through the use of 'emojis'. Practitioners are incorporating respect and rights into learning and support children to learn about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Outdoor learning opportunities encourage children to be active and to work together to explore their own solutions in their play. Children benefit from sessions in a local woodland area. They risk assess their play and challenge themselves when traversing flooded areas and playing alongside ponds. Children are developing a good understanding of how to support their own health and wellbeing through daily routines. Children can talk about foods that are healthy and the importance of hand washing. Opportunities for children to prepare their own snack could be explored further to develop children's responsibility for these tasks.
- Practitioners listen carefully to what children say and act upon children's views in their daily interactions. Practitioners should now provide appropriate opportunities to formalise their consultation with children. For example, children could be supported to share their views, at a developmentally appropriate stage, as members of the school's eco committee.
- There are sound arrangements in place to comply with statutory requirements. The deputy headteacher works closely with the nursery teacher, practitioners and other agencies to ensure that they are proactive in fulfilling their legislative duties. Practitioners engage in professional learning which help them improve the way they support and care for children. The nursery teacher works collegially with the deputy headteacher. Together they are building practitioner's awareness of the wellbeing indicators and support them to plan for children's emotional and mental development.

- The leadership team and practitioners have a very good understanding of legislative requirements for children who face additional barriers to their learning or require additional support. They have made positive links with a range of other support agencies and have clear procedures in place for creating and reviewing support plans. Equality and diversity is celebrated and families are supported in a non-judgemental, inclusive and appropriate way.

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 are making very good progress in early literacy. Practitioners interact very well with children during free play to extend children's communication and early language skills. Where appropriate they make use of visual prompts to support children who require additional help to communicate their needs and have identified the need to continue to build on this approach. Children show a keen interest in mark making and enjoy sharing their 'writing' with adults and each other as they play. They write with large chalks on the ground outdoors and use clipboards to write 'notes'. Children listen intently to stories in small groups and can recount facts from fiction texts to share with others.
- Children are progressing well in early numeracy and can count when playing with increasing confidence. They are developing good early mathematical skills through use of the range of toys and resources available. They are learning about shapes as they build with blocks and loose parts and learning to solve problems. Natural materials encourage children to sort, match and group, embedding early numerical and mathematical skills. Most children use appropriate mathematical language as they compare the size and length as they measure their constructions and are developing their use of comparative language. Practitioners should continue to support children to develop early numeracy and mathematical skills through real-life contexts and outdoors.
- In health and wellbeing children are making very good progress. Practitioners provide a supportive ethos in the setting and encourage children to be caring, kind and respectful to others. The emphasis on relationships and inclusion is helping children settle and develop friendships with the different groups attending across the week. Children are learning about healthy lifestyles through discussions about healthy snacks, the importance of learning outdoors and daily active play. Older children can concentrate on tasks for extended periods of time and are keen to share their learning with adults and each other.
- Children enjoy investigating with water, mud and sand using the 'mud kitchen' outdoors. They mix paints and use them expressively and are developing their skills in the use of a small range of woodwork tools to make models. They are supported well to identify insects when playing outdoors and can discuss how worms move. They keenly watch over incubating eggs and can discuss the life cycle of chickens. Children use binoculars from the top of the climbing tower and investigate magnetic forces when playing with construction toys. Children engage enthusiastically in energetic play outdoors including a daily 'mini mile' and move expressively to music.

- Children's individual achievements within the ELC class are captured and celebrated well. Praise is used effectively to support and encourage children and to celebrate their success. Achievements from home are starting to be shared and the learning journeys and 'wow' sheets help celebrate children's successes. Practitioners should continue to explore ways to encourage parents to celebrate and share children's achievements.
- Practitioners work hard to develop a supportive and inclusive ethos. They are proactive in identifying potential barriers to learning and are well placed to engage parents further in a wider range of family learning activities.

Choice of QI: 2.5 Family learning

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

- Teachers and practitioners across the school have established long standing positive and supportive relationships with families. They work hard together to ensure families feel welcome and valued in the life of the school. Support is offered to families around specific areas such as supporting children's emotional needs. Teachers and practitioners are aware of, and respond promptly to, changes in family circumstances. This means families feel well supported by the team. As a result of carefully judged on-going support and effective partnership working with parents important positive changes can be seen. These include supporting learning in the home and reducing levels of isolation, stress and anxiety for adults and children.
- There is a strong recognition of the crucial role of parents in supporting their child's learning, development and emotional wellbeing. There is a belief in, and commitment to, developing the skills and capabilities of families. An increasing number of parents attend 'Little Acorns' each week when they benefit from opportunities to play alongside their children and support each other to face the challenges bringing up children pose. Parents benefit from a rolling programme of baby massage sessions. They are consulted about the content of 'Little Acorn' sessions and indicate they appreciate the support offered by this group. In order to effectively evaluate the impact of these initiatives on children's learning, we have suggested the school continues to develop a shared understanding of family learning and how it can impact positively on children's learning in the ELC class.
- The school offers a range of opportunities for parents to share in their children's learning including soft starts, literacy and numeracy workshops and twice weekly breakfast club. Plans are in place to begin to operate a toy lending library to encourage positive attitudes to play in the home. 'Little Acorns' provides useful opportunities for families to interact and play together. Commendably, the group is also used by those whose children do not attend Beattock Primary School and also live out with the local area. Teachers and practitioners have recognised the need to develop the programme of family learning to include more planned opportunities for children and parents to learn together as well as groups focussed on parents developing their own skills. These opportunities will be useful in promoting a culture of learning within families. The use of evidence based parenting programmes would also be useful to help build capacity within 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.