

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Thomas RC Primary School Nursery Class**

Moray Council

28 July 2020

## Key contextual information

St Thomas RC nursery class is an integral part of the school. It is registered to provide early learning and childcare (ELC) for up to 20 children aged three to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of inspection, there were 18 children accessing 600 hours of funded ELC, across five mornings each week. The headteacher has overall leadership responsibility for the nursery. The nursery provision consists of a playroom that has direct access to a well-resourced garden area. The nursery class also make use of spaces in the wider school environment, such as the gym hall and the large outdoor play space.

### 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 nursery class shares values with the school. Children, parents and staff have recently reviewed the values and these are displayed in the cloakroom area and in the playroom. The setting is at the early stages of developing children's understanding of respect, happiness, community, creativity and positive attitudes. The nursery, along with the school, is in the process of reviewing the vision for the school and nursery.
- Practitioners are beginning to engage with national documentation to support them in the self-evaluation process. They are using the challenge questions from How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC) to evaluate aspects of practice. They should continue to embed this and consider ways to involve children, families and other stakeholders in the process. This should support them to make well-informed changes to improve practice.
- Practitioners engage in regular professional learning to support improvement. This includes good practice visits to other settings, professional reading, undertaking award bearing courses, attending training delivered by the authority and attending collegiate sessions in the school. Practitioners should evidence the impact professional learning has on improving practice in the nursery.
- Practitioners do not yet have identified leadership roles. They share responsibility to take forward areas for improvement such as developing the outdoor area and responsive planning. As the team grows, in order to deliver additional funded ELC hours in August 2020, the nursery should develop leadership roles relevant to the experiences and skills of each team member. This will help to provide a more focused approach and allow practitioners to evaluate more effectively the impact of improvements for children and families.
- Children's leadership roles consist of 'tidy teams' and 'snack helpers'. Practitioners should develop these to reflect children's leadership roles in the primary school. This should support children to develop further their leadership skills and their ability to contribute to decision making and planning.

- The newly formed nursery team work very well together with the headteacher and demonstrate a strong commitment to continued improvement. The team is well placed to continue to improve provision to deliver high standards of ELC.

## 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

- There is a relaxed start to the nursery session. Practitioners are available to welcome children and their families individually each morning. Relationships between practitioners, children and families are nurturing and caring and this supports children to feel settled and ready to learn. The learning environment allows children freedom to make choices about where they play and what they play with. There is a good range of real life, natural and open-ended resources that allow children to investigate and explore. Children can access resources independently and have time to follow their own interests. This leads to most children being motivated and engaged in their play. A minority of children require support to sustain interest and engage purposefully in play.
- Practitioners gather children together at the end of each session. They should review these group times to ensure children spend quality time with their key worker. They should plan group times to provide a balance of experiences across the curriculum and to support children's next steps in learning.
- Children access the interactive board to play games to consolidate prior learning, such as counting and recognising numbers. They use the tablet computer to take photographs and to research information about their interests. Practitioners should continue to extend opportunities for children to develop early digital skills through using technology.
- Practitioners' professional learning has led to them have a good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. They interact sensitively with children during their play. The majority scaffold learning and ask well-formed questions to challenge children's thinking. This should be developed more consistently across the whole team to secure improved progress in children's learning.
- Practitioners plan responsively for overall learning during the 'daily huddle' by analysing significant observations of the playroom. They plan experiences, interactions and changes to environment in order to build on children interests or to develop further children's learning. They also plan responsively for individual children each week. Practitioners use floorbooks to document activities and learning around children's interest. They should develop further the use of floorbooks so they become a mechanism to plan effectively for children's learning. This should support practitioners to streamline the current planning paperwork. Children are not yet able to talk about their learning. This could be supported through developing the use of floorbooks and this should also help children to develop an understanding of themselves as learners.
- Each child has a learning journal, a learning jotter and tracking sheets to record progress in literacy, numeracy and developmental skills. Learning journals contain observations gathered during the child's focus week and identified next steps in learning. Learning jotters contain

photographs, comments and samples of children's early mark making. Learning jotters and journals are readily accessible to children and their families. Children enjoy sharing their learning jotters and talking about the activities they have taken part in that are captured in the photographs. Observations of children's play and learning are of variable quality and do not yet consistently focus on significant learning. Practitioners should review the documentation of children's learning to make this more manageable and coherent.

- Practitioners use a variety of trackers to document where children are in their learning. Trackers are not consistently dated and this makes it difficult to evidence children's progress over time. There is a need to review trackers to ensure the information gathered is useful in planning for children's learning.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum is based firmly on play and takes account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. There is currently a lack of challenge, depth and progression of children's skills across all curricular aspects. The nursery team need to develop a shared understanding on how they can develop the use of curricular pathways to address this.
- The nursery does not yet have a curriculum rationale to help guide and inform its work. The nursery is ready to develop this to help practitioners provide relevant experiences, which take account of its unique local community. This should also support high aspirations for all children.
- Practitioners are beginning to provide real life learning experiences for children to develop an awareness of the world of work. They order snack ingredients on line and help to put these away when they arrive with the delivery van. They take part in baking and cooking food for snack. As planned, practitioners should continue to make greater use of the local community to widen children's learning experiences.
- Practitioners take account of children's individual needs when they start nursery, with a settling-in period tailored to suit children and families. Transition for children moving on to primary is well planned to give children a variety of experiences within the school before starting P1. The newly introduced trackers should support continuity and progression in children's learning across the early level.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have strong positive relationships with families. They make time each day to speak with parents and carers at drop off and pick up times. Parents and carers meet termly with practitioners to discuss their child's progress in learning and together they identify children's next steps in learning.
- Practitioners are aware of the benefits of working in partnerships with families. They invite families to become involved in children's learning in nursery by attending stay and play sessions. Practitioners have reviewed these sessions to make them more focused and meaningful. This is supporting them to share important messages with parents and carers, for example, the benefits of singing and reading with children at home. Practitioners should consider ways to make better use of the skills and interests of families to enrich children's learning in the setting.
- Practitioners should build on the positive, well-established relationships to support families to contribute more effectively to the self-evaluation process.

## 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.

### 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 understand the impact of positive relationships to ensure wellbeing and place high importance in establishing these. As a result, the caring, nurturing relationships between, practitioners, children and families is a strong feature of practice. Practitioners consider each child as an individual and this supports children to feel included and involved in the life of the setting.
- Practitioners demonstrate through their practice their understanding of wellbeing for children. They support children to develop their understanding of how to keep safe and manage their own risks in the outdoor area. Practitioners try to ensure children experience a nurturing snack time. Snack times are social experiences where children are encouraged to try new foods and develop good social skills. There is daily free flow access to outdoors where children benefit from fresh air and exercise. Children do not consistently take responsibility for looking after their own belongings and nursery resources. Practitioners should consistently promote positive behaviour and a respectful ethos to support all children to become increasingly responsible in the nursery. Senior leaders are skilled in using restorative approaches to support children to deal with disputes and develop positive relationships. The approaches they model are supporting other practitioners to begin to implement restorative approaches and this should lead to increased consistency across the team.
- Wellbeing indicators are displayed in the cloakroom. Practitioners have recently created a character for each indicator and these are displayed across the nursery environment. They are beginning to use the language of wellbeing indicators with children during their play. This is supporting children to develop an understanding of what it means to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible and respected. Practitioners should continue to develop children's awareness the wellbeing indicators. They should also begin to make appropriate links with the school values.
- The school has systems in place to ensure practitioners comply with statutory requirements and codes of practice. They know what is involved in fulfilling statutory duties and undertake relevant training to ensure they keep their knowledge and practice up to date.
- Practitioners value cultural diversity and they provide resources that reflect different cultural backgrounds. The open-ended dressing up resources support children to avoid developing gender stereotypes. Practitioners should consider ways to further actively challenge children's thinking and beliefs about gender stereotypes and the traditional view of what makes a family. This will help to support children further to be inclusive and respectful of others.
- Practitioners are aware of children's socio-economic backgrounds and make provision to ensure all children can participate in learning experiences. For example, they provide suitable outdoor clothing and a lending library that allows families access to a wide range of books to

share at home. They are also attuned to children's needs as they arrive at nursery and make additional snack available if required.

- Practitioners identify children with potential barriers to learning. They value the input of other professionals and use information to plan experiences for individual children. Children who need them have individualised plans. These should be shared more widely to ensure that all practitioners are clear about planned strategies and are involved in contributing to children's targets.

### 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

- Most children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. Most children recognise their name and a few are beginning to attempt to write letters from their name. The majority of children talk confidently during play with familiar adults and their friends. A few children choose to look at books independently and the majority listen well to stories at group time. Practitioners should review story sessions to develop further children's love of reading and awareness of print. All children have drawn pictures for their learning jotter and a few are beginning to draw recognisable pictures. The majority of children are developing good fine-motor skills that will support them with emergent writing. A stronger focus on early mark making would help to challenge children to present more detail in drawings and inspire them to become emergent writers.
- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in mathematics. Most children join in with number songs. They are learning about the passage of time using timers and they sing songs that develop their understanding of the sequence of the days of the week. Most of the older children count using one-to-one correspondence and know the number sequence to ten. Most older children recognise basic two-dimensional shapes and use positional language such as on, under, before. The majority of children are beginning to use the language of measure in their play through using the range of open-ended resources. There is no evidence yet of children developing an understanding of money and coin recognition. Most children are beginning to develop an awareness of using graphs and charts to represent information. For example using charts to display information about who liked and did not like the homemade soup.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing friendships and are learning to interact positively with each other. A few children require support to help them regulate their emotions. Practitioners should support all children to develop vocabulary to talk about feelings. All children are developing an understanding of good hygiene practice. They know when to wash their hands and take part in the tooth brushing programme. Almost all children are developing a good awareness of healthy eating as they help to prepare the healthy snacks. The majority of children demonstrate good levels of independence. Practitioners should ensure that they consistently support independence skills particularly at tidy up time and when children are putting on and taking off their outdoor clothes. All children take part in outdoor play and most are developing good control of the movement of their bodies.

- Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in their learning. Children's learning journals, jotters and tracking information do not yet fully illustrate the progress children make across their learning at nursery. Practitioners should develop the use of trackers to evidence that, over time, children continually develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Parents have regular formal and informal opportunities to discuss their child's progress in learning.
- Practitioners celebrate and display children's wider achievements at nursery and at home on the Proud Cloud. This is supporting children to be aware of what it feels like to be a successful learner. Practitioners should develop further the use of the Proud Cloud to celebrate achievements of specific targets.
- There is a need to create systems to gather data on children's progress in learning. This should provide valuable information that will help to give a clearer overall picture of children's progress and identify areas where practitioners can improve learning. This should support practitioners to identify interventions to improve learning for all with a particular focus on approaches that will support children facing challenges.

## 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.