

# Summarised inspection findings

**Deshar Primary School Nursery Class**

The Highland Council

2 July 2019

## Key contextual information

Deshar Primary School nursery class is accommodated within the main school building. Since January, a second smaller room has been made available, next to the main playroom. This has allowed an increase in the registration from ten to 16 children attending at any one time. At the time of inspection, there were 15 children on the roll. The two practitioners are well established in their role. The principal teacher, shared with the sister school, has responsibility for the management of the nursery class, overseen by the headteacher. The management team have been in post for two years.

### 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 is an integral part of the school and community. Nursery children work with their school peers in learning experiences such as Forest Schools and regular shared learning across the early level. A review and refresh of the whole school vision, values and aims has recently been undertaken. To ensure a shared ownership of these it is important that all nursery stakeholders are actively consulted with and that the language is accessible to children.
- Local community members, including parents, have formed a group known as the 'All aboard for Deshar Nursery' project. Together, they have raised a significant amount of money. This is being used to work in partnership with The Highland Council to establish a purpose built nursery on the school campus. This will accommodate an increased number of children ensuring a nursery place, for all local children. This exciting development is due to commence in July 2019 to be ready by April 2020 providing significant potential for continued improvement.
- Within a strong culture of self-evaluation, the management team have developed a clear vision for the development of early learning and childcare (ELC) at Deshar Primary School. They are ably supporting practitioners to develop the nursery class in line with current thinking and national guidance. The management team have an accurate view of the existing strengths and aspects, which require development. The inspection team endorses this fully. In order to realise the vision, practitioners now need to assume a more active role in the leadership of change. This needs to include meaningful reflective practice and involvement with self-evaluation. We discussed with the management team how this could be realised, for example, practitioners leading developments and identified priorities that drive forward improvement. Previously, leadership of change has been too slow resulting in the nursery class not keeping abreast of current thinking in ELC. There is a clear recognition that the pace of change now needs to be accelerated to ensure positive outcomes can be secured for all. Visiting staff from The Highland Council support the setting in developing capacity for improvement, for example, by supporting professional learning.

- The nursery is part of the whole school improvement plan as well as having an independent, strategic plan for improvement. This plan clearly sets out priorities and some positive impact is evident. This includes the implementation of agreed areas for the profiling format and changes to nursery routines. Practitioners now need to develop their skills and understanding in the use of self-evaluation. This will enable them to increase their role and responsibilities in identifying what is working well and what needs to improve.
- A bespoke range of continuing professional learning has been provided for practitioners over the last few years. This includes visits to other nurseries to encourage an outward looking approach to the leadership of change. The impact of this learning is not yet evident in the improvement of outcomes for all. Moving forward it will be important that everyone takes full responsibility and is accountable for this.

## 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

- A welcoming ethos is evident with positive relationships evident between practitioners, children and families. Across the session, there are opportunities for children to choose where to play and engage in free play and adult-initiated activities. The majority of children show an appropriate commitment to their chosen tasks with a few demonstrating extended concentration. The addition of the second playroom has increased children's choices and broadened the experiences on offer. Practitioners now need to reflect on and evaluate the impact of these changes on children's engagement and progress in learning to inform ongoing developments.
- Through their interactions practitioners are respectful, attentive and supportive of children. They respond well to children's interests, for example, supporting research on the internet on chosen topics. Practitioners know children well as individuals and now need to apply this knowledge to help support and challenge them as learners. In a few examples, the use of questions extends learning effectively. Developing skills in effective questioning will help practitioners to support and challenge learning more consistently.
- Building on the positive development of the environment, children now need to be enabled to be more independent in routines and in their play. This will allow them to increasingly lead and direct their own learning. To support this further, a review of resources with a sharper focus on the provision of natural, open-ended materials that promote creativity, curiosity and inquiry should be undertaken. The planned development of loose parts materials would support this well.
- Overall, practitioners need to work with management to establish a shared pedagogy for the nursery class that is understood by all. To support this, it would be helpful to revisit national guidance to ensure a deep understanding that fully reflects current thinking and best practice in ELC. Whole school approaches already adopted, for example, for classroom management, could form part of this to ensure shared and raised expectations.
- The use of digital technologies appropriately supports and extends learning, for example, researching subjects of interest such as dinosaurs and volcanoes. As a result of these experiences, a few children can provide detailed descriptions of characteristics of dinosaurs and what happens when a volcano erupts.
- Children have individual 'Learning Journey' folders, which contain examples of drawings, photographs and observations made by practitioners. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop the quality of observations to ensure a sharp focus on the significant learning of individuals. Learning targets, with a numeracy focus, have recently been established for all children. Moving forward, assessment information needs to be gathered to support these and targets established and progressed in other curricular areas.

- Children's progress is tracked using local authority developmental overviews. Appropriate assessment information now needs to support these consistently to ensure rigour. Moderation of professional judgement in completing the overviews is also an area for development.
- In the most positive examples, planning is based on children's interests with what children already know and what they want to find out being established. Approaches, modelled and introduced such as the use of 'talking tubs' provide a stimulus for other learning, for example, the current context on bees and growing. Practitioners use mind mapping and 'learning walls' to record children's thoughts and learning. A review and refresh of how planning and learning is undertaken may help streamline processes and reduce bureaucracy. This should promote the delivery of depth and challenge in children's learning and support the development of a language of learning.
- Recently, children have had more regular and consistent access to learning outdoors. This is an important feature of the setting. Building on the positive start this should be fully exploited to maximise the learning potential of the outdoor learning area and the local environment.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- As planned, a clear curriculum rationale should be established that reflects and celebrates the unique context of the setting. Documentation to support curriculum development, including national guidance, needs to be revisited to ensure a full and shared understanding. Progressive curriculum pathways for the early level and beyond need to be developed to increase children's progress and raise attainment. The development of a shared pedagogy of early learning across the early level needs to be established. This should fully reflect national guidance and best practice in ELC.
- The basic elements of early learning and childcare are evident. However, there is scope for an increase in literacy and numeracy learning opportunities that motivate and excite young learners. These should be available both indoors and out and be provided through a range of open-ended resources.
- Visiting specialists including drama and countryside rangers and representatives from the Royal Society of Protection of Birds (RSPB) enhance and enrich the curriculum offer. It is important that these experiences are replicated and learning built upon by practitioners. This will ensure maximum learning potential for all children.
- Regular work across the early level supports transitions well. Children join peers in the P1-P3 class regularly and participate in activities such as baking, celebrating festivals and other cultures and tasting new foods. Care needs to be taken to ensure that experiences are developmentally appropriate and progressive for all children across the early and into the first level.

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

- Partnerships with families and the local community are a key part of the work of the nursery class. The 'All aboard for Deshar' project is a strong example of this. Parents value the work of the nursery and have opportunities to be part of their child's nursery experience. Practitioners and parents communicate effectively to support children's learning and development. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress at nursery. There is potential to build on the established positive relationships to develop an even stronger learning link between home and nursery. The sharing of wider achievements is a positive start to developing this. Promotion of the local authority website, 'Bumps2Bairns' would be helpful to parents and inform a learning partnership.
- Partnerships with other professionals and use of the local natural environment provide opportunities to learn in contexts outwith the nursery. This could be maximised to allow the development and application of skills for life and learning. The occupations and skills of parents could be utilised more fully to help children develop an awareness of the world of work.

## 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

- The promotion of children's wellbeing is an important feature of the setting. Practitioners are caring towards children and responsive to their care needs. There is a strong sense of community where children play well with each other, taking turns and sharing resources during play. A few children are confident in how they can resolve disputes independently of adult intervention.
- Outdoor learning experiences during weekly forest visits add value to children's learning and the promotion of wellbeing. An ethical approach is supporting children to respect the natural environment alongside developing skills and attributes such as problem solving and resilience. These experiences should be provided more spontaneously and skills built upon in outdoor learning within the nursery environment.
- Most children have a well-developed awareness of safety and how they can keep themselves healthy. Practitioners are at the early stages of using the national indicators to support children's understanding of their wellbeing. We discussed how the wellbeing indicators could be promoted with children in a more interactive way, for example, use of the wellbeing display.
- Practitioners have worked hard to develop a rolling snack approach following the addition of the second playroom in January. This is beginning to support children to develop independence and apply skills in food preparation. There is now potential for children to play an even greater role in leading aspects of the nursery and develop more independence within an enabled environment.
- Overall, the management team have an understanding of the statutory duties relating to ELC. Personal care plans are in place for all children. We discussed how these need to be audited to ensure that they consistently fulfil legislative requirements and are utilised to secure positive outcomes for children. Practitioners need to make full use of the format to record care, learning and welfare needs as appropriate. This should include recording interventions and monitoring of the progress of children who have identified support needs, both short and longer term.
- Fundraising through events such as World Book Day is helping children develop an appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves. There is scope for wider celebration and exploration of diversity in meaningful ways. This will support children to become aware of cultures, customs and ways of life in the wider world as they develop as citizens of 21st Century Scotland. Inclusion and equality are evident with all children and families observed to be treated fairly and with respect.

### 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

- In early language and literacy, most children are making satisfactory progress as a result of their nursery experiences. Most children listen well in group situations and to instructions which they carry out appropriately. At times, a few children require differentiated expectations of their concentration and listening skills to allow them to experience success. A few children create and sustain their own situations, for example, creating an ice cream shop at the sand tray. With familiar adults and peers, the majority of children enjoy sharing their experiences and thoughts, recognising and adhering to the rules of conversation. The majority of children show interest in mark-making at their individual developmental stage, for example, adding increasing detail to drawings. A few children are beginning to form letters correctly and making positive attempts to write their name independently. There is considerable potential for increased opportunities for children to explore and apply their developing skills in a wider range of meaningful contexts, both indoors and out.
- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in developing early numeracy and mathematical skills. Most children apply their understanding of number in play and routines, for example, counting using software on the computer and preparing for snack. This now needs to be developed further to allow children opportunities to develop a wider range of skills both indoors, outdoors and through routines. Children accurately use a range of mathematical language to compare size and weight and describe position. Most children recognise simple patterns with a few enjoying the challenge of replicating or creating their own. Aspects such as time, money and information handling could be promoted and with greater depth.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. An 'emotional check in' gives children the opportunity to share how they are feeling when they arrive at nursery. Extending this would allow children to explore other emotions and enable them to articulate how they are feeling in a range of situations. There is considerable scope for children to become more independent, for example, dressing for outdoors and in the use of the learning environment. The introduction of rolling snack provides a useful starting point for this. Overall, expectations of children need to be raised with the image of the child being developed further.
- Evidence from children's individual learning journeys and developmental overviews demonstrate that children have made satisfactory progress in their learning because of their nursery experiences. Opportunities such as those afforded by outdoor learning clearly add value to children's learning.

- Wider achievements are recognised and celebrated through a simple display and recently being included in children's learning journeys. Practitioners should continue to work with parents to encourage a holistic view of achievements within and beyond the nursery. Where achievements are recorded, care should be taken to build on and extend skills wherever possible. There is scope to consider ways for children to engage in their local community more effectively in order to develop their early citizenship skills.
- Given a number of children attend on a split placement with other settings consideration should be made to how experiences are provided across the week.
- A supportive and inclusive ethos supports all children to feel welcome and safe within the setting. There now needs to be more specific, measured and targeted interventions put in place in response to individual needs. These should be monitored and success measured to ensure they are the correct interventions. A clear focus on supporting all children to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to continue to become motivated lifelong learners needs to be developed more fully.

## Choice of QI: 2.4 Personalised support

- Universal support
- Role of practitioners and leaders
- Identification of learning needs and targeted support
- Removal of barriers to learning

- Practitioners are responsive to children's individual needs, interests and wellbeing. Some helpful information is gathered through personal planning, including an 'All about me' format. The robust collation of this information and more extensive use being made of it would help secure the best possible outcomes for individual children.
- A key worker approach is now established which provides a platform for effective universal support as well as a key point of contact for families. The role should continue to be developed with practitioners taking a lead in ensuring records for individual children, including personal care plans are robust. The impact of the developing role on outcomes for children should be monitored. The key worker approach should also facilitate the introduction, and use of, learning conversations that support the identification of learning targets appropriate to the individual.
- Tasks, activities and resources could offer more challenge to help children make the progress that they are capable of because of their nursery experiences. As the identification of learning targets embeds, it will be important that they build consistently on what children already know and skills they have already acquired. Children, and their families, should be involved in establishing what they want to learn next as learning targets.
- Professional learning for practitioners needs to continue to ensure they have a full understanding of the learning needs of individual children. This should include understanding of developmental stages irrespective of chronological age.
- Children who have potential barriers to their learning are identified appropriately. Where necessary, plans are established for children who require additional support to help them learn. These plans now need to play a more central role in the targeted support offered within the playroom to promote a more personalised approach to learning. As discussed, using personal care planning formats to maintain records that are more detailed would ensure interventions are recorded and their impact measured over time.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

- The number of ELC places available within the current nursery class has been identified as not being adequate for the number of local children in coming years. As a result, the 'All aboard for Deshar Nursery' project was initiated. As a result of fundraising, they have been able to share financial responsibility with the Highland Council for a new, purpose built nursery which will be ready for April 2020. The monies raised will be passed to The Highland Council to support the building. Once complete, the building will belong to the local authority with availability for community use.

## 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.