

# Summarised inspection findings

**St Athanasius' Primary School and Nursery Class**

South Lanarkshire Council

25 April 2023

## Key contextual information

St Athanasius' Nursery Class is situated within the St Athanasius' Primary School building. The nursery has undergone major changes in context in recent years. To accommodate 1140 hours, the nursery has grown in size, with an increased nursery roll and practitioner team. Along with this, the nursery environment has expanded to include an additional room and new cloakroom area.

The nursery now offers early learning and childcare for 1140 hours from 9.00am – 3.00pm during the school term. At the time of inspection, 55 children attend the nursery, with the capacity for 72 children. Children attend St Athanasius' Nursery Class from three years old. The early years depute leads the day-to-day running of the nursery, supported in management by the depute headteacher and headteacher. The nursery environment includes two large indoor areas with direct access to an outdoor area. Practitioners and children in the nursery class also make use of spaces in the wider school environment, such as the gym hall, dining hall and school grounds. The nursery is non-denominational and whilst predominantly linked to St Athanasius' Primary School, it links with seven different primary schools.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

very 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

- Senior leaders and practitioners have recently revised the nursery vision, values and aims. All in the team reflect the values of nurturing, kindness, respect and happiness in their interactions with children and families. Practitioners demonstrate that they are highly committed and very responsive towards their nursery community. As planned, practitioners should continue to share the updated vision, values, and aims with parents and the nursery community.
- There is a successful blend of leadership roles across the nursery, which helps to achieve a consistent approach to delivering positive outcomes for children and families. The very effective strategic leadership of the headteacher and depute headteacher supports the nursery to be highly valued and integrated fully with the school. Both senior leaders are highly visible and very supportive to all in the nursery. The early years depute provides very strong day to day leadership in the nursery. The whole nursery team work very well together.
- Senior leaders know practitioners very well and develop their skills, including through formal professional development reviews. All practitioners take on lead responsibilities with enthusiasm, embracing the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. This includes, for example, literacy, numeracy, digital technologies, outdoor learning, parental engagement or Forest Schools. Practitioners undertake regular professional learning which continues to support improvements in practice and has a positive impact on children's experiences. Examples include approaches to supporting individual children's needs in language development.

- Practitioners respond very positively to implementing improvement and change. The move to providing 1140 hours of early learning and childcare has brought significant changes. Senior leaders and practitioners work very well together to trial and review new approaches to ensure they are having a positive impact on children. For example, the headteacher worked with the staff team and catering service to improve lunchtimes, resulting in a calm and engaging experience for children and staff.
- Senior leaders embed approaches to developing continuous improvement and self-evaluation very well, with engagement from practitioners, children and families. This includes through following a quality assurance calendar based on national guidance. Regular surveys to parents ensure engagement of all families. Through daily end of day discussions and weekly formal meetings, practitioners constantly review aspects of nursery life, including with the peripatetic teacher. Children are involved in meaningful decision making, for example in the map, do and review approach to their learning. Children risk assess their outdoor learning space.
- Senior leaders create conditions where practitioners feel confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for the process of change. Practitioners are keen to revive peer observations and visits to other establishments, activities which were impacted due to the pandemic.

## 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 worked hard to develop a play environment which offers attractive resources and real experiences for children. Children are calm, engaged in their play and are supported by well-thought through routines. Children's drawings, artwork and photographs of learning are displayed attractively throughout the nursery. The outdoor environment offers a good selection of risky play activities and experiences, including loose parts and climbing opportunities.
- Practitioners demonstrate calm and nurturing interactions with children, which are responsive to children's needs. Children are happy and confident, displaying well-formed relationships with adults and peers. Children are excited to share their learning experiences with each other. As a result of the supportive environment and caring interactions from practitioners, children's behaviour remains positive throughout the day. Practitioners skilfully use a balance of questioning and commenting to extend children's interests and skills observed through play.
- Practitioners observe children during play and small group times. They come together regularly to share and discuss children's learning. Practitioners share regular observations of children's learning with families using digital platforms. Parents are encouraged to comment on online journals and share learning from home. As identified by senior leaders, practitioners should continue to extend the use of learning journals, involving children more. This will support children to reflect further on their learning and support practitioners to extend children's next steps.
- Practitioners plan for children's development of skills through play effectively, using responsive planning approaches. Children's learning across the key areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing is influenced by planning and tracking, linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) outcomes. Practitioners are developing their approaches to capturing child-led planning, through daily responsive planning sheets. As identified by senior leaders, practitioners should continue to consider the balance of planning for children's skills and interests and how to involve and evidence children's learning more fully.
- Practitioners are at the early stages of developing their newly revived floorbooks. Children's voices are visible on wall displays across the nursery and are beginning to be evidenced in floorbooks. Practitioners should continue to develop the use of floorbooks, to ensure children's voice is more visible, capturing what children know and understand about their learning.
- Practitioners ensure that learning goals are set for all children and are shared with families. Senior leaders meet with practitioners three times a year to monitor tracking procedures. Practitioners track children's experiences and outcomes across all CfE areas well. They provide children with appropriate interventions to ensure differentiation for those requiring support and challenge in their learning. This leads to children being well-supported with targeted interventions in place.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners' training in pedagogy and practice has influenced their curriculum design, resulting in a shared understanding of their curriculum framework. The framework takes good account of children's developmental progress and learning pathways across essential aspects for early learning within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners use national documents such as *Realising the Ambition (2020)* well to support their work. The team's approaches to planning for curiosity, enquiry and creativity ensure that children are confident learners. Children are central to the curriculum as they influence the activities and resources on offer. They benefit from having access to real resources and risky play, indoors and outdoors.
- Children have direct access to a stimulating outdoor environment with a slide, climbing activities, 'hobbit hut' and mud kitchen. Practitioners should continue to ensure all children are having regular and equal access to the outdoors. Children access their community to extend their learning, such as local shops and the care home. A visit from local firefighters supported children's understanding of risk and people who do risky jobs.
- Children have good access to digital technologies to develop further their skills. For example, the use of the interactive board supports children's creativity and peer learning. Children use digital cameras confidently, capturing images within their environments.

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

- Practitioners seek the views of parents regularly throughout the year. This includes through nursery surveys along with daily discussions with parents. Parents are clearly valued as key partners in the life of their child in the nursery. Parents are very positive about their children's experiences at nursery.
- Parents and grandparents are involved in a variety of worthwhile activities in the nursery. This includes activities such as 'Big Cook, Little Cook', sharing maths bags and 'stay and play' sessions.
- Parents are positive about how practitioners use digital platforms to share learning at home. Practitioners use the digital journal and platforms well to inform families of children's experiences. Children and parents are encouraged to make comments within the learning journals and share learning from home. Practitioners also use social media well to share successes in the nursery.
- Practitioners have good links with the community. These were disrupted through the pandemic and are now being revived. Examples of these community links include Bookbug sessions in the local library, visits to the local shops and woodlands, all of which are supporting positive experiences for children. Staff's partnership within the local care home supports children to enjoy opportunities to develop their intergenerational links. Practitioners continue to actively seek opportunities for meaningful and relevant partnership working.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

- The setting 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

- Practitioners are very nurturing towards children, showing high levels of care throughout nursery life. All staff have a key focus on wellbeing, with a positive and inclusive ethos in the setting. As a result of this, children settle well, are confident and keen to contribute, including with visitors.
- Children are kind and caring with each other and display positive behaviours. They share and respect resources and demonstrate high levels of age-appropriate empathy and self-awareness. Almost all children can talk about being safe and healthy, including during their outdoor learning activities. Practitioners focus on developing children's understanding of a nursery value each week and a wellbeing indicator monthly, through the use of visuals such as puppets. Practitioners provide regular and familiar routines, which contribute meaningfully to wellbeing.
- Practitioners are supporting children to develop their independence skills well, for example in daily routines in dressing for outdoors and in preparing for snack or lunchtime. Children's lunchtimes are a very positive experience and help children to increase their social skills. Practitioners sit with children and engage in conversations, whilst allowing children the opportunity to engage with their peers.
- Practitioners use outdoor learning well to support children's wellbeing, helping them to develop resilience and take risks. Access to the school grounds, local walks and visits to woodland and forest areas allows children time to explore their wider environment.
- Practitioners use various strategies very effectively to support children in understanding and regulating their emotions. Through this, almost all children show that they are learning to manage their own emotions and recognise how others feel.
- Children learn about their rights through focused activities and learning. They share their views confidently, making choices based on their interests. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop children's understanding of their rights in meaningful and appropriate ways.
- As children start nursery, practitioners and parents complete "All about me" documents. Children's personal care plans are reviewed regularly. Appropriate individual education plans are in place for children as required. These plans are collated in conjunction with parents and professional partners, such as specialist support teachers. This all ensures that children's needs are being met very effectively.
- Practitioners undertake regular training in statutory duties and recognise the importance of keeping children safe.



- Practitioners treat children and families with respect and value equality and diversity across their community. They plan celebrations for key cultural events throughout the year, with practitioners sharing their particular skills. Practitioners should continue to explore how they can engage children in relevant planned learning about equality and diversity.

### 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

- Almost all children are making very good progress in early language and communication. Most children demonstrate skills confidently, from early mark making to writing their name. Children engage in functional writing, for example, by signing in for the day. A few children can write familiar words independently, such as the names of family members. Most children are interested in drawing and enjoy sharing their detailed representations and ideas. Children enjoy drawing complex pictures on the large screen on the interactive board. A few children can draw trains and detailed walkie talkies. They explore the technology using different lines, colours and by erasing their drawings. Children self-select stories, share with friends and enjoy time reading with adults.
- Children are making very good progress in numeracy. Children have many opportunities to extend their numeracy skills, playing games with peers and adults. Children demonstrate their learning through discussing shape and describing the properties of shapes. Practitioners use real life and imaginary contexts well to teach children about mathematical concepts, for example cooking pizzas. A few children understand basic fractions through chopping fruit at snack. Children measure ingredients and count how many cups of flour are required when making playdough.
- Children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. Children describe their feelings and emotions through the use of visuals, stories and 'how I am feeling today' jars. Children identify healthy foods and enjoy baking and preparing snack. They are confident articulating their interests when learning through their play. Children ask each other questions and share ideas to extend their play. A few children who require support with their speech and language development are supported very well through targeted interventions. A few children who require tools such as visual symbols and Makaton to communicate are supported effectively by practitioners.
- Practitioners use robust tracking procedures to evidence that children are making very good progress over time since starting nursery. Practitioners use tracking data very well to contribute to learning goals. Parents participate in goal setting for children and share their views about children's learning through the use of online journals.
- Practitioners recognise and celebrate children's successes and achievements well through praise and encouragement. Practitioners display children's achievements in the cloakroom

area and through digital platforms. As planned, practitioners should continue to encourage all parents to share achievements from home.

- Practitioners are inclusive and welcoming to all families and children. Practitioners take account of the cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds of families. They understand their role in promoting equity and provide sensitive and valued support and advice, which is welcomed by families.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

As a result of the positive encouragement and wide variety of opportunities for drawing, mark making and early writing, children are making very good progress in early language and communication.

- Children express their ideas through regular drawing and mark making on the interactive board, with use of the split screen promoting discussions with peers and leading to peer learning. Children show confidence when mark making at the writing table and the variety of provocations on offer gives children a choice of media to explore, including cards and a variety of paper, pens and pencils.
- Children are independently writing words, letters and copying words written by an adult. Practitioners respond to children's requests and questions as they ask, "what are you writing?" and "can I write?". Children ask for an adult to scribe for them or write a word so they can copy. Children make their own cards and drawings for families and friends. Children explore sounds whilst writing and sound out words. Children are extremely proud of their drawings and writing and are keen to show their creations to all adults. Children can describe in detail their drawings and 'writing' and are motivated to take part in these experiences.
- Children are encouraged to make plans whilst taking part in junk modelling. These plans are displayed so children can check back on their plan during the creation of their models. Practitioners provide a variety of mark making tools in various areas all around the playrooms and in many areas outside, including the 'hobbit hut', all of which is supporting children's literacy indoors and outdoors.
- Displays within the playroom have examples of children's writing. Resources around the playrooms, for example at the water tray, are labelled with children's writing. Children are given the opportunity to write shopping lists and practitioners supply clipboards for children to mark make on the move. Children are given opportunities to write for enjoyment and for real life contexts.

## 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.