

Summarised inspection findings

Insch School Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

13 December 2022

Key contextual information

Insch nursery class is registered to provide early learning and childcare for 70 children aged three until starting school. Up to 56 children can attend at any one time. There are currently 53 children attending full and part time places. One third of children registered have split placements with other local providers. The nursery is open between 8 am and 6 pm, 50 weeks each year. There have been significant changes in the nursery staff team. A senior early years practitioner and three lead practitioners lead the nursery team, which consists of nine early years practitioners and one support worker. The nursery has two spacious playrooms with free-flow access to a large outdoor area.

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

- The nursery team work collaboratively with children and parents to create an appropriate and meaningful vision, values and aims. This is helping staff, children and parents to identify with the nursery and they understand what they want to achieve.
- The senior practitioner is responsible for managing the nursery. She is an effective leader and supports practitioners well. Currently, she is exploring ways to bring the team together to take part in planning and professional learning. The depute headteacher and lead practitioners provide her with valuable support. They work well together as a team and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Practitioners are enthusiastic and keen to take on leadership roles. The team have created a well-considered improvement plan with appropriate priorities for the nursery. As they start to take forward these priorities, it will be important to consider the pace of change and ensure all practitioners are involved. The team have made a start to involving children and parents in considering areas for improvement. They should continue to develop this practice and ensure the opinions of children and parents are reflected and taken forward.
- There is a strong culture of self-evaluation and reflection in the nursery. Lead practitioners take responsibility for identifying improvements to make well planned changes. For example, they have recently worked together to improve outcomes for children during snack and lunch time. As a result of these developments, almost all children are developing independence and enjoying the opportunity to socialise with friends and practitioners. The leadership team should explore ways to ensure the whole nursery team are able to contribute and be involved in future developments.
- Practitioners are enthusiastic and take part in professional learning to continue to develop their skills. This is helping the team to support children with their speech and language, and provide interesting outdoor experiences. Practitioners are using national practice guidance to support changes in the layout of the playroom. The nursery has recently started to use a new system to

track children's learning and progress. Moving forward it will be helpful to provide additional training to enable all practitioners to gain confidence in using the new system.

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

- Children are interested and enthusiastic as they explore the range of stimulating and developmentally appropriate experiences both indoors and outside. They are given a high level of freedom as they make choices and engage well with the play opportunities on offer. Most children are happy and settled in the playroom. A few children show a good level of confidence and are able to lead their own learning. Children access real-life experiences and most enjoy spending periods of time peeling potatoes and making play dough. Most children work in small groups or by themselves and a few are starting to make important friendships. There are a few children who need more support to settle and engage in appropriate experiences.
- Practitioners show a good understanding of child development. They are caring and have warm, responsive relationships with the children. Practitioners use questioning well to promote children's curiosity and encourage them to extend their vocabulary. They listen attentively to children and are responsive to their needs and interests. Outdoors, children are given free flow access to the spacious play areas. Practitioners provide a wide range of suitable resources which children use well to explore and investigate. Children take part in a range of interesting experiences as they solve problems and take part in physical challenges.
- Practitioners know their children well as individuals. They observe children and record important information about their learning in online learning profiles. The team are improving the quality and frequency of observations. Practitioners are starting to talk to children about the information in their profiles. They encourage parents and families to add achievements from home to the profiles. Practitioners should build on this good start and support children to talk about their learning and set targets for what they would like to learn next. Practitioners recognise the need to continue to use information about children to plan significant next steps in learning.
- Practitioners plan responsively to meet the needs and interests of children. They use planning boards on the walls to document this. The leadership team should continue with their plans to develop further their planning to ensure all children access a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The team have recently adopted a new tracking system to track and monitor learning across the early level. Senior leaders and practitioners should continue with their plans to develop this further. This will help practitioners to identify gaps in children's learning and plan how they will meet individual needs.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners are using national practice guidance to guide the improvements they are making in the nursery. This includes creating calm spaces where children can relax and listen to stories. Across the curriculum, free play is supporting children's developing skills and children enjoy choosing resources and leading their own play. Most activities and experiences are matched appropriately to the children's stages of development. Practitioners should use their observations of children during play to plan how they can support children to deepen and extend their learning.
- There is a large well-resourced outdoor area that children access freely throughout the day. They take part in exciting experiences including making fires and climbing on large tyres. Practitioners are continuing to develop the outdoor area to ensure they meet children's needs and interests. They also use a nearby meadow and local community hall for outdoor experiences and energetic play.
- Transitions across the early level are very positive and support children to continue to make progress. Primary 1 teachers and nursery practitioners' work together to create learning experiences and use 'Bertie Bear' to support the transition process. They also involve children from other local nurseries in this process.
- Practitioners should continue with their plans to refresh and develop their curriculum rationale using national guidance. This will help to ensure they are providing a broad and balanced curriculum.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents are positive about their children's experiences in the nursery and enjoy ongoing conversations with practitioners to talk about their children's progress. They share important information with practitioners before children start their nursery experience. This helps children to settle well and allows practitioners to build on children's prior learning. Practitioners share useful online individual learning diaries with parents and encourage them to add information on their child's interests and achievements. Children enjoy celebrating this information in nursery. Practitioners support parents to access the learning diaries and track responses. They also share information on social media. This helps parents to understand what their children are learning in the nursery.
- Practitioners assist parents and extended family well to enable them to support children with their learning. They are planning to build on the contact with parents and involve them more fully in the nursery.

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 have a strong focus on supporting children and families' wellbeing. They develop caring, nurturing relationships with children and, as a result, most children are settling well and developing confidence. Practitioners use the language of the wellbeing indicators well throughout the setting. Most children can talk about being safe and healthy. They know that they can earn stars for showing kindness to others. Children display positive behaviours and are kind and caring with each other. Practitioners are at the early stages of developing their knowledge about children's rights. They should continue with plans to develop children's understanding of their rights in appropriate and meaningful ways.
- Prior to children starting nursery, practitioners meet with parents and complete detailed 'all about me' documents. These contribute to children's personal plans and are reviewed regularly. This ensures that children's individual needs are being met effectively. As a result of the interventions practitioners have in place, the majority of children are able to talk about their feelings and record them on a daily basis. Practitioners allow children time to think and complete everyday tasks, for example, changing coats and shoes. Children's skills are being developed well through this relaxed, unhurried approach. Practitioners use a variety of strategies to support all children to regulate their emotions. They are embedding these practices in the nursery daily routines. As a result, most children cope well with challenges and develop positive relationships. They are starting to show empathy for one another.
- Practitioners are clear about their statutory duties and recognise the importance of keeping children safe. They take part in regular training and carry out work on safeguarding scenarios to ensure everyone understands how to respond appropriately to challenging situations.
- Practitioners should continue with their plans to re-establish intergenerational work through partnership with the local care home. These experiences were paused during the pandemic. Evidence from previous visits demonstrates that children were able to interact well and value their engagement with the residents.
- There is an inclusive ethos throughout the nursery. Practitioners treat all children and families with respect. Equality and diversity is celebrated with families. Practitioners provide support in a non-judgemental, inclusive and appropriate way. Children learn about diversity through story books and role play. The team should continue to explore how they can engage children and practitioners in relevant planned learning about equality and diversity.

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

- Practitioners focus well on supporting children's health and wellbeing and this is having a positive impact on children's learning and development. Practitioners create interesting spaces where children are motivated to explore and learn at their own pace. Children enjoy taking part in relaxed snack and lunch experiences and are developing their independence and social skills well. Most children are developing their physical skills well and are supported to manage risks as they negotiate large tyres. They also participate enthusiastically during physical sessions in the local hall. Most children are happy and relaxed in the setting and are making satisfactory progress across their learning. Practitioners should use their observations of children's play and plan experiences to help them to continue to make progress.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. They enjoy looking at books and listen attentively to stories. Children enjoy mark-making and there are interesting examples of developing emergent writing. The majority of children speak confidently to practitioners and other adults. There are a few children, identified by staff, who would benefit from more intensive interventions to support them to be able to express themselves more clearly.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. They use real life and imaginary contexts to support their learning. A few children are using scales and the language of measure effectively during play. They also explore maths concepts while preparing snack. A few children are developing their number skills and practising forming numbers. Practitioners should continue to consider how they can ensure all children participate in appropriate experiences to support them to develop their skills in numeracy and mathematics.
- Practitioners provide a wide variety of appropriate experiences and spaces to enable children to develop curiosity and creativity. Children are able to design and build models using large blocks and small construction toys. Outdoors, children work well together to explore and find their own solutions during play. They benefit well from the learning opportunities on offer. Children particularly enjoy the sense of satisfaction they gain from adventurous physical play. They decide where resources should be moved to and know that their views are important. The nursery session is focused on children's free choice. Senior leaders and practitioners are reviewing the pace and balance of the day. Practitioners need to ensure adult-initiated sessions are targeted to meet children's needs effectively. This will help children to make appropriate progress across the curriculum.

- Parents and practitioners come together to share relevant information on children's wider achievements. Children, parents and practitioners celebrate these in the nursery and show pride in their achievements. Parents are kept informed about children's progress through online journals and daily informal conversations. Practitioners should consider how they can start to involve children and parents more fully in talking about learning and setting specific learning targets.
- Children were observed to be happy, confident and increasingly secure in a safe and supportive environment. Practitioners know individual children well and understand their family situations. They understand the types of poverty affecting the local area not captured in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). They are responsive to identified socio-economic circumstances and provide sensitive interventions to meet the needs of families effectively. These interventions are supporting children's progress and development.

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.