

Summarised inspection findings

Crimond School and Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

23 April 2019

Key contextual information

Crimond School nursery class offers early learning and childcare within the main school building. The nursery class has a dedicated entrance, cloakroom area and direct access to a large, interesting outdoor space. Children aged three to five attend for a morning or afternoon session with 27 children currently on the roll. The team consists of a recently appointed senior practitioner, shared between two settings, a lead practitioner and four part-time practitioners.

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

- Recently, stakeholders have been involved in streamlining the vision, values and aims, which are shared across the school and nursery. This will ensure they are accessible and relevant to all current families and children. A strong and well-established sense of community is clearly evident. Practitioners consistently reinforce shared values in their daily practice.
- The effective lead practitioner and hard-working practitioners work very well as a team. Practitioners are committed and focused on ensuring a quality experience for children. The team feel supported by the actively involved headteacher, who attends their regular meetings. The newly appointed senior practitioner and headteacher are working well together to begin to clarify roles and responsibilities. As their new structure evolves, it will be important to evaluate how roles support improvement and ensure quality.
- Practitioners regularly reflect on the quality of their work at weekly planning meetings and in daily handovers. The team have responded positively to many changes in their work. The visiting principal teacher has provided valuable feedback. Action points have been progressed by the team. A calendar of self-evaluation activity and focused monitoring is now in place. As planned, practitioners now need to develop further their use of the national self-evaluation framework 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' in order to drive improvement. The team are well placed to take forward specific improvements identified in their action and improvement plan.
- The team appreciate professional learning opportunities they have access to, such as recent training on schemas. They are motivated to take forward planned work to improve literacy across the early level. Recent professional dialogue and self-evaluation has informed key improvements to the indoor learning environment. Increased use of open-ended materials in the outdoor area shows positive signs of impact. There should now be a focus on developing a deeper understanding of current thinking and best practice across the whole team. This will support recent positive work to develop an enabling learning environment. As they take forward leadership responsibilities, the team need to develop confidence and skills in demonstrating the impact of improvements.

- Children's views, preferences and interests influence the setting. Practitioners value children's opinions and act on their feedback. The management team recognise there is scope for children to have an increased role in the improvement agenda through a wider range of leadership roles.

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 welcoming ethos where strong attachments and positive relationships are evident. Relationships between children are very positive as they work together in the construction and art areas. There are good opportunities for children to engage in spontaneous play and group activities. Positive changes have been made to the resources, layout and flow of the learning environment. Practitioners should continue to evaluate the impact of changes on children's engagement in learning.
- Practitioners interact in a respectful, attentive and supportive way with children. The team respond promptly to what children are interested in, their feelings and opinions. In the best examples, practitioners use open-ended questions well to help children to solve problems, as they construct a den. At present, there are missed opportunities for children to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in all areas of the playroom and outdoors. The team now need to ensure they consistently support children to apply their skills.
- A positive start has been made to using mind maps to plan learning with children. Practitioners increasingly establish what children already know about topics of interest. They discuss with children what they would like to know more about. At the time of inspection, an interest in space had developed into a focus on nocturnal animals. Children's ideas and early mark making are evident in new displays recording their experiences. As planned, the team should now work with children to support them to lead consistently their own learning. Planned floorbook training will support this work.
- Tablet computers and cameras are used within the playroom, garden and local community to document learning. Children enjoy accessing games and use the internet to look closely at pictures of owls. There is scope to develop and extend children's more independent use of a fuller range of digital technology to enhance learning.
- All children have an online profile of their development and experiences. The setting has recently re-established this approach. Profiles contain a range of photographs and observations of activities children have taken part in. The team have been working together to improve their observations. Practitioners recognise they need to improve how they use online profiles to support children to reflect more regularly on their skills and progress. Effective self-evaluation has identified that there is not yet a unique, personalised record of children's progress over time. The team recognise next steps are too often general and focused on activities rather than the progressive development of skills.
- Planning is responsive to children's own interests and is clearly linked to experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence. The team need to develop further the cycle of observation, planning, tracking and monitoring of learning. They recognise that very recently

introduced approaches to tracking and monitoring of children's progress is at an early stage. Using new trackers over recent weeks has helped practitioners identify gaps in children's experiences. Parents have also been asked to complete a record of their child's achievements to help track progress over time.

- Practitioners pay particular attention to recording focused next steps and progress for children who face additional challenges. They work closely with parents and relevant agencies to agree specific targets for children. Planned work to improve tracking and monitoring will support the team to show the impact of such specific support for individual children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum reflects national Curriculum for Excellence guidance. Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are included in various areas of the playroom. The team deliver a play-based curriculum. Children influence learning by expressing their interests and asking questions that shape their experiences. The team have accurately identified that they provide a good breadth of experiences. They now need to focus on consistently building on prior learning for all children. It would be helpful to work with colleagues at the early stages of the primary school to develop a curriculum rationale that supports progression in learning across the early level.
- Planning for children new to the setting is sensitive, flexible and supports children and families to have a positive experience of settling in. Children are also well supported in their last term transition into P1. Consideration should now be made to how these strong pastoral transitions could be enhanced and extended. The development of a shared pedagogy across the early level would link well to planned work on emergent literacy.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Long standing partnership working with families and the local community is central to the success of Crimond School nursery class. The setting has very positive partnerships with families. Parents value the way in which the headteacher and practitioners involve them in their child's learning and life of the setting. Families share skills with children as they lead snack, donate materials to extend children's play and assist with events and outings. Practitioners and parents communicate effectively to support children's learning and development. Parents told us that they are kept well informed about their child's progress. Communication with families is varied and includes newsletters, social media, texts, daily diaries and regular detailed informal feedback. As planned, practitioners should analyse, evaluate and celebrate the impact of new approaches, such as 'home learning bags' to ensure they help children to make progress.
- The setting continues to build on established and new partnerships within the local community, such as visiting the local garage and new health centre. We discussed with the team how they could maximise opportunities to develop and apply skills for life and learning.

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

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

- Children are relaxed, purposeful and have fun at nursery. Relationships between practitioners and children are warm, positive and respectful. Children's needs are met as practitioners apply their good knowledge of them as unique individuals. Parents we spoke with shared how practitioners listened to, and acted immediately upon any important information shared about their child's wellbeing.
- Children are safe, independent and autonomous learners. They receive sensitive support and encouragement to explore the full range of experiences on offer. Practitioners are responsive to the amount and type of support each child needs. Children are happy, confident and have developed positive attachments with the team and with other children. Their behaviour is positive and appropriate to their age and stage of development. Children confidently share their views and ask for help if needed from adults or one another. Practitioners are patient and prioritise children's emotional and social needs in their work. As a result, children are secure and ready to learn.
- The team have developed a good range of opportunities for children to learn more about their own and others' wellbeing. Recent learning about owls and taking care of babies provides motivating and relevant contexts to explore wellbeing indicators. Children identify and remove risks in the outdoor area. They keep themselves safe as they remind one another to wear safety goggles when sawing at the workbench. Parents and children are beginning to explore wellbeing together as they care for the 'wellbeing bears', Honey and Poppet, over weekends. We discussed with practitioners how they could build on this popular and effective work to maximise links with the wellbeing indicators.
- Children are active through daily free-flow access to their large, interesting outdoor play area and visits to a local woodland area. Most children work well together to explore their own solutions in their play. Children have a good understanding of how to support their own health and wellbeing through preparing healthy snacks.
- Practitioners listen carefully to what children say and act upon children's views in their daily interactions. They should now provide appropriate opportunities to formalise their consultation with children. For example, children could be supported to share and act on their views as members of an Eco committee.
- There are appropriate arrangements in place to comply with statutory requirements. Practitioners engage in training which helps them support and care for children. As new management roles develop, this will be a key area in which to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Children who face additional barriers to their learning, or require additional help, are well supported to achieve and be fully included. Frequent dialogue, adaptations to the learning environment and individual support ensures that children's needs are met. There are good

links with a range of relevant support agencies. Appropriate care plans, chronologies and targets are in place in order to plan effectively to meet individual children's needs.

- All children are welcomed and included in the life of the nursery. Equality and diversity is celebrated and families are supported in a non-judgemental, inclusive and appropriate way. Practitioners are attentive to and respectful of children's individual home lives.

3.2 Securing children's progress

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 good progress in communication and early language appropriate to their stage of development. Most children take part in extended conversations with adults. They are confident communicators as they discuss reading newspapers, plan how to construct windows or share a book with a friend. Most children access books independently throughout their day and enjoy sharing familiar stories and rhymes. A few children show an interest in mark making and enjoy making up stories that are scribed by adults. Practitioners recognise that children now need opportunities to apply and develop further their skills in more challenging activities.
- Most children are making good progress in mathematics. Almost all children count confidently throughout their play. Children demonstrate a developing understanding of measure as they carefully mark wood with pencils during their block play. Children apply their good knowledge of a range of shapes to their local environment and when constructing models from junk materials. As planned, practitioners should maximise opportunities for children to build on prior learning and increase opportunities for data handling. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to use their skills in real-life contexts.
- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Children behave well, show concern and care for one another and respect for resources. They understand how to support their own health through daily routines such as tooth brushing and hand washing. Outdoors, increased access to open-ended and natural materials supports children to problem solve and develop their own ideas. Children develop their skills in co-operation and problem solving as they dig, transport and construct. They very much enjoy their snack helper roles. There is scope to expand and develop further opportunities for leadership and responsibility for children.
- Through inspection activities, review of floorbooks and records of experiences children are making good progress across all areas of learning. Children enjoy regular creative activities and represent their ideas in their own way. At the time of inspection, children were highly motivated to explore the natural world as they prepared planting areas. The team should consider how activities maximise opportunities to build on children's prior learning and support progression.
- Practitioners use praise well in order to celebrate success and reinforce learning. Examples of children's successes are shared on achievement walls. As this work develops, the team should

track and monitor achievements using children's profiles. This will support practitioners to take action to ensure no child is missing out on development of skills.

- There is an inclusive ethos in the nursery class, where all children are valued. Children who require additional help to access the curriculum are well supported to enable them to make good progress. Activities, environments and interactions are adapted if needed to ensure all children can access learning. As discussed, the team should continue to work together to track the progress of children with additional needs to evidence the impact of specific strategies or interventions.

Choice of QI : 2.5 Family learning

- engaging families in learning
- early intervention and prevention
- quality of family learning programmes

- Practitioners in the nursery class value the contribution families make to children's learning. The team work hard to get to know children's extended families, make them feel welcome and fully included. They understand families and their individual circumstances very well. As a result, most parents feel confident to access support, participate in 'stay and play' sessions and attend events. Families participate by sharing their time, skills and experiences with children. 'Stay and play' sessions offer opportunities for parents to observe children playing and learning. During the inspection, almost all children had a keen interest in nocturnal animals. Many parents joined children to share in the experience of observing and handling real owls. We discussed with the team plans to increase the range of accessible ways families can participate in sharing learning.
- The team prioritise building links between informal home learning and planned learning in the nursery. A good range of materials, events and activities encourage families to engage in and share children's learning. Story sacks, wellbeing bears, transition packs, new home learning kits and family challenges are popular with parents and children. As a team, they now need to consider how these activities contribute and link with the curriculum. Through self-evaluation, practitioners should work with parents and children to celebrate the impact of shared learning and early intervention work.
- The development of family learning programmes is at an early stage. As the headteacher has identified, there is an exciting opportunity to develop further this area of work. The appointment of a new senior practitioner provides scope for delivering a wider range of family learning programmes. The team work with a health visitor who has been leading family learning in the local area. The headteacher is working with the local early years forum to host a 'play at home' session in the village over the summer holidays. It will be helpful for practitioners to work with the school and local community to develop a shared understanding of the purpose and nature of family learning. This will support local families to work in partnership with practitioners to shape a programme that suits their unique circumstances.

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.