

Summarised inspection findings

Crieff Primary School Nursery Class

Perth and Kinross Council

24 January 2023

Key contextual information

Crieff nursery class includes two playrooms, a sensory room, office space and a cloakroom area. One playroom has been adapted from space originally intended for office use. Children and their families access the nursery using a separate, secure entrance. Children access a well-resourced outdoor area from the larger playroom. The current nursery roll is 57. Children aged two to five attend the setting between the hours of 8 am and 6 pm. The team of full and part-time staff includes support/play workers, inclusion staff, a nursery teacher, early childhood practitioners (ECPs) and two senior ECPs. The depute headteacher has overall leadership and management responsibility for the nursery.

The team has worked together to provide a consistent service through periods of significant change. Expansion of the setting meant the staff team doubled in size. This change also involved changes to the hours and shifts that staff work. There have been frequent periods of disruption to staffing, including changes of management and staff absence. Since the start of the session, there has only been one week with a full complement of staff.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, practitioners provided online materials and engaging activities for children and families. Staff sustained relationships and provided support through calls and outdoor visits. The team was resilient and focused on the needs of local families, as they staffed local hubs for children. Practitioners implemented many changes to practice during periods of restrictions in line with national guidance.

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 Crieff nursery team collaborates effectively and works well together to support all children to learn. Practitioners use national practice guidance and short observations of children effectively to improve spaces and experiences. The team has increased the use of open-ended resources and created cosy and interesting environments. The team has made a few of these changes recently. Children, in particular those aged two to three years, benefit from these improvements in their playroom. They transport resources freely between spaces or enjoy a story on the sofa with an adult. Practitioners and children are familiar with the values of their setting. The values of 'respect and responsibility' are visible in the actions of, and discussions between, children and adults. The newly formed leadership team plans to review and refresh the vision and aims of the whole school. It will be important to engage practitioners, children, parents, and partners of the nursery in shaping this vision. This should support the nursery team to contribute and feel re-engaged fully with the work of the school.
- The nursery team is involved actively in leading improvements in the setting. The depute headteacher is a caring, supportive leader who understands and builds upon the strengths of the team very well. Following periods of significant change, there has been a necessary focus on redefining and reinforcing roles and responsibilities. This has included useful clarification of

the depute headteacher and senior ECP's leadership responsibilities. Changes to the timing, frequency and focus of meetings has improved communication. Reinstated observations of staff practice provide valuable information about what staff do well and what they need to develop further. The team has been involved in agreeing improvement priorities such as a focus on improving quality interactions. This initial improvement work means there is now a better balance between child and adult-initiated learning. As a result, a few children now become engrossed in their play for extended periods of time. The team has worked well with the nursery teacher to make important changes to the planning, documentation and evaluation of children's learning. Practitioners should develop further their skills and confidence in documenting, evaluating and celebrating the impact of improvements.

- All staff are motivated and enthusiastic about their leadership roles. The team applies ideas from professional learning and suggestions from visiting professionals. Practitioners work well together to make changes. The team has increased rightly the use of open-ended resources to support imaginative play. As the team takes forward improvement priorities, they need to have a better shared understanding of what they hope to achieve. Creating specific and measurable targets would support the team to document the difference improvements make to outcomes for children and families. Children share what they enjoy about nursery, and what they would like to learn more about. Practitioners should increase children's and parents' involvement in identifying, leading and evaluating improvements.

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

- Across the setting, children benefit from warm and nurturing relationships. The nursery team works very well together and staff support each other in the provision of care and learning for all children. The staff team respects and values all children. Children feel secure in their play indoors and outdoors due to the positive ethos and learning environment. Practitioners ensure children understand and can follow the well-established routines of the day. Almost all children play well independently and enjoy time together in their key worker groups.
- Practitioners have a good understanding of the needs and interests of the children. Staff interactions with children are consistently warm and encouraging. The team uses questioning well to extend discussions and encourage children to explore their ideas further. Practitioners are well organised and confident. They support children to build dens and explore the natural world in regular small group visits to the nearby woodland. Children enjoy playing outdoors in all weathers. Well-planned experiences and interactions support children in developing curiosity and enquiry. Leaders should ensure all children have access to high quality fiction and non-fiction books across the playrooms. The team should also explore opportunities to work with staff in the school to develop further approaches to digital learning.
- The nursery teacher has introduced refreshed approaches to planning. This new planning supports both intentional and responsive learning. Practitioners take forward children's interests and build on prior learning. The team meets weekly to reflect on plans and activities, and to share responsibilities across the playroom. Children discuss their learning with their key worker. Staff record their comments in floor books alongside photographs and on displays. In subsequent group chats, staff revisit comments and support children to plan additional learning experiences.
- Staff know individual children very well. Practitioners observe children's learning across the playroom. The team records observations and learning in floor books and on-line platforms. Staff use the online platforms to share experiences and learning with parents regularly. The teacher and practitioners use the local authority tracking tools to record learning and identify next steps. The team talks confidently about what children can do, and recognises gaps in their experiences, knowledge and skills. They know each child well and note progress over time. Practitioners should build on their skills and confidence in using assessment to plan, track and monitor progression across all areas of the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a play-based curriculum. There is an improving balance between adult and child-initiated opportunities to develop children's literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills. The team currently offers a wide variety of experiences for children that are well matched to children's stage of development. Practitioners should continue to pay careful attention to experiences, interactions and spaces that challenge all children and build on prior learning. This will ensure there is depth and application of skills across a wider range of areas of the curriculum.
- The team supports children and families very well as they start nursery for the first time. Practitioners develop positive relationships quickly to support children and families as they move to the next stage of their learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted previous joint working and shared learning with primary one teachers. The team is enthusiastic about the reintroduction of experiences to support children across the early level. An interest in play-based approaches by school staff provides a useful opportunity to work together. Developing further approaches to continuity and progression will ensure children make the best possible progress across the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have respectful, supportive relationships with families. Parents and children enjoy opportunities to 'stay and play'. The team is keen to reintroduce previous opportunities for parental and community engagement and family learning. This includes a valuable link with a local care home. As the team begins to reintroduce these opportunities, staff should plan for ways for children to share and apply their skills. Children are excited to share their learning with parents. They point animatedly as they take adults towards their creations. Children share and reflect on learning using photos and videos that staff upload to online platforms. A few children would benefit from the opportunity to record and share significant learning more independently.
- Keyworkers, practitioners and parents share information about children's achievements frequently. Effective use is made of daily contact in the playroom, social media groups and online platforms. A few platforms are new to parents and practitioners, replacing the previous use of learning journals. New formats prove popular to share accessible content about individual children's interests and development. As the team embeds this approach, staff should reflect on the purpose and use of all social media platforms they use with families.

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

- Playrooms offer calm and welcoming environments. Most children settle quickly and appear safe, happy and eager to play. In daily conversations with their key worker, children talk about their feelings and are learning how to express their emotions. There is a strong focus on encouraging children to be kind and responsible. Children are developing skills in sharing materials and taking turns to use toys. They enjoy helping to prepare snack and take turns at lunch. As they chat together at the table together during snack and lunch, children are beginning to develop social skills. Staff support this well in their interactions with children. Children are learning about healthy eating choices and enjoy trying different foods. A few returning children are ready for greater responsibility and leadership opportunities across their learning.
- Practitioners, children and leaders understand and promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This work is led and implemented well and links with the nursery and school approaches to develop children's wellbeing. Staff use wellbeing vocabulary well in their everyday engagement with children. Children know their opinions are important. Most children develop their skills in listening and responding to the views and feelings of others. Children are active, confident and engaged learners as they join in with litter picks or support new children to be safe in the forest. The team should continue to engage with children and parents in using the full range of wellbeing indicators. This will help to develop further a shared understanding of wellbeing vocabulary.
- The staff team is clear about their shared responsibilities for keeping children safe. There is an up to date list of audits, checks and responsibilities to ensure staff implement and review policies. Practitioners are aware of and comply with statutory requirements in relation to early learning and childcare.
- The team promotes inclusion and equality well. The nursery has a strong sense of community. All staff support children who require additional help with their care and learning very well. The team implements strategies agreed with partner agencies such as the local authority inclusion team and speech and language therapists. This ensures children have sensitive support from practitioners who understand their needs. Staff feel confident about strategies used. The team shares information about the positive difference this makes for children with families and other professionals. The team appreciates invaluable specialist support from staff in the Intensive Support Provision based in the school. This liaison supports effective assessment, including risk assessments. It also supports careful transition planning for children who may access specialist placements or need specific support in P1.
- As a result of the inclusive environment in the nursery, children value and respect differences in how others communicate and play. Practitioners model respect and fairness effectively in

their interactions. Children know they are unique and valued. Practitioners should now develop further intentional and responsive experiences to support children to develop understanding of diversity and equality.

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

Children aged two to three

- Children confidently use gestures, repeat single words, form short sentences and ask questions as they make good progress across their learning and development. Most children anticipate responses with delight during turn taking games and counting songs. A few children reflect on real life experiences as they 'read' their own cookbook. All children develop their gross motor skills well as they balance and swing, transport materials and splash in puddles. Practitioners support children to develop a positive sense of self and an early awareness of the needs of others using visual prompts.

Children aged three to five

- Children join in, retell and predict events in stories, songs and nursery rhymes in small groups and during free play. Most children participate in conversations confidently and develop their vocabulary well. A few children use sounds, gestures, visual cues or signs to communicate their needs. Children are enthusiastic and engaged as they mark make to write their name on drawings or mark make in floor books. A few children are ready for more challenging experiences and opportunities to apply their skills as they revisit experiences.
- Most children count and estimate when playing outside. Most children use mathematical language appropriately as they count and roll apples down pipes. Children count and record numerals to 12 as they record how many children are in their group. A few children are ready for more challenging opportunities to apply their skills in real life contexts.
- Almost all children are very independent as they quickly get ready for outdoor play or wash dishes after snack and lunch. Children develop their gross motor skills well as they take part in small group activities. Children's fine motor skills develop well as they manipulate dough and use scissors with increasing control. Most children persevere and are determined as they use their imagination to construct detailed models using recycled materials. Most children have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe indoors and outside.
- Practitioners support all children to build on their strengths and interests. Staff are sensitive, highly responsive and creative, and offer a reassuring presence. This helps all children, including those with additional needs, to access experiences and spaces that enable them to make progress at their own pace. Practitioners work with individual children and small groups to improve language and communication. A few children spend time one to one with adults in the sensory room. This supports children to self-regulate or engage with an adult to

concentrate on an activity. Leaders share information with keyworkers about children who may need additional support individually or in groups. The team should develop further their use of data to identify any children who require targeted support to close the poverty-related attainment gap. Practitioners should also build their skills and experience in evaluating the impact of targeted interventions.

- The staff team knows children and families well. Staff take steps to support families who face socio-economic challenges. This includes close partnership working and signposting families to access support and advice should it be required.

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.