

Summarised inspection findings

Southesk Primary School Nursery Class

Angus Council

2 June 2020

Key contextual information

Southesk nursery class currently provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for 23 children in the morning and five children in the afternoon. There is one main playroom, situated within the main school building, with a separate, welcoming reception area. There is no direct access to outdoor play space. The team includes an acting senior practitioner, two early learning practitioners and an assistant who works between two settings. A visiting additional support needs early years' practitioner (ASNEYYP) enhances the work of the team. The depute headteacher has overall leadership and management responsibility for the work of the nursery. An acting headteacher has been in post since August 2019. Since then there has been an unsettled period for the senior leadership team due to a range of factors, including periods of absence. At the time of inspection, the acting headteacher was not present. As part of the Scottish Government ELC expansion programme, building work to extend the provision is due to start imminently. This will significantly increase the size of the team, offer a service outwith the academic year and accommodate an increased number of children.

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 a valued part of the school and community. The school and nursery class share a common vision, values and aims. Practitioners understand and share this well-established vision. In particular, their values of being welcoming and nurturing of children are clearly evident in practice. The senior leadership team have rightly identified the need to refresh their vision, values and aims as children and families do not yet fully relate to a shared vision. The nursery team have worked hard together through a period of significant change. Staffing absences, changes to roles and planning for their new expanded service are significant features of their work. Currently, there is not yet an effective approach to quality assurance and self-evaluation to support continuous improvement. The senior leadership team recognise the need to implement manageable approaches to evaluating the work of the nursery. It will be important to involve all stakeholders in identifying and leading improvements.
- All practitioners have leadership roles. The team are proud of the important initial changes they have made to the learning environment. Practitioners have created a 'cosy corner' to implement their approach to nurture. They use this well to provide targeted support for individual children. There is an improved range of open ended resources that support children to be more creative. Practitioners recognise they should continue to develop an environment for learning which promotes curiosity and supports children to lead their own learning. Current thinking and research in early learning and childcare does not yet fully underpin the pedagogy of the whole team. Senior leaders need to guide and manage the pace of change in the ELC setting more effectively. The team would benefit from opportunities to look outwards at best practice in ELC to inform their work. Practitioners need support and guidance to reflect in a deeper way on children's learning.

- The leadership team has made recent use of a few quality indicators from the national self-evaluation framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' to reflect on the work of the nursery. Weekly planning meetings, daily informal dialogue and written reflections on learning and teaching provide opportunities for practitioners to reflect together on their practice. The team are involved in a range of professional development opportunities with the school. Senior leaders recognise that there is now a need to target these opportunities to the specific needs of the nursery. Strategic planning for continuous improvement is not yet effective enough. Children would benefit from specific leadership roles and involvement in leading improvements. Senior leaders and staff need to plan rigorous, self-evaluation processes that lead to improved outcomes for children. It would be useful to re-introduce a specific monitoring and quality assurance calendar for the nursery. Clear, measurable targets, specific to the work of the nursery setting, will support more effective self-evaluation by the team. The team need to develop their skills, confidence and experience of measuring the impact of their work on outcomes for children.

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 sensitively and warmly welcome children and their families as they start their session. Families have strong, trusting relationships with the team. This supports children to develop secure attachments with practitioners. Children feel at ease due to the caring, responsive approach. The playroom, wildlife garden and local community spaces provide children with interesting opportunities for inquiry and risk taking. A key feature of the setting are the nurturing and supportive relationships between children, practitioners and parents.
- Most children choose confidently where they want to play. Practitioners have begun to provide more open-ended and natural materials to support children's play. As a result, most children concentrate for extended periods of time. They are creative and imaginative as they take turns to dig a 'pool' or use real tools confidently to create 'walkie talkies'. Practitioners should continue to develop their indoor learning environment to encourage children's curiosity, creativity and problem solving skills. Children benefit from significantly increased time in their engaging school wildlife garden. Most children are motivated and celebrate proudly their success as they identify rough objects linked to their word of the week. Practitioners need to ensure learning experiences maximise opportunities for children to deepen and extend their knowledge and skills.
- Practitioners understand individual children and their stage of development well. They use this information to inform their positive interactions. There are a few good examples of practitioners using open-ended questions appropriately to support children to express and communicate their ideas. There are a few missed opportunities to support children to extend their interests and thinking. All practitioners should continue to develop higher order questioning skills in order to support children to make connections in their learning and build on their prior learning and skills.
- Practitioners make use of digital technologies to support and enhance children's learning. Children take photographs confidently using a tablet to record their learning experiences and creations. Staff should maximise opportunities to use technology to enhance learning with the limited digital technology available.
- Weekly planning meetings support practitioners to plan for children's learning. Practitioners use a play based, responsive approach that values children's ideas and interests. The team respond well to what motivates children and are beginning to record learning experiences in floorbooks. Practitioners recognise these books do not yet capture the development of children's skills and how they extend and develop further children's learning. Children need support to think about what they already know and what they would like to learn next.

- At present, the cycle of planning, tracking and monitoring of children's progress includes several approaches. These are at an early stage of development. Parents and practitioners discuss frequently children's progress in an informal way. All children have a profile that contains a few observations. These are beginning to capture and celebrate children's learning. At present, next steps are too general and not yet specific to each individual child. The team recognise they should work together to improve the quality and use of these profiles. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the profiles at regular meetings with keyworkers. A few parents share important information about children's interests and skills from home. Practitioners use this information effectively to complete new milestone trackers to assess what children need to learn and develop next. The team produce detailed transition reports for children at the end of term that celebrate progress in learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners use the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence to plan a wide range of learning experiences. The team provide good opportunities to develop children's learning and development in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across different areas of the playroom and outdoors. Planning of learning takes account of children's interests and stage of development. A few children need more challenging activities that support them to apply their skills in new and real-life contexts.
- Practitioners support families well during transitions into the setting. Their approach is sensitive and tailored to the individual needs of each child and family. Children benefit from well-established pastoral transitions into primary school. Practitioners are keen to work more closely with school staff to develop a shared play pedagogy. Working across the early level, from nursery and into P1, senior leaders and staff should use their curriculum frameworks effectively to ensure continuity and progression in learning for all children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents and carers are highly valued partners in the life and work of the nursery. The team's respectful approach has established honest and trusting relationships with families. Parents share openly crucial information about children's interests, and their development, with the team. Practitioners use their daily contacts and a website to provide a good range of current, useful information for families. As a result, parents feel well-informed about the work of the nursery.
- Practitioners, senior management and outside professionals establish and sustain positive relationships with families. The team works with a shared focus on children's best interests and progress. Most parents attend regular meetings with practitioners to inform the planning and review of children's learning. Group sessions including parenting groups and family learning sessions offer opportunities for parents to build confidence and develop new skills. The team should work with parents, partners and colleagues in the school to develop a shared understanding of the purpose of family learning. Practitioners should evaluate and celebrate the impact of their work with families on children's 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

- Practitioners, children and families have positive, empathetic and supportive relationships that build children's confidence and self-esteem. The team communicates effectively with parents to understand children's individual likes, preferences and home life in detail. They use this information well to underpin their support for children's wellbeing. Most children are kind and patient with one another throughout their play. The team should continue recent work to support children to communicate their feelings and develop their understanding of, and empathy for, other children's emotions and behaviour. Most practitioners demonstrate a good understanding of the principles of nurture and attachment that underpin their work. As a result, positive relationships support children to feel secure and happy at nursery.
- A recent focus on improving and developing the language of wellbeing across the work of the nursery team is working well. Most practitioners and the majority of children have an increased awareness of the wellbeing indicators. Recent work on safety supports children to risk assess their play in a meaningful way. Children spot hazards and remind one another of boundaries in the wildlife garden. They remind others of the importance of safety procedures when using real tools. The team should now work with parents, children and other partners to embed the full range of wellbeing indicators throughout all aspects of their practice. The team role model positive behaviours and increasingly assist children to discuss and resolve conflicts together. Almost all children are able to share space, resources and cooperate well as they play. Practitioners should raise the profile of their work to implement restorative practices in nursery, in line with the work of the school.
- Most children demonstrate good independence as they dress for outdoor play and brush their own teeth. Most children enjoy helping practitioners with tasks and enthusiastically share their views and ideas about changes to the learning environment. Children are ready for increased opportunities to be responsible and take leadership roles throughout their nursery. Practitioners should explore how rights based approaches could extend and develop children's understanding of fairness and increase their participation.
- Practitioners work well as a team and prioritise good communication to meet statutory duties. An appropriate range of professional learning in first aid, infection control and child protection, ensures all practitioners are clear about procedures and individual responsibilities. Records about children's needs are stored securely and accessed appropriately.
- Practitioners' inclusive approach ensures all children are supported to learn and develop and are treated equally. All children are valued as individuals. Practitioners value difference and respect diversity as they plan for religious and cultural celebrations. The team should continue to audit and review resources to ensure they represent and celebrate diversity.

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

- Most children are making good progress in communication and early language. A few children use gesture, initiate eye contact and make familiar sounds to share their preferences and needs. Children explore and discuss books with enthusiasm in the garden and during visits to their local library. Most children enjoy exploring Scottish words and a few familiar letters as they share well-loved stories. Children mark frequently in the indoor and outdoor areas. A few children recognise their name in print and begin to represent their name and ideas. They draw stamps on letters and make 'maps' of their own stories outside. Children are ready to apply and develop further these communication and early language skills across all areas of their play.
- Overall, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Most children count with increasing confidence as they sort natural materials. A group of children measure and compare lengths of jumps enthusiastically in the outdoor area. The majority of children show a keen interest in numbers, and can count to five with confidence, with a few counting beyond. A few children need to develop further their understanding of one to one correspondence with larger numbers. Children are capable of applying and developing further a wider range of early mathematics skills through meaningful real-life contexts.
- Children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They show care and kindness for one another. Children are proud of their improved independence as they get ready for outdoor play or cooperate well to make a den outdoors. Children challenge themselves to develop their gross motor skills as they climb, balance and negotiate uneven surfaces and heights confidently in the wildlife garden. Most children are developing a good awareness about how to keep themselves and others safe outdoors. They share their good knowledge of safety as they complete enthusiastically risk assessment records. Children need to apply and develop further their skills and prior learning in health and wellbeing. Most children also make good progress in developing their fine motor skills as they thread pasta and make playdough. Children need to continue to develop how to describe with confidence their thoughts and feelings. A few children need specific support to regulate their emotions. They would benefit from the whole school restorative approaches that support children to resolve conflicts when playing together.
- Over time, children are making good progress across their learning from their own individual starting points. Practitioners recognise that their new approaches do not yet track children's progress in learning effectively. A few children enjoy discussing photographs and the learning experiences recorded in their folders. They add pictures they have drawn. Children need

opportunities to use their profiles with practitioners to reflect on the progress they are making and develop a shared language of learning.

- Practitioners do not yet effectively capture and celebrate children's achievements from within and outwith the setting. Children are active as they walk to the wildlife garden, and are responsible citizens as they collect litter in their local community. Daily praise and encouragement from practitioners builds children's confidence and self-esteem. A few children contribute well as they make suggestions for new resources for the home corner. However, practitioners do not yet use information about achievements to build upon children's prior learning and skills. As they continue to improve children's profiles, the team should work with children, parents and partners to build a picture of children's achievements.

- Identified children who need specific interventions or support are making good progress. The inclusive and supportive ethos supports all children to concentrate for longer periods, and to use all of their senses to learn about the world around them. Children who may face potential barriers to their learning are included in groups and targeted work to support them to learn. Effective use of the school's sensory room, nursery cosy corner, and consistent implementation of agreed strategies, supports a few children to overcome barriers to learning. Where children have specific additional needs, records are current, updated regularly and include specific targets that have been agreed with parents and visiting specialists. As a result of regular meetings and effective partnership working, children progress well. The team recognise they need to measure the impact of interventions on the progress of individuals and groups.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| 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.