

Summarised inspection findings

Whalsay School Nursery Class

Shetland Islands Council

30 June 2020

Key contextual information

Whalsay School nursery class is located in a separate building in the grounds of the primary department in Symbister, Whalsay, an island off the east coast of mainland Shetland. At the time of the inspection, the morning session roll was sixteen children aged 3-5 years and seven children aged 3-5 years in the afternoon session. There is a secure outside area which children access daily as well as a gym hall within the primary department. At the time of the inspection, there were building works adjacent to the nursery building. There have been significant staffing changes and challenges over the last eighteen months. This includes the creation of a new senior practitioner role and new appointments within the practitioner team. An ongoing nursery teacher vacancy has impacted on key areas for improvement required in the nursery class. Two depute headteachers (DHTs) have been designated management responsibility by the headteacher who has overall responsibility.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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 senior practitioner leads the day-to-day running and management of the nursery class effectively. The senior leadership team has identified areas for improvement and helped the nursery class team to rebuild positive relationships. Senior leaders and the local authority now need to support the work of the nursery more strategically. They need to create and implement a structured action plan with a focus on addressing the important weaknesses, which are currently diminishing learning experiences for children.
- The nursery team displays statements illustrating the vision, values and aims shared across the whole school community. Practitioners discuss them with children and families and their views and perspectives are gathered. Practitioners discuss the values with children in a developmentally appropriate way by talking about how they can be creative, responsible and healthy. The nursery team ensures the children experience a clear sense of belonging to their local community through strong relationships with children, families and links in the wider school community. The nursery team has a wide variety of resources donated to support learning experiences.
- Practitioners are keen to take on leadership roles for various aspects of the setting's work. Children are ready to take on increased leadership responsibilities. The nursery team should explore opportunities for children to be involved in learner participation groups for example the Eco Group. This should support the development of their leadership, confidence and sense of inclusion in the wider school community.
- Practitioners reflect on their work and take part in annual professional review meetings led by the DHTs. They have undertaken professional learning that relates to children's health requirements. The DHTs support practitioners to access professional learning in early learning

and childcare, including a recent local authority input on block play. There is a need for senior leaders and practitioners to identify and undertake key areas of professional learning required to support improvement and deepen professional knowledge. Local authority inputs and links to national online resources should support the work of the nursery team on its improvement journey. Senior leaders need to evaluate formally the impact of professional learning to ensure it is improving outcomes for children. This should support practitioners to deliver high-quality early learning and childcare that better reflects current thinking.

- The DHTs, together with the nursery team, should continue to improve self-evaluation approaches. They should continue to use the national guidance, *How good is our learning and childcare?* alongside other relevant national guidance to support them with this. Senior leaders need to re-establish formal monitoring processes that support the nursery team to identify what is working well, areas for improvement and the impact of changes.
- The whole-school improvement plan includes priorities which are specific to the nursery class. Senior leaders and practitioners should continue to look outwards to other settings providing high quality early learning and childcare. This should focus on developing a shared understanding of high-quality early learning and childcare and benchmark practice in line with national standards. Clear roles, remits, and guidance for the senior practitioner, members of the nursery team and senior leaders should support the identification of responsibilities and how they support continuous improvement. Senior leaders need to ensure the pace of change is appropriate, well planned and leads to improved outcomes for all children.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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 benefit from supportive and caring relationships. Practitioners know children well as individuals and confidently discuss their particular personalities and care needs. This supports children to feel safe, secure and confident in the setting.
- Most children's levels of engagement during their play are variable. Children should experience sustained levels of engagement to develop further their creativity and independence skills. The majority of children need more support to remain engaged in play throughout their time at nursery. Practitioners need to sustain and extend children's skills and interests to better support them and meet their needs.
- Practitioners are supportive and positive in their interactions with children. They provide commentary and praise when children are playing in the setting. In a few examples, practitioners support children to think about their learning. Most practitioners need to employ more effective and skilled questioning techniques to support and challenge children's thinking. They should explore how higher-order questioning can support children to develop further their curiosity, enquiry and problem-solving skills.
- The nursery team is at the very early stages of using children's individual learning journeys to record children's learning and identify next steps. They need to develop their practice in gathering observations by recognising, evaluating and recording children's significant learning. This should ensure next steps are identified and individualised for each child. Senior leaders have identified correctly that the range, detail and types of information provided needs to improve as a matter of priority. Senior leaders need to support the work of the nursery by building skills in the discussion of children's learning and ensure that observations record significant learning over time.
- Practitioners are at an early stage of developing their understanding of children as learners. They use their professional judgements well to assess when children achieve developmental milestones. They share these with parents and carers. Practitioners need to have more conversations with children about their learning, individually and in small purposeful groups. This should give children a greater sense of themselves as active leaders of their learning. It should also help children develop vocabulary to talk about their learning and plan their next steps.
- Senior leaders and practitioners are at the early stages of planning using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. A shared floorbook records children's views and reflects what children already know, linking learning activities and resources to CfE experiences and outcomes and possible lines of development. Senior leaders need to support planning for

learning in a more focused way to ensure there is clear progression and challenge for all learners and planning is individualised for children.

- Senior leaders identify the need to establish strategically-led processes that track, monitor and evaluate children's learning needs as a matter of priority. Practitioners are at the early stages of using a recently introduced numeracy tracker. Once more robust tracking processes are in place, this should support practitioners in building upon what children already know and in planning their next steps in learning.
- Practitioners should be included in whole-school moderation processes. Opportunities to be involved both within and beyond the setting will develop a shared understanding of progress and achievements. This should support practitioners in making robust professional judgements in line with national standards.
- Practitioners make some use of digital technology, including the use of remote controlled toys, a camera and games on a desktop computer. The use and range of digital technology should be developed further to extend and enhance learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The nursery team are at the early stages of using local authority progression frameworks. Senior leaders should support the work of the nursery with the implementation of documentation as it is created and developed by Shetland Islands Council. This should deepen the nursery team's knowledge of children's learning across the CfE early level.
- Senior leaders should work with the nursery team to create a curriculum rationale that reflects early learning pedagogy and the unique context of the setting. The curriculum design principles should be taken into account with a particular focus on progression and challenge.
- Practitioners make effective use of the local environment to extend children's awareness of the world around them and deepen their sense of belonging to the local community. Children benefit from close links with families and residents on Whalsay Island. Practitioners often bring resources into the nursery class for children to investigate and observe, for example an octopus, a frog and feathers from local wildlife. Children buy snacks and resources for the nursery from local shops.
- Well-planned transition arrangements to primary one include visits to the wider school community. Practitioners from the nursery share information about children's health and wellbeing and developmental milestones. The development of tracking systems for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing should support the primary one teacher further to build upon prior learning and ensure coherent progression across the CfE early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have strong, positive relationships with parents and carers. They have established effective partnership working with health professionals, which allows for appropriate support to both children and families. The nursery class should continue to build upon the strong links with the local community. This should focus on developing a shared understanding of the purpose of parental engagement and its impact on children's learning.
- The nursery communicates in a variety of ways including a nursery blog, emails, letters, the children's learning journeys and a variety of information leaflets from the local community. Parents and carers are regularly asked their views to improve aspects of the nursery class.
- Parents and families feel very positive about the nursery class and they appreciate the relationships between the nursery team, children and their parents and carers. A few parents would like more advice in supporting learning in the setting and at home. The nursery team should continue to gather views from parents and carers to identify and develop further advice and information about how children learn through play.

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 local 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

- The nursery class has an inclusive ethos. Practitioners foster positive relationships with children and families and have a good knowledge of the local community. Overall, most children are happy in the setting. Practitioners discuss, display and refer to the nursery rules in child-friendly language. This supports children's understanding of the importance of daily routines. Most children respond well to each other and develop important friendships. All practitioners encourage positive behaviour. A few children need support to share and take turns. The nursery team should continue to support children to discuss their feelings and emotions in order to develop their cooperation and teamwork skills.
- Practitioners use the wellbeing indicators in a child-friendly questionnaire with children to identify children's needs and experiences. Children are learning how to be safe during walks in the local community when crossing roads. They enjoy a daily healthy snack. This supports their developing awareness of healthy food choices. Practitioners use national guidance to plan for snack with children who give suggestions and help to prepare the snack and wash up their dishes. Children are developing skills of independence and responsibility. A consistency of approach by all practitioners on how children's independence skills are developed because of snack routines should be regularly monitored. Children recycle in the local community and visit the local charity shop to purchase resources for the nursery. Practitioners should ensure they plan real and meaningful contexts for children to understand how they manage their own wellbeing and increase their knowledge of all the wellbeing indicators in a developmentally appropriate way. Practitioners should consult children on the day-to-day and wider decisions about their setting. This should support increased leadership roles that reflect their communication skills and abilities.
- Practitioners know each child and their families very well. Senior leaders and practitioners are aware of their responsibilities in relation to statutory duties within early learning and childcare. They create personal care plans with parents and carers. These include important information to allow practitioners to care for children's needs. Practitioners respond and plan for children's individual needs and barriers to learning in a sensitive and caring manner. Practitioners undertake training on specific areas such as first aid, child protection and food hygiene as required.
- The work of the nursery promotes inclusion and equality. Practitioners recognise and celebrate a range of events in the calendar year, supporting children to develop an awareness of diversity. Senior leaders and the nursery team should continue to develop further their understanding of equality and diversity. This should ensure that any potential stereotypes are consistently recognised and challenged wherever possible.

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

- Senior leaders and practitioners are unable to evidence clearly children's progress over time in their learning and development during their time at nursery. Senior leaders should now embed tracking systems that will enable practitioners to evidence more robustly children's progress in their learning.
- In early communication and language, most children are making satisfactory progress. Children are learning to take turns when speaking and are developing their awareness of when to talk and when to listen. Most children enjoy listening to familiar stories, nursery rhymes and songs. This is supporting them to hear patterns in words. A few need support to extend their engagement and increase their listening skills during group story times. Children visit the school library every week, which supports their use and enjoyment of fiction and non-fiction books. Children self-register for snack, which is supporting awareness of their names and the meaning of text. The majority of children engage with provocations to write secret messages via the newly established 'message centre'. Children are developing their mark-making skills and understanding that writing has a purpose. Practitioners should continue to make use of environmental print and review and update meaningful mark-making opportunities. This should ensure levels of engagement are sustained and extended.
- In early mathematics and numeracy, most children are making satisfactory progress. Practitioners support children's understanding of number and number recognition through daily routines and experiences. Most children understand that numbers represent a quantity. They have regular opportunities to count in order. Most children can sort and recognise two-dimensional shapes and explore three-dimensional objects and their inter-relationships through the increasing use of block play and loose parts. The majority of children use the language of measure such as full and empty through exploration and activities using the water and sand trays. Children are aware of the days of the week and are increasingly aware of the months of the year and seasons. The nursery team should explore meaningful ways to develop further children's understanding of money, creation of simple patterns and use of information handling. The development of the outdoor area into a more numeracy-rich environment will support further children's learning in this area.
- In health and wellbeing, most children are making good progress. Overall, most children are happy in the nursery. They are making important friendships. Children have access to the outdoor area, local park and gym hall. This supports them in their physical activity and

promotes balance and movement during energetic play. They climb, run and manage their own risk. Children are increasing their independence skills as they get themselves ready to explore their local community and go outdoors. Children are developing their sense of place and appreciation of the natural world. They can talk about how living things need food and water to survive, including how they grow and change over time. Children's skills in being responsible and creative should be developed further through real and meaningful opportunities.

- Practitioners support children's learning and achievements by offering praise and encouragement. Practitioners discuss informally children's achievements. However, these are not recorded consistently in individual children's learning journeys. Including these would support a holistic view of learning, capturing and building on wider achievements. Children should be enabled better to contribute their views and ideas to the setting and the wider school community. This should support their developing skills of responsibility and support them to better lead their own independent learning.
- Practitioners treat children and their families with fairness and respect. They understand the challenges children and families face, as well as potential barriers to wellbeing and learning. Practitioners provide appropriate additional support to secure positive outcomes for children.

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.