

Summarised inspection findings

Priorsford Primary School and Nursery Class

Scottish Borders Council

5 March 2019

Key contextual information

Priorsford Nursery Class is located in a separate building in the grounds of Priorsford Primary School. The setting provides a care service to a maximum of 40 children at any one time between the ages of three years and entry into primary school. The setting comprises one large playroom and an enclosed outdoor area.

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 vision, values and aims reflect the ethos of Priorsford Primary School. They outline the whole school commitment to a rights respecting community. A charter agreed with parents, carers, children and the nursery team is displayed in the setting. The charter and vision is given to all parents and carers. It explains how the children in Priorsford Nursery Class interpret the vision. It states they have the right to show and tell, to be safe, to be cared for and to explore and play. As discussed, practitioners should ensure the values are fully understood by children in a meaningful way.
- Practitioners and members of the senior leadership team visit other settings to support work on areas for improvement. Practitioners access professional learning and development opportunities. Practitioners have individual leadership roles reflecting their areas of interest. As discussed, a more strategic curriculum focused approach to leadership roles should now be developed. A specific initial focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing would support improvement priorities.
- The senior leadership team need to clarify their remits and responsibilities specific to the nursery class as well as the specific roles of the senior nursery nurse. This will ensure a more focused and purposeful collegiate delivery of improvement priorities.
- Children demonstrate an enthusiasm to be involved in leadership opportunities. However, there are currently missed opportunities for children to take on leadership roles. Practitioners now need to support children to become more involved in the life and decision making processes of the nursery class.
- The strengths and areas for improvement in the nursery class are outlined within the school improvement plan. Improvements are recorded, regularly reviewed and collated as part of an action plan. The support and expertise of the local authority Early Years Team Teacher (EYTT) is valued greatly as part of this approach. The principal teacher responsible for early level works closely with the EYTT and the senior nursery nurse.
- Robust self-evaluation processes are at the early stages of being established. Senior leaders need to plan a more systematic, rigorous approach to self-evaluation in the nursery class.

Embedding the use of national frameworks and guidance such as 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?' and 'Building the Ambition' will ensure practice in the nursery class develops further in line with national expectations. Regular, planned input by senior leaders will support the setting on its journey of improvement.

- During the inspection week, senior leaders and practitioners engaged well in professional dialogue. Practitioners have established a positive and collegiate team since the appointment of the new senior nursery nurse. There is a much-improved environment for learning. The team are keen to improve further the layout of the learning environment to better meet the needs of children.

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

- Practitioners create a warm, caring ethos in the nursery class and treat children with care and respect. As a result, children appear to be happy, settled and are developing confidence and independence as they make choices about their play. Most children are motivated and engage well in the wide range of experiences on offer in the playroom. They are able to cooperate and share resources as they play together and discuss their ideas. A few children concentrate for extended periods and take pride in creating junk models and using construction materials. Children are allowed time and freedom to develop their creativity.
- Recent changes to the playroom environment help to create a more positive ethos for learning. Practitioners know children well and are responsive to their needs and interests. They interact effectively to support children's play and provide appropriate praise and encouragement. Practitioners now need to continue to develop their questioning skills to ensure their interactions support children to deepen and extend their learning.
- Children use a range of digital technologies, including computer programmes and interactive whiteboards to support their learning. There is scope to continue to develop this.
- As a team, practitioners observe children during play and record information in individual learning diaries. They are starting to collate assessment information based on their knowledge of children. This work is at an early stage and is not yet affecting the learning experiences available to children. The team now need support to develop their approaches to assessment to help them use significant information on children's learning. This will help to plan more effectively for children's next steps in learning.
- Learning diaries are accessible to children and contain examples of their experiences including photographs, comments and examples of work. During the inspection week, we did not observe children using their diaries. It would be beneficial for the team to explore how they can ensure children take greater ownership of their diaries. There are opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to the diaries. This includes making comments on children's learning and contributing to planning next steps in their learning. Parents and carers receive an end of year summary report with information on children's progress. Practitioners should explore how they can engage more effectively with parents and carers. This should support them to play a more active part in their children's learning.
- Transition into P1 is well planned and takes account of children's pastoral needs. We discussed how the senior leadership team can develop this further to support progression in children's learning and development.

- Procedures for planning and tracking children's learning are at an early stage of development. Practitioners are exploring how they can start to involve children in the planning process through the use of floorbooks and learning walls. This has resulted in children being involved in making changes to the book area and home corner. There is scope for the team to build on this positive start. With support, they should now develop and implement robust procedures to plan appropriately challenging experiences. This will ensure all children make the progress of which they are capable.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Across the nursery class, there is an appropriate focus on learning through play. This is enhanced by the use of open-ended natural resources. There is a focus on the essential aspects of early learning including wellbeing, communication, mathematics and creativity. Continued support from the local authority will be beneficial in supporting the team to make better use of national guidance on the curriculum. This will help to ensure they are providing the necessary breadth, depth, challenge and relevance for all children. The team should work together to build a shared curriculum rationale. This should reflect early years pedagogy and incorporate the elements that are important to Priorsford Primary School Nursery Class.
- The playroom environment is inviting to children and engages them in a variety of interesting learning experiences. Although children have free-flow access to the outdoor area, during the inspection we noted a reluctance from groups of children to access the area. There is scope for the team to make use of relevant guidance to develop the outdoor area. This will ensure it is inviting for all children and provides a wide variety of experiences across all areas of the curriculum.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents and carers are kept informed about their child's experiences through a range of informal and planned opportunities for discussion. They have access to children's learning diaries once per term where they can make comments and share learning from home. This helps to develop close relationships between home and the setting. As discussed, practitioners should monitor the completion of the parent comment sheets. This will support any future development work to increase parental engagement.
- Parents and carers demonstrate their interest and involvement in the life of the setting. They participate in twice-yearly 'stay and play' sessions and support outings in the community. The 'stay and play' sessions are very well attended and evidence and feedback is shared on the nursery class social media page. As discussed, there should be more regular opportunities for parents and carers to attend 'stay and play' sessions with a particular curriculum focus. This will further support and deepen parental engagement in their children's learning.
- The recent reinstatement of the parent focus group aims to include parents and carers in the improvement and development of the nursery class. Positive changes have already been made including changes to the entrance area and how parental information is displayed. Plans to include parents and carers with the delivery of improvement plan priorities will be a positive next step.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

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

- Within the nursery class there is a welcoming and friendly ethos. Children and families are valued for the contributions they make and are encouraged to share their views. Practitioners understand the importance of strong relationships in creating a positive climate for learning. They know each child well and all share in the responsibility for creating a respectful ethos and sense of community. Parents and carers speak highly of the inclusive, nurturing ethos and improvements in the learning environment.
- Practitioners have established warm and caring relationships with children. Practitioners promote and consistently use rights respecting language in accordance with the Rights Respecting Schools approach. Practitioners have a developing understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They should now consider ways in which to increasingly embed and share information with children, parents and carers. An overview linked to the wellbeing indicators is identifying and recording actions implemented to support children and families. As planned, an individualised format identifying next steps for children will support the further development and use of the indicators by practitioners. This will ensure children are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.
- Children are aware and can talk about healthy foods during snack time. They are increasingly aware of how to keep themselves safe. As discussed, the extension of children's knowledge using real life contexts will be a positive next step. This will support the development of the health and wellbeing curriculum.
- Positive behaviour is promoted and practitioners encourage children to be aware of the needs of others. As a result, almost all children are able to play together cooperatively or alongside each other. When necessary, practitioners intervene in a way that is restorative and is respectful of children's feelings.
- Children are confident and approach practitioners to communicate their needs. Practitioners are at the early stages of capturing children's voice in their learning. Practitioners should now provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for more consultation with children.
- Senior leaders and practitioners have a clear understanding of what is expected in order to fulfil required statutory duties to secure positive outcomes for the children in their care. They undertake professional learning tailored to the needs of children and to further their own understanding and knowledge.
- Practitioners, supported by the depute headteacher, effectively identify where children may require additional support in their learning. Appropriate links with the relevant external agencies such as speech and language therapy support children and their families.

- Practitioners understand the circumstances of individual children and families. They use this knowledge effectively to help promote their participation in the nursery class. There is an ethos of equality and inclusion and practitioners are clear about their responsibilities to ensure all children recognise and value 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

- Overall from observations, conversations with children and reviews of children's records it is evident that children are making satisfactory progress in their learning and development over time. However, as discussed, the nursery team are not at this time able to clearly evidence the added value in how they support children's progress over time. Children's learning diaries, observations and planning documentation do not yet illustrate how the nursery builds effectively on children's individual prior learning and skills. The nursery team recognise that approaches to observing, capturing and evaluating information about children's progress and achievements need to be improved. This should demonstrate clearly the impact provided by the work of the team.
- In health and wellbeing, children are making satisfactory progress. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe and can talk about the importance of personal hygiene. They are starting to develop friendships and, with support from practitioners, are able to share resources and resolve simple conflicts. Children are developing independence and learning to follow routines at snack. They understand the need to take responsibility and play an active part in tidying up at the end of the session.
- Most children are able to communicate effectively and take part in detailed conversations with each other, and with adults. Children access a variety of opportunities to practise mark-making, and a few are making good progress with emergent writing. The majority of children are able to recognise their name, names of friends and other words and letters that are familiar to them. Most children access the book area and enjoy sharing books with friends and adults. They respond well to rhymes in small group situations. However, a few children need support to listen attentively to stories in a large group situation. Practitioners should build on children's interests in communication and early language. They should explore how they can provide challenging real-life experiences to support children to make the progress of which they are capable.
- In mathematics, most children are making satisfactory progress as they sort, match and count during play. Most children count to ten and beyond and are able to recognise and match numbers. They are learning about shape and money through playing games and building in the construction area. The team should ensure that children systematically experience all aspects of mathematics. Activities should consistently build on prior learning and skills, and provide challenge for all children.

- As a result of free access to a variety of open-ended materials, most children are developing creativity and a few demonstrate a high level of skill during play. They experiment with musical instruments and collaborate in small groups to make music. Children are developing confidence as they use the woodwork bench, and understand how to keep themselves safe as they use tools.
- Children's individual achievements are recognised and praised by practitioners within the nursery class. Children will benefit from a greater focus being placed on their achievements. This should include recognition of their achievements from beyond the nursery class.
- Practitioners know children and families well and are responsive to the differing cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds of individuals. Attendance at recent training is helping practitioners to gain confidence in supporting children with English as an additional language. There is scope for the team to start to explore evidence based interventions to help them support all children to make progress. As discussed, practitioners should continue with their plans to provide programmes for children and families to learn together.

Choice of QI: 1.2 Leadership of learning

- Professional engagement and collegiate working
- Impact of career-long professional learning
- Children leading learning

- Across the nursery class, there is an ethos of professional engagement and collegiate working. Senior leaders encourage and support the nursery team to take up development opportunities in areas in which they are interested. This has included visits to other settings, training opportunities and professional reading. The recently appointed senior nursery nurse embraced the opportunity to develop her knowledge of early learning and childcare. This has had an impact on the learning environment, and further sharing of this knowledge with the nursery team will support planned improvement priorities.
- Practitioners engage positively in a variety of professional development opportunities which are offered in the nursery class. This has included work to develop understanding of schematic play, significant observations in learning and the learning cycle. The nursery team will benefit from planned opportunities to reflect critically on their work and professional learning.
- Career-long professional learning should now be strategically planned and carefully evaluated. This will ensure and measure the impact of this learning in progressing school improvement priorities. All practitioners should continue to ensure they reflect and record how professional learning impacts positively on outcomes for children. This should be done in line with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) responsibilities of practitioners.
- Children are poised and ready to play a more active role in planning their learning to meet their needs. Practitioners should work with children to explore the most effective ways to enable pupils to engage more actively in their own learning. This should lead to a balanced approach that incorporates children's ideas and interests, which lead to flexible and responsive approaches.

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.