

Summarised inspection findings

Birkhill Primary School Pre School Class

Angus Council

7 March 2023

Key contextual information

Birkhill Pre School Class is situated within the Birkhill Primary School building. The nursery has undergone significant change in recent years.

Previously, the nursery was situated in a separate building located over a mile from the school. Around seven years ago, the nursery moved into the primary school building. It was refurbished and extended in 2019/20. This increased the nursery's capacity from around 30 children, to its current registration for 56 children at any one time. The practitioner team increased in size, from three members to 11 members to accommodate this expansion. The nursery now offers early learning and childcare (ELC) for 1140 hours from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm during term time. At the time of inspection, the roll was 54 children. The Senior Early Years Practitioner (SEYP) leads the day-to-day running of the nursery, supported in management by the headteacher and principal teacher. The nursery environment includes three large indoor areas with direct access to two outdoor areas.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 nursery and school values of 'ready, respectful and safe' and mission statement 'because we care' are evident throughout the nursery. Senior leaders and practitioners reflect these values in their daily activities and interactions with children and families. Practitioners demonstrate that they are highly committed and very responsive towards their nursery community. As planned, practitioners should continue to reinforce the vision, values, and aims with parents and the nursery community.
- There is a blend of leadership roles across the nursery team, which works well and helps to deliver and achieve very positive outcomes for children. The SEYP provides very strong day-to-day leadership in the nursery. The principal teacher and headteacher are highly visible in the nursery. The principal teacher contributes to the nursery through their participation as a team member on a weekly basis. This enables her to have a clear understanding of day-to-day life in the nursery and supports very strong transitions across the early level. The headteacher provides clear strategic leadership of the nursery. She has a very good understanding of early learning and childcare and highly values the nursery as a key part of the school. The whole nursery team work very well together.
- Practitioners engage in regular professional learning activities, which continue to support improvements in practice. They access a range of learning opportunities, including remote learning sessions offered by Angus Council. Practitioners proactively seek out and undertake learning individually, or together as a team. This professional learning is having a positive impact on children's experiences, for example, nurturing approaches to supporting children with additional needs. As a result of this input, practitioners are offering more consistent

approaches to meeting individual children`s needs. Additionally, practitioners work well with external providers to support improvements, for example to develop listening and talking skills across the nursery and primary.

- The practitioner team know the strengths and areas for development of the nursery well. Through daily and weekly end-of-day discussions and formal meetings, practitioners regularly review aspects of nursery life. The headteacher, principal teacher and SEYP undertake very effective self-evaluation activities, supported by Angus Council early years officers. This includes following an annual quality assurance calendar, based on national guidance. Practitioners regularly look outwards, collaborating with nearby settings to moderate learning folios.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 have created a warm, welcoming environment, and, as a result, children feel safe and secure. Practitioners, children and parents share positive, nurturing relationships. Children have developed friendship groups and play very well together. They are kind and respectful to their peers, sharing and taking turns well.
- Most children are engaged in their learning across the indoor and outdoor environment. Practitioners have created an inviting learning environment, which allows children to explore and develop their curiosity, creativity and inquiry. Children's drawings, artwork and photographs of engagement in learning experiences are displayed attractively throughout the playroom. Children have daily access to outdoors and engage in a range of learning experiences, for example, digging for treasure in the mud. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop their outdoor space.
- Practitioners interact with children in a positive and caring manner, which supports children's confidence and self-esteem. Most practitioners use skilled questioning well to support and extend children's learning. Practitioners listen actively to children and allow them time and space to develop their learning. Children have access to a range of digital technology, including an interactive board to enhance their learning.
- As a team, practitioners have developed their knowledge and skills in early learning pedagogy. Practitioners increasingly implement a consistent approach to observing and capturing children's learning. This is evident in children's folios, floorbooks and daily planning sheets. Practitioners share children's learning with parents through an online learning platform, individual children's folios and parents' meetings. Children confidently share their learning experiences through discussion and reflection, using their folios well at times for reference.
- The nursery team have introduced a new local authority approach to responsive planning for children's learning. This approach takes account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and includes a focus question. Practitioners plan taking account of children's interests and use floorbooks to capture the learning experiences well. The team engage in moderation activity with local establishments, which helps staff in moderating the standard at the early level.
- Practitioners track children's learning at regular points across the year using Angus Council's developmental milestones. This supports practitioners to identify children who may need additional support with their learning. Practitioners should continue to review approaches to tracking and monitoring. They should ensure they effectively capture significant learning and identify next steps for all children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a broad and balanced curriculum firmly based on play. All practitioners take responsibility for early numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum. This is clear in practice, for example, encouraging children to read and count during register time.
- Practitioners continue to reflect on, and review, their approach to planning. They should ensure this takes full account of the design principles, such as breadth and depth. As practitioners continue to adapt to the expansion to 1140 hours, they should review their daily plans. In doing so, they should continue to ensure there is an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-led experiences.
- Practitioners have engaged in extensive training to develop their knowledge and skills of learning outdoors. They continue to develop their outdoor environment with parental support, for example, building a mud kitchen. Practitioners make effective use of the local community, regularly engaging in walks to the park and woods.
- All staff support children very effectively as they move from being at home to being in the nursery. Practitioners offer very good support to families through well-established transition arrangements. 'Mix up Mondays' allow nursery children to visit P1 and P1 children to revisit the nursery on a weekly basis. Practitioners and teachers across the early level work well together to support successful transitions.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners seek the views of parents regularly throughout the year. This includes through whole school formal surveys, along with daily discussions with parents. Staff identified parental engagement and family learning as key areas for improvement in this year's nursery and whole school improvement plan. They value parents as key partners in the life of their child in the nursery.
- Parents are involved in a variety of activities in the nursery. This includes the weekly lending library, along with stay and play sessions. Parents and grandparents regularly support weekly outdoors walks and activities.
- Parents are positive about how practitioners use a digital platform to communicate effectively with them. Practitioners use the platform well to inform families of children's experiences, with the option to have a chat with key practitioners each day at drop off and collection time. Children's folios are sent home regularly children and parents are encouraged to make comments within the folios. Children in the nursery share their achievements through the whole school 'Birkie Bulletin', which parents and extended family members find informative.
- Practitioners have good links with the community, which were disrupted through the pandemic and are now happily being revived. Examples include the mobile library, the local café and the church, all of which are supporting positive experiences for children.

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

very 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 have a strong focus on improving children's wellbeing. This is clearly linked to the whole school mission 'because we care.' All practitioners are nurturing and caring towards children, with high levels of care and positive relationships shown throughout nursery life. Practitioners have caring interactions with children and there is a very positive and inclusive ethos in the setting. As a result of this, children settle very well, are confident and very keen to contribute. Children enjoy welcoming visitors to their nursery.
- Children are kind and caring with each other and behave well. Most children can talk about being safe and healthy, including, for example, during their weekly walks to the woods. Practitioners should continue to reinforce the language of the wellbeing indicators, with children and parents throughout the setting.
- Practitioners support children to develop their independence skills well. Children demonstrate these skills as they dress for the outdoors, and when preparing snacks.
- Practitioners are using early level United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) resources to support professional dialogue and their practice around children's rights. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop children's rights in meaningful and appropriate ways.
- As children start nursery, practitioners meet with parents and complete 'My World' documents. These contribute to children's personal plans and are reviewed regularly. Practitioners ensure appropriate individual education plans are in place for children as required. They develop these plans with parents and professional partners, such as speech and language therapists or additional support needs teachers. This all ensures that children's needs are being met effectively.
- Practitioners report that professional learning in nurture has had a positive impact on their practice. They apply nurture well approaches to support individual children's needs. Practitioners use various strategies skilfully to support children in understanding and regulating their emotions. As a result of positive input from practitioners, including daily use of the 'emotion station,' children can talk about their feelings and emotions. Almost all children cope well with challenges and continue to develop positive relationships with each other.
- Practitioners undertake regular training in statutory duties and recognise the importance of keeping children safe.
- Children and families are treated with respect by practitioners. Practitioners ensure equality and diversity are celebrated throughout the year. Parents contribute to particular cultural

celebrations. Practitioners should continue to explore how they engage children in relevant planned learning about equality and diversity.

3.2 Securing children's progress

very 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 very good progress in early language and communication. They listen well to stories from adults and enjoy stories shared with their peers. Most children engage well in register time and actively respond well to questioning. Children talk confidently about being 'Independent Iguanas' and describe the reason for receiving a sticker. Children have opportunities to recognise words, sounds and letters. Children use a range of mark making opportunities which allow children to develop early writing skills.
- Children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They develop their skills as they demonstrate counting well in their daily routines. Most children can recognise and count numbers to 10 and beyond. Children count, sort, match and demonstrate their skills in early number concepts across the nursery environment. All children access opportunities to develop their skills in measure across a range of contexts. Almost all children can confidently name and choose their favourite colours.
- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is very good. Children confidently share how they are feeling using visuals and emotions pebbles. Practitioners actively encourage children to develop very good hygiene skills. All children develop their gross motor skills well as they participate in weekly sessions in the gym hall. They have daily opportunities outdoors to run, cycle and explore using loose parts.
- Children are making very good progress over time since starting nursery, building well on their prior learning. Most children are confident and continue to develop their independence skills well. Practitioners meet at regular points throughout the year to review and monitor children's individual progress using a range of data. Practitioners are developing evidence of children's progress over time through documenting learning in folios. They should continue to develop their approaches to capturing and effectively recording children's progress over time.
- The practitioner team recognise and celebrate children's successes and achievements well through praise and encouragement. Practitioners display children's achievements on the 'Birkie Boasting Board', in the 'Birkie Bulletin' and on 'The Gallery'. Practitioners should continue to encourage all parents to share achievements from home.
- Practitioners are inclusive and welcoming to all families and children and have a good understanding and knowledge of their needs. Practitioners are aware of and understand the socio-economic context within their local community. They use individualised plans to target interventions for individuals and groups.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Transitions across nursery and P1, which take place throughout the year

Children from the nursery and P1 classes play and learn together one afternoon every week, through 'Mix up Mondays'. Helpfully, as soon as places are confirmed in the nursery, children from other nurseries are invited to join the 'Mix up Monday' sessions. These weekly sessions are well planned by practitioners and teachers and are based on play and learning experiences at an appropriate level for all children. This includes supporting P1 children revisiting their nursery experience, siblings playing and learning together, and children from the nursery being very familiar with the P1 classroom and school gym hall.

Communication with parents regarding transitions is very strong. Parents report that they feel well informed about transitions into school. This includes through newsletters, sways, videos and visits, The aim of the school is to maintain strong relationships with families as children move from nursery into P1.

As part of the planning for the 'Mix up Mondays' and transitions as above, the nursery team took an outward focus, researching practice elsewhere, including outwith the authority.

All the ongoing transition activity supports children's confidence in moving on into P1, along with sharing skills and expertise of staff across the early level.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience. Children felt valued, loved and secure because their care and support was delivered in a warm, kind and compassionate way. The service motto, 'because we care' was clearly evident. Secure attachments and high quality interactions nurtured children to feel secure and confident in their nursery.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported by the effective use of personal plans. Personalised information was gathered through various recording formats including 'My World' and individual educational plans (IEPs). The importance of involving families and other professionals in agreeing support strategies meant there was a consistent approach to delivering individualised care that supported children to achieve their potential. Staff continued to reflect on the quality of information recorded about children and how this was shared with families.

Mealtimes were safe, unhurried and sociable experiences for children. Most staff sat with children chatting and positively role modelling social behaviours. Children were developing life skills and independence when chopping fruit, pouring drinks and self-serving food. They confidently followed the snack routine that was visually displayed in the snack area. Children's dietary needs were managed in an inclusive way enabling all children to have a similar mealtime experience. Staff continued to reflect on meal time experiences as the numbers of children increased to ensure they created a homely feel.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children were actively involved in leading their own play and learning both indoors and outdoors. They spent long periods involved in things that interested them. We saw children creating drawings and paintings, a child that spent time modelling a rocket using recycled materials, lots of children enjoying reading books and children digging in the mud area. Staff respected children's choices and worked collaboratively with children to build on their learning together. Children's achievements were celebrated in various ways including within their learning 'folios' and through wall displays. They proudly told us about their learning experiences. They were listened to and respected by staff and were growing in confidence.

A new planning system had been introduced but was at an early stage. Staff were responsive to children's interests and to their stages of development. Children were supported to feel valued and involved through their interests being considered through the planning process. Staff had improved their understanding and skills in observation and were using their learning to ensure that interesting and relevant experiences were planned to support children's curiosity and creativity.

Children's play and learning was enhanced through the nursery having links with the local community. A visit from the mobile library, visits to the café and walks in the woods were all experiences that supported children's play and learning. They were supported to feel a sense of belonging and connection with their community.

Children were supported to feel included, respected and confident through well managed transitions. Mix up Monday meant nursery children and Primary 1 children swapped over. This was managed in a calm and organised way so that children benefitted from becoming familiar with the school environment and developed relationships with staff across the early level. Children told us about how they enjoyed these visits including visiting siblings in nursery. Staff continued to review and develop transitions across the day including times when children came together for a short group time. This ensured children's interests and choices were considered and the pace and flow of the day did not interrupt children's play and learning opportunities.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a calm, welcoming environment. Staff continuously reflected on how children used the areas and made changes to ensure they were interesting and exciting. Most children were busy and having fun as they engaged in their learning. Having access to open-ended resources encouraged children to be curious and imaginative.

Consideration had been given to the layout of the open planned space. This allowed children to play with friends in small or large groups. Staff continued to review and develop the space as the numbers of children increased. They recognised that creating homely play spaces supported children's wellbeing and helped them to feel safe and secure.

Children's wellbeing benefitted from having access to the enclosed garden space. They had daily free flow access to the outdoors for fresh air with opportunities to run, climb, dig, build and play imaginatively. A child proudly demonstrated riding their two wheeled bike and kindly shared this Christmas gift with some of the older children. Staff training was supporting the continued development of outdoor space to maximise the benefits to children's outdoor learning experiences.

Children were supported to be healthy and safe through effective infection, prevention and control routines. The environment was well ventilated, hand washing was embedded in practice and regular cleaning took place. Staff included children in undertaking risk assessment indoors, outdoors and in the local community. Children were learning to stay safe as a result. As part of the 'digging deeper' training, staff were reviewing and developing risk assessment records using a risk benefit approach.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The nursery promoted a shared vision for the service that reflected the views of children, families and staff and had high aspirations for children and families. This created a happy and welcoming ethos in the service promoting a positive atmosphere for children to play and learn. The mission statement 'because we care' was lived by all staff.

Strong leadership in the service supported staff to develop confidence and knowledge in their roles. This created a positive culture across the team. Continued professional learning and a reflective staff team had a positive impact on outcomes for children.

Strong leadership and effective quality assurance enabled the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children and family's particular needs and choices. Staff were passionate and motivated, and a shared value base meant that they worked well together. Continued professional learning and a highly reflective staff team brought about positive changes to outcomes for children and families.

The views of children and families were important to the service in helping to shape improvement. Surveys and the use of digital platforms were some of the ways families were invited to provide feedback. Seeking the views of families contributed to them feeling valued and included.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

4.3 Staff deployment

Children and families benefitted from a caring and nurturing staff team who knew them well. Opportunities to develop relationships with all staff in the service had resulted in continuity of care. A shared approach ensured that all children and families were supported to achieve their potential.

The management team recognised and valued the importance of ensuring the service was always appropriately staffed. Staff supported one another and communicated effectively to ensure the needs of children and families were met. Staff were flexible and breaks were planned to minimise impact on children whilst making sure staff had time to rest. The management team made time to regularly meet with staff, one-to-one. Staff told us that they had a strong relationship with the management team and felt valued and listened to.

Most staff were confident in their roles and communicated well as a team when tasks took them away from their areas of responsibility. They regularly checked with each other that they had an appropriate level of support in areas, such as outdoors. This helped to provide the necessary supervision of children.

An effective process for mentoring staff supported them to maximise their skills to support children and helped them to feel happy and confident at work. The induction process was being developed taking account of the Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) National Induction Resource. A focus on developing respectful relationships across the team had ensured a consistent approach for children and created a positive team ethos that impacted positively on the delivery of high-quality care and support.

Partnership working with families was well established. Staff recognised the importance of engaging with children and families at the earliest possible stage. Key staff provided reassurance for parents on their child's first day by sending photographs and messages. Opportunities including the 'lending library' and 'Wednesday walks' provided meaningful experiences for family involvement. Children were proud to have a family member help in nursery and families felt involved and connected as a result.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had one requirement and no recommendations. This requirement has been met. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and no recommendations.

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.