

# Summarised inspection findings

**Balmerino Primary School Nursery Class**

Fife Council

30 May 2023

## Key contextual information

Balmerino nursery class is based within Balmerino Primary School, within the village of Gauldry. Children attend from the village and surrounding areas. The nursery provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for children aged three until they begin primary school. Eighteen children can attend at any one time. The current roll is nine. There is one small playroom with direct access to an interesting outdoor space. This space has been redeveloped following significant storm damage. Children attend for full days during term time. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery, supported by a small team of practitioners. The headteacher also has management responsibility for Wormit Primary and nursery class. A local authority visiting teacher from the early years team provides support to the nursery through regular contact. The school and nursery have experienced challenges with staffing. Continuity for children has been achieved by part-time staff increasing hours and cover at lunchtime by staff from Wormit Primary.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher and team have a detailed knowledge of their immediate and wider rural community. Practitioners directly influence the school vision to ensure it is meaningful and relevant to the youngest children. Children and staff refer to 'be kind, gentle and helpful' as they play. The headteacher should ensure future planned development of values, vision and aims continues to include nursery children, parents, and staff. This will ensure the vision includes the approach of the nursery and is meaningful and relevant to young children.
- The headteacher is a reflective and supportive leader. Practitioners feel valued and involved in the life and work of the nursery and school. The headteacher identifies and builds on their individual strengths. Together, they have a clear focus on improvement and children's wellbeing. Practitioners work very well as an effective small team. The team provide good support to children, their families, and to one another to focus on improving learning spaces and experiences. Daily professional dialogue, and focused meetings with the headteacher and visiting teacher, help practitioners to identify and take forward improvements. Practitioners frequently evaluate planned and responsive learning. The team involve children as they evaluate and adapt the playroom and outdoor area. Children frequently share ideas about what they enjoy learning and would like to do next. Staff respond quickly to children's suggestions. The team should develop further their skills and confidence in documenting the impact of improvements on children's progress.
- Practitioners engage enthusiastically in professional learning opportunities. The team are motivated as they extend and build on their knowledge and skills. Professional learning has included work on understanding national and local guidance, increasing parental involvement, and improving observation skills. The team are keen to undertake training to support children's interest in cycling. Practitioners have leadership roles for a few areas of their work. Recently, this has included re-instating parental involvement within the setting, with a focus on early

literacy. The team should continue to develop leadership roles for children, for example, as digital leaders.

- The team use national and local authority guidance to help them reflect on the quality of ELC they provide. Practitioners meet to consider how they can best plan learning. Children discuss what worked well and what they might learn next as they investigate areas of interest such as volcanoes or the world of work. The headteacher and practitioners consult regularly with children and families about their views. The team are clear about agreed areas for improvement for the nursery. Rightly this includes work to refresh approaches to recording children's care plans to keep up to date with latest guidance. A clear timetable of activities monitors the completion of record keeping, reporting to parents and improvement planning. The headteacher should now introduce formal recording of strategic monitoring of practice within the nursery. Alongside professional dialogue this will provide valuable feedback to practitioners and support the team develop further their practice.

## 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 and children consistently demonstrate respectful and caring relationships. Children demonstrate high levels of confidence, co-operation and motivation in their play appropriate to their stage of development. There is a keen sense of community and belonging between members of the small group. Most children are engaged and purposeful throughout their day.
- Practitioners are attentive, responsive, and thoughtful as they respond to and anticipate what children are interested in. Staff provide well judged levels of support to engage or divert children in activities that interest them. Most children concentrate well for extended periods of time as they build models in the construction area or look closely at shoots on potatoes. Practitioners have increased the range and quality of loose parts available in the playroom and outdoors. Practitioners frequently involve children in deciding what questions, topics, and activities they would like to know more about. The team should continue to help children to make connections between things they would like to take part in and the skills they use and develop.
- Practitioners frequently interact with children in an attentive, interested way. The team skilfully ask open-ended and higher order questions to support children to explore their ideas in more depth. The team are skilled in adapting their language and levels of support to children's individual needs and personalities. Across the nursery, children are familiar and confident in leading nursery routines. The team should continue to develop further their skills in their observations of children. This will support them to continue to identify and document the progress children make and use this to inform their planning for children's learning.
- The team cooperate and share ideas effectively to improve how they document children's learning. Practitioners record experiences and achievements using an online learning platform, individual personal learning journals, learning walls, planning records and displays. Regular meetings about how well children are progressing are supporting practitioners to take a more strategic approach to how they plan, assess and document children's progress. A few next steps in learning focus on what children would like to do next such as having a PE lesson outside or taking a trip on the local bus. The team should build on this approach to work with children to ensure the evaluation of next steps reflects well the good progress they are making in their learning.
- Practitioners record useful information about children who may be experiencing barriers to learning. The team promptly identify children who may require additional support. Keyworkers use their knowledge of child development and strategies to support children well. Practitioners effectively implement agreed strategies for individual children.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a curriculum that is play-based and responds promptly to a wide variety of children's interests. This means there is a fast moving, personalised curriculum that includes a breadth of experiences across different areas of learning including the expressive arts and science. Planning of learning spaces, experiences and interactions includes careful attention to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The team use planned and responsive experiences to support learning. Planned work to develop a curriculum rationale with the school will provide an opportunity to ensure the curriculum offers depth and challenge across all areas of learning.
- Practitioners support children who are new to the nursery well, working in effective partnership with families. The team are sensitive to the individual needs and temperaments of individual children that are shared in All About Me forms. Practitioners implement a programme of activities to support children as they transition into the primary school linked to their local area. Practitioners should continue to use national practice guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' (2020) to develop further their work with colleagues across the early level. This should support continuity and ensure a progressive approach to learning across the early level.

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners quickly establish and maintain close partnerships with parents and extended families. There is a clear, shared focus on the wellbeing of children and families. The small playroom means there is limited space for parents and children to be in the playroom together. Practitioners and parents work well together to plan stay and play sessions, shared starts and parent groups held in the school building. There is a strong sense of community and belonging within the nursery due to the positive, respectful relationships.
- Practitioners use a wide range of approaches to communicate, inform and involve parents in sharing what children have been learning about. The team prepare and share a weekly update about children's interests and experiences. Practitioners and children identify and share achievements on their playroom tree and about their learning using an online platform. Children share the opportunity to look at their personal learning journals with parents. A few parents share learning from home as they make maps to continue an interest or record pictures and activities from home. As planned practitioners should continue to find creative ways to encourage parents to share achievements and learning from home.

## 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. Inspectors have identified good practice in child protection and safeguarding procedures.

### 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 are caring and positive in their interactions with children. The team are responsive and attentive, they value and support all learners equally. Positive relationships support children to learn to share resources and spaces very well. Children feel safe, secure and are independent within the nursery. Most children are patient and gentle with one another as they learn to take turns and play together. Most children demonstrate a high level of confidence, and perseverance in their play.
- Practitioners use a good variety of resources well to support children to begin to explore and recognise a range of emotions. Children are invited to talk about how they feel and why as they start their day. Practitioners gather information from parents about children's wellbeing and health as children settle into nursery. This helps the team plan for what children new to the setting need. Practitioners use the national wellbeing indicators with children using the characters of Poppy and Henry. Children take these toys home and parents share photos of how children have cared for them. This helps children gain an early understanding of a few of the wellbeing indicators. The team refer to the wellbeing indicators in records of discussions with parents. Practitioners should continue to link real life experiences in the playroom, outdoor play and in the community to a wider range of wellbeing indicators. The team plan to develop further children's understanding of their and other children's rights. It will be important to link this work with existing planning for health and wellbeing to help children make connections in their learning.
- Children benefit from a calm, social and unhurried snack, and lunch time within their playroom. Children confidently help order, prepare, and serve their snack and eat lunch. They enjoy being independent as they set their table, pour their water, and clear away their plates. Practitioners plan and respond to children's keen interest about food, recipes, and menus in frequent food preparation activities.
- Senior leaders and practitioners are clear about their statutory duties in relation to ELC. They understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children and keeping them safe. Each child has an All About Me plan, which outlines their individual needs. Additional plans are completed for children with specific health or learning needs. Rightly the team have explored new guidance on personal planning and implemented new paperwork to record administration of medication.
- Practitioners have planning in place to record how they will offer additional support to a few children. The team review individual children's progress to ensure identified strategies are successful and support children's development and learning. Practitioners implement agreed strategies to support children who need additional support. New progress meetings will also provide the opportunity to review how these strategies support children to make progress.



- Practitioners' value and respect diversity. Children enjoy learning about different cultures and faiths as they celebrate a few festivals. Practitioners display and read new books that represent and celebrate diversity. The team should continue to build on this to plan a wider range of experiences and resources to explore diversity, fairness, and equality in a developmentally appropriate way. This will help children to develop further their awareness of the diverse world in which they live.

### 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

- Children make very good progress in early language and communication. Children frequently request or join in with familiar stories. Children enjoy writing their name, identify sounds and rhyming words. Almost all children mark make for a purpose as they take the register, make their own books and record what tools parents use at work. A few children enjoy recalling visits to the local library. Almost all children develop their vocabulary very well as they begin to talk in longer sentences or explore what unfamiliar words mean with help from adults. Practitioners should continue to provide experiences that challenge children to apply their skills in motivating play and real-life contexts.
- Children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children explore measure, weight, and size as they persevere and work together to move heavy stones in the forest. A few children add the number of children and adults getting ready for outdoor play. Most children make very good progress in counting and recognising numbers as they play simple computer games. Children benefit from motivating contexts such as their parents' café and role play ice cream shop to explore real coins. Children would benefit from further opportunities to explore information handling.
- Children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. Almost all children play together well, particularly during imaginative play. Children take turns, problem solve and work together well to complete tasks. They are confident and skilled as they navigate hills and slopes and manage risk to climb trees. Children develop their gross and fine motor skills well as they work together to explore the forest and help prepare snack. Children build their self-esteem as they successfully complete 'grown up' tasks such as when they phone the office to order lunches they have chosen. Children and parents frequently share information about their achievements as they complete a swim challenge or sleep in their own bed.
- Children make progress across other areas of learning as they explore their interests. Children mix paints to explore the work of artists and follow visual and written instructions to make soup for their lunch. A few children explore direction, maps, and technology as they identify the best route to take to the forest and follow simple directions. Children recall and apply their prior learning as they prepare their outdoor space for growing and planting. Children explore and appreciate the wonder of nature as they look for and record signs of spring and notice changes in the forest. A few children show a keen interest in technology and tools as they investigate their new STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths) area.

- The headteacher and staff have introduced termly progress meetings to monitor and track the progress children make in their learning. Practitioners work with children and parents to identify termly literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing learning targets. The team record information about the progress individual children make in a wide variety of different records. It will be helpful to pull this information together in meetings to focus on significant learning for individual children. The team should continue to involve children in planning and reflecting on their learning and progress.
- Practitioners know their children and families well. They understand the community context and offer sensitive appropriate support where this is needed. The team work well with parents and partner agencies such as health visitors and speech and language therapists to ensure children get the support they need.

## 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.