

Summarised inspection findings

Whiteness Primary School Nursery Class

Shetland Islands Council

17 September 2024

Key contextual information

Whiteness nursery class is located within Whiteness Primary School, situated approximately 10 miles west of Lerwick, the main town in Shetland, and serves the districts of Whiteness, Weisdale and surrounding areas. There are 20 children in the nursery class. The playroom has direct access to an outdoor learning space and a quiet room. Children access other areas within the school such as a gym hall, a large outdoor grass area with a poly tunnel and a play park. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the nursery and is the named manager. She has a 0.3 full-time teaching commitment in the nursery. The senior early years practitioner has responsibility for day-to-day management of the nursery. The wider team includes one senior practitioner, two early years practitioners and three early years support workers. In the past four years the nursery has experienced periods of staffing changes at all levels.

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

- Children are happy, settled, and enthusiastic in their play and learning. Strong positive relationships underpinned by the school values permeate across the nursery. Children demonstrate independence in their play. Most children share resources and turn take in a developmentally appropriate manner. Practitioners use skilful, nurturing approaches to support children to regulate their behaviour.
- Practitioners know children very well and are caring and compassionate. They create a nurturing, positive learning environment where all children are welcomed and valued. Practitioners listen actively to all children and respond to their individual needs. They use sensitively timed questioning throughout their interactions to extend children's learning. The environment allows children to be creative and play imaginatively. As a result, children are highly motivated, and engage well with a range of purposeful high-quality learning experiences both indoors and outdoors. This promotes curiosity, independence, and confidence in all children.
- Practitioners use the local area and community partners effectively to enhance and extend children's learning. For example, children regularly learn at the beach and through visits from the crossing patrol person. This is supporting children in their awareness of road safety and an appreciation of nature within their local community.
- Practitioners listen attentively to children and support their learning through praise and encouragement. They use conversation and commentary very well to help children sustain their learning. Practitioners are attuned to children who have specific learning needs and provide additional opportunities to help them settle. Children's voice is strong and included consistently throughout a range of interactions. These include creating play spaces and choosing resources. Children are learning to use tablets and the interactive whiteboard to

access the internet to gather information. Senior leaders and practitioners have plans in place to further enrich learning experiences using digital technologies.

- Practitioners know children very well as learners. They observe them during play and capture evidence of their experiences through photographs and comments. Practitioners record children's experiences in floorbooks, wall displays and learning stories. The information recorded demonstrates clearly the high quality of children's learning and the progress they are making. Families make valuable contributions within their child's learning stories. They comment on their child's learning and how this connects with home. Children are encouraged to reflect on their learning. They show ownership of their 'learning story books' sharing proudly their achievements with practitioners. Senior leaders should continue with their plans to support practitioners to develop their skills further in observing and recording children's significant learning. This will enable practitioners and senior leaders to make increasingly confident judgements about children's progress.
- Practitioners plan appropriately over a variety of timescales. They work well together to plan a blend of intentional and responsive learning experiences. These high-quality experiences are developmentally appropriate and meet the needs of individual children. Practitioners use local authority assessment and progression frameworks very effectively. These are underpinned by national practice guidance documents. Practitioners use a tracking system to record children's progress in early language, early mathematics and health and wellbeing. They plan to build on this very positive practice and explore how they can involve children and parents more fully in planning children's next steps in learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

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's progress in communication and early language is very good. Almost all children are confident in asking questions, following instructions, and listening well during group activities. The stimulating learning environment is rich in literacy opportunities using a wide range of open-ended resources. As a result, most children are starting to scribe their own name and other words. They recognise print in the environment and are beginning to sound out letters. Children would benefit from continued support in developing their pre-writing skills across their learning.
- Children's progress in mathematics is very good. Almost all children are using numbers confidently in their play. Most children explore shape and measurement using appropriate mathematical language and resources such as scales and rulers. They recognise numbers in their environment and use numbers throughout play experiences, confidently counting to 10 and beyond. A few children use one-to-one correspondence to count objects. Almost all children enjoy using numbers during real-life experiences. This includes, for example, during snack to identify amounts of food, using money in their flower shop and estimating size outdoors.
- Children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. They access confidently a range of equipment outdoors including the playpark, bikes and balancing on a range of surfaces. Children's gross motor skills are developed further through accessing the school gym hall and outdoor areas. They have a strong awareness of where food comes from. They grow their own vegetables in the school garden and cook these for snack. Almost all children are independent at lunchtime and getting themselves ready for outdoor play.
- Practitioners place very high value on recognising and celebrating children's achievements outwith nursery. As a result, children talk proudly about their successes. Children are keen to give their opinions and know their voices are valued. They discuss and make decisions about changes to their environment to meet their needs. For example, practitioners made changes to the lunchtime experience based on children's views.
- Children are making very good progress over time across most areas of the curriculum. They participate confidently in a wide range of appropriate experiences to develop their skills in creativity and curiosity.
- Practitioners and senior leaders know children and families as individuals very well. They use their knowledge of children's individual needs to reduce potential barriers to learning. They

have a very good understanding of families' backgrounds and actively promote fairness and respect across all aspects of their work. Practitioners and senior leaders signpost families to other agencies to ensure they receive the support they need. As planned, practitioners and senior leaders should continue to make robust use of available data to plan and evaluate interventions. This will improve further outcomes for all children.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children and their families were warmly welcomed by peers and staff. They experienced warm, caring, and nurturing interactions. Staff comforted and reassured when needed, using soft voices, giving cuddles and smiles. This helped children to feel secure and loved.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through nutritious food options and access to fresh water throughout the day. There were opportunities for children to develop their independence and life skills through involvement in the preparation and serving of their food. Staff promoted a nurturing social experience by sitting with children and promoting conversation. This enabled opportunities for language development and ensured children were supported well and kept safe when eating.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. Families were included in developing and reviewing these to ensure information was current and relevant. Staff had a very good knowledge of children's plans, which aided them in providing tailored care and support for children. Children who required additional support received effective care, which ensured they were included in experiences and play and contributed to their progress. A proactive staff team sought advice from professionals and welcomed multi-agency working to ensure children received the right care and support, resulting in positive outcomes. This included effective partnership working with parents to establish shared strategies, which contributed to a continuity of care for children.

Children's safety, emotional security and wellbeing were supported through sensitive arrangements for rest and relaxation. Staff supported children in the story and home corners as they enjoyed stories and relaxed on the soft seating and cushions. The quiet, sensory room provided another space for children to rest and relax if required.

Staff were knowledgeable about children's health needs and knew the signs, symptoms and actions to take where a child may require medication. Medication forms contained accurate information. We advised some improvements to medication administration forms which were immediately actioned by management.

Children's safety and wellbeing was promoted by staff's understanding of their role of identifying, recording and referring any safeguarding concerns. This meant children and their families were provided with the support and help they needed.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children were happy and confident as they independently explored a variety of experiences whilst leading their own play. Play spaces were inviting, and included real life and natural open ended resources to encourage creativity, curiosity and problem solving.

Attractive displays within the environment showcased children's work and achievements. As a result, they were able to share their learning with friends and family and felt valued.

Children benefitted from uninterrupted free flow access to the outdoor play area. This was fully enclosed and provided further opportunities for exploration, sensory experiences as well as developing physical skills and managing risks. This supported children's wellbeing and resilience.

Children were supported to play, have fun and experience joy through skilled interactions from staff. They used questioning to extend children's thinking, widen their skills and consolidate their learning, supporting children to follow their own interests. Support and modelling was available for less experienced members of staff to ensure consistent high-quality experiences for children.

Play experiences promoted emerging language, literacy, and numeracy skills. This included the skilful use of music to promote literacy and social emotional development. Children enjoyed mark making, reading stories, singing songs and rhymes with staff in an engaging way. Mathematical language was used as children and staff played games, visited the role play flower shop and within daily routines such as snack time.

Planning approaches were child centred and Floorbooks were used to record children's experiences and capture their voices. This supported staff to identify and plan future learning. Children's ongoing learning and progression was supported through the recording and sharing of observations within learning stories. These were individualised, included significant learning, were shared with parents and included children's achievements and identified next steps. As a result, children were effectively supported to learn and progress.

Meaningful links within the local community had been established and included trips to the wildlife area and local beach. Recent visitors included a crofter with lambs. These enhanced children's experiences and promoted a sense of belonging within their local environment.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Ongoing consultation meant the vision, values, and aims of the service reflected the aspirations of children, families and staff. Staff told us how proud they were of the service values which included, "kindness, respect and inclusion." These were clearly reflected in practice and evident in the high-quality care for children.

Regular communication with families took place through daily updates at drop off and collection times, regular meetings, online blog and sharing of children's learning stories. This supported children's continuity of care.

The importance of using the views of parents and children to inform the planning and development of the service was recognised and valued. Children and families views were actively sought through daily conversations, stay and play sessions, questionnaires and button votes. Recent examples included the transition to Primary One and mealtime experience. This led to positive relationships and partnership working to promote positive outcomes for children.

Committed, visible leadership within the service promoted a culture of continuous improvement. Self-evaluation was embedded in practice, linked to guidance, and used to identify where improvements could be made. These were reflected in the service improvement plan which focussed on key areas, such as environment and family learning. Recent changes had resulted in improvements to the environment to support children's mark making and literacy skills.

Children benefited from effective quality assurance systems that impacted positively on their experiences and outcomes. Regular audits of infection prevention and control practice, mealtimes and the environment helped keep children safe and well.

Staff told us they felt well supported by management. Regular observations of staff practice, team meetings, and continuous conversations with management, helped support staff with their professional development. This promoted very good outcomes for children and families.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and no areas for improvement.

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.