

Summarised inspection findings

Mid Calder Primary School and Nursery Class

West Lothian Council

30 April 2019

Key contextual information

Mid Calder nursery class operates from a purpose built extension to the main school building. There is one large playroom with direct access to a dedicated, secure outdoor area. The nursery class has a separate, welcoming entrance and cloakroom area. There is an additional quiet space used for small group activities and dance sessions. Children aged three to five attend for either full or half-day sessions. The nursery has access to areas within the school and uses the drama space to have their lunch. At the time of inspection, 53 children aged between three and five were on the roll of the nursery.

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 headteacher very much values the nursery as part of the whole school. Highly effective partnership working between the depute headteacher and early years officer supports the team to implement continuous improvements to the quality of their work. All practitioners have a clear understanding of, and commitment to the values of the setting. Parents and children have been involved to ensure values are meaningful and relevant. A shared focus on being respectful, happy, and treated fairly supports their vision of 'playing to learn' and is evident in all aspects of their work. As planned, the team should now work with the whole school and all stakeholders to refresh their aims.
- Senior leaders have developed a culture of distributed leadership. Almost all practitioners increasingly identify and implement highly relevant improvements such as their recent work to develop creativity, outdoor learning, and emotional literacy. These improvements show clear evidence of improving outcomes for children. Increasingly practitioners are empowered and supported to lead change. The team have worked well together to use professional learning, research, and best practice. They regularly reflect on their shared understanding of their pedagogy. As planned, the whole team should continue to develop and extend their skills and experience of measuring the impact of changes on children's learning.
- The team are actively involved in a wide range of reflective self-evaluation and effective monitoring activities throughout the session. A clear calendar of effective monitoring and self-evaluation activities are implemented. As a result, specific key priorities relevant to the nursery class are identified. Regular meetings, discussion, involvement in school in-service sessions and cluster work inform improvements. There is a learning culture and an increasingly collegiate approach to improvement across the team. The team are proactive and prompt in implementing advice and ideas from professional development sessions or local best practice visits. As a result, the pace of change is vibrant and continual. The views of stakeholders are valued and acted upon to influence improvements. As planned, the team should build on consultations with families and create increased opportunities for children and parents to lead improvements.

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

- Relationships between practitioners and children are strong and nurturing. As a result, children are happy, settled, and enthusiastic about their learning. Practitioners work together to develop a stimulating environment which promotes the development of children's creativity and curiosity well. Almost all children are highly motivated and demonstrate a sustained level of engagement in their play. Children confidently make choices and select materials to develop their creativity and play from a very good range of quality resources.
- Children's views are listened to and used to support the development of environments and experiences. They have time and freedom to follow their interests and practitioners encourage children to take risks and develop their skills. The exciting outdoor area provides a wide variety of opportunities for children to investigate, solve problems, and challenge themselves. Regular visits to the Secret Garden and Wild Connections space are enriching children's experiences as they take increasing responsibility for keeping themselves safe and learn to manage risk.
- Practitioners have a very good understanding of how young children learn and develop. They readily engage in conversations with children to extend their talking and listening skills. Practitioners' responsive interactions and effective use of praise successfully contribute to the positive climate for learning and achievement. Almost all practitioners use skilled questioning techniques appropriately to extend children's thinking and promote curiosity and inquiry. The use of digital technology is supporting and enriching children's play and learning.
- Practitioners know children very well. They assess learning as they observe children and interact with them during play. Key observations, including photographs and videos, are shared with the team and captured in children's online learning journals. The learning journals are accessible to parents who are encouraged to add their own comments about children's learning and share achievements from home. Practitioners create attractive and informative presentations which illustrate the children's current enthusiasms and recent learning experiences. These are used effectively by the practitioners to support children to reflect on their experiences and are shared on social media to keep parents informed. There is scope to develop further the use of these digital tools to engage children in conversations about their learning and identify meaningful and challenging next steps.
- Children's interests are used as a starting point for planning appropriate learning experiences. Very good use is made of experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence to support the planning and assessment process. The use of floorbooks helps practitioners to document children's learning and experiences over time. As discussed, practitioners should continue to develop these approaches to involve children more in the process of planning for their own learning. Practitioners monitor and track children's progress through their learning

journals. This useful approach should be developed further to identify progress across all key aspects of early learning more clearly.

- Practitioners are particularly knowledgeable about the individual circumstances of children and families attending their setting and make very good use of this information in order to secure positive outcomes for all. Practitioners work with other agencies and partners to share information as appropriate. Plans are developed with parents for individual children who require them.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum is centred on play and offers stimulating and engaging opportunities for learning. It is responsive to children's interests and needs. Practitioners view children as capable learners with individual needs, skills, and interests. The team have successfully established a rich and interesting learning environment that meets the varying needs of children.
- Practitioners build on children's previous experiences in order to provide a curriculum that is relevant and developmentally appropriate. Health and wellbeing, numeracy and literacy opportunities are embedded throughout children's play experiences. The focus on open-ended materials offers children very good opportunities to develop their imagination, creativity, and inquiry skills well. Daily free flow access to the nursery garden and regular visits to local woodland spaces are a key feature of the curriculum. Practitioners make good use of parents and partners to enrich learning, for example, in sharing their skills and promoting the world of work. There is potential to support children to make more explicit links between their own learning and specific skills for life and work.
- Transition arrangements in the nursery are flexible and tailored to meet the needs of individual children and families. When moving from nursery into primary school, a planned programme of events helps children to feel prepared and facilitates this process. This includes a number of visits and having support from children in the upper stages of the school. Information about children's progress is passed onto class teachers to support progression in learning. Practitioners have begun to work with primary colleagues to develop shared approaches to pedagogy and play with a focus on supporting children's emotional literacy. The team should build on this positive start as they continue to collaborate across the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents and families are actively involved in the work of the nursery class. They regularly share their skills as they lead sessions with children to find out more topics they are interested in. Families help with trips to the local woodland area, fundraising and resources. Parents work with children to develop their outdoor area. They regularly share their feedback and suggestions with the team. As identified through self-evaluation the team should now develop further the range of ways for parents shape and influence the work of the nursery.
- Specific, relevant, and regular two way communication enables parents to be well informed about their child's learning and the progress they make. The use of online journals and social media gives parents a valued window into the very good range of children's learning experiences. 'Pop in and Play' sessions provide children and families with opportunities to share learning together. As planned, the team should work continue to develop creative and inclusive ways to engage parents in children's learning.

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

- Relationships between children and practitioners are trusting, supportive, and enabling. Children are understood and valued for their own unique skills, talents, and personalities. As a result, children are comfortable, confident and engage well throughout their time at nursery. All practitioners demonstrate a very good understanding of the principles of nurture that underpins their work. The team work very well with families to establish effective links in order to support all children. Practitioners use information from parents to respond sensitively to children's ideas and attempts to communicate their feelings and emotions.
- Children are safe as they identify risks and overcome their fears by risk assessing their walks to local woodlands. All children are healthy and active as they plan, prepare, and enjoy a range of healthy snacks and daily outdoor play. We agreed with the planned whole school work on healthy eating with a focus on lunchtimes. Children feel nurtured as they receive reassurance from key workers or sensitive support to settle into their day. The language of wellbeing is used very well throughout children's learning. Up to date, relevant displays are used to make links between experiences in the nursery and at home with children's wellbeing.
- There are a very good range of learning opportunities that support children to develop their skills in understanding and extending their knowledge of health and wellbeing. A structured, progressive programme to develop emotional literacy has been introduced. In recent weeks, focused professional development and joint working across the early level shows early signs of developing a shared language. Children use new techniques to explore how to treat one another with respect and develop their understanding of their feelings and behaviour. Almost all children are able to share space, resources and work together throughout their play. As a result, children feel included throughout the session. Practitioners role model positive behaviours and assist children to talk through and resolve conflicts together. As planned, the team should work with all stakeholders to evidence the impact of their work on health and wellbeing on children's progress.
- Children are actively involved in designing, adapting and directing their own learning. They make real, important choices throughout their time in nursery. Almost all children demonstrate confidence in their environment as they challenge themselves to find solutions and independently find or create resources they need in their play. They frequently transport open-ended materials between play areas to extend their own ideas or solve problems. Children are developing as responsible citizens with their special 'jobs' during activities or when preparing snack. As planned the team should work with the school to maximise opportunities for children to develop their leadership skills and link to rights.
- The whole team work well together to ensure statutory duties are fulfilled. A range of effective monitoring activities ensures the team implement procedures. A very good range of professional learning opportunities ensures all practitioners are up to date with their responsibilities.

- Inclusion and equity is prioritised and successfully promoted by the early years officer and wider team. The team have clear, effective strategies that are implemented consistently. This ensures all children make very good progress regardless of their individual needs. Recent focused work on gender has involved practitioners, children, and parents. As a result, the team have made changes to language used, resources, and ways of working. There is a sensitive, solution-focused approach to identifying and supporting children. As a result, we saw that children feel they are treated fairly and are valued as individuals.

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 communication and early language. They talk naturally as they play and are keen to share their ideas and thoughts with practitioners. Children use a wide range of vocabulary which is extended through skilful interactions. Children are developing an awareness of rhyme and enjoying playing with the sounds and patterns of language. Older children are beginning to recognise letters, identify sounds, and confidently tap out the syllables of their name. Children show an interest in books and listen attentively to stories. A few children use books and signs in the nursery environment to support them with their early reading skills. Most children are developing an interest in early writing and use a variety of resources indoors and outdoors to practice and develop their skills across the curriculum. The majority of children show high levels of imagination and apply this in their play. They invent games and stories and use resources well to represent their ideas. As discussed, there is scope to build on and extend opportunities for children to apply their early literacy skills in meaningful real-life contexts.
- In numeracy and mathematics, almost all children are making very good progress. Many are able to count beyond ten and recognise and use numbers in a wide range of contexts. Practitioners develop children's mathematical thinking by providing regular opportunities to apply their skills in relevant real-life and play-based situations. They learn about weight through a wide range of baking and cooking opportunities and explore volume through the innovative and creative resources for water play outdoors. In the construction area, children plan and build complex structures learning about height and length as they use mathematical language appropriately in their play. Sewing, weaving and textile crafts provide further creative opportunities where children are exploring shape, pattern and measure as they develop their fine motor skills. Practitioners provide meaningful opportunities for children to explore information handling in response to their questions and interests. Children enjoy using the interactive whiteboard to play games that enable them to apply a range of mathematical skills.
- There is a strong emphasis on health and wellbeing and, as a result, almost all children are making very good progress. Children demonstrate very positive relationships with one another, they are caring and co-operate well. A few children who require ongoing support with this are sensitively provided for. Children are very active and are developing a range of gross motor skills whilst they ride bikes, create obstacle courses, and climb trees with increasing skill and confidence. They show excitement and adventure while being in the woodland environments, which are used very effectively to promote children's interest in nature and living things. Children are experiencing planting and growing in their garden area and are learning about

different vegetables. They are learning about making healthy choices at snack and use small tools appropriately, as they prepare snacks.

- Overall, children are confident, successful learners and demonstrate responsibility in their play. Children's achievements are recognised well through praise and celebrating special pieces of learning and artwork on the 'Pegs of Pride'. The team should continue with work build on this work and develop this further. Practitioners take very good account of the individual circumstances of children and families and work in partnership with other professionals to provide tailored support and promote equity.

Choice of QI : 2.4 Personalised support

- Universal support
- Role of practitioners and leaders
- Identification of learning needs and targeted support
- Removals of barriers to learning

- The team have shared high aspirations of all children in the setting. A very good understanding of children's individual needs shapes and informs the planning of learning. Environments for learning are regularly adapted, improved, and personalised with the involvement of children and parents. As a result, children receive high quality universal support. Practitioners frequently engage with children in learning conversations, which support discovery and creativity. In the best examples, practitioners and children participate in extended conversations where they build a shared understanding of topics of interest.
- The specific role and individual responsibilities of practitioners and leaders is clear to everyone in the team. Key workers work very well with a good range of professionals and partner agencies to support children who experience short or long-term barriers in their learning. Care plans, wellbeing plans, and individual education plans are up to date, stored securely and regularly reviewed. They include specific targets and agreed strategies implemented by the whole team. Practitioners implement helpful suggestions from specialist staff in the school and other professionals promptly. This ensures children are provided with support or challenge that meets their particular stage of development. As a result, children thrive within the setting and are supported to make very good progress in their learning.
- Effective communication between parents and carers, senior managers, practitioners combined with regular observation of children, means the team understand children's needs very well. As a result, they identify, remove or work to minimise the impact of barriers to learning. Children with specific medical, learning or social and emotional needs receive carefully planned, high quality support. We discussed with the team that they should progress their plans for extended transitions for a few children. In partnership with school staff and partners, the team should continue to monitor the impact of interventions and strategies implemented for individuals or groups.

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.