

# Summarised inspection findings

**Duns Primary School Nursery Class**

Scottish Borders Council

27 August 2019

## Key contextual information

Duns Primary School nursery class provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for children and families in and around the town of Duns. The school and nursery class moved to new accommodation in August 2017. At the time of the inspection, construction work was underway on a nursery extension. As a result, part of the nursery garden was unavailable to children and practitioners. The nursery offers morning and afternoon sessions. Places are offered to children aged from three years. Thirty-eight children attend morning sessions, 18 attend afternoon sessions. There is one main playroom with free flow access to a secure outdoor space. Children benefit from additional facilities including the school gym and grounds. They use a nearby woodland area for forest adventures, and make trips to the local swimming pool.

### 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

- Since moving to new accommodation the nursery team has been successful in developing, and continuously improving, the environment and learning culture of the nursery. Practitioners have been creative and resourceful in exploiting opportunities afforded by the move to enrich children's learning experiences.
- Practitioners have worked with families and children to establish a vision for the nursery. This reflects well their shared aspiration for children's experiences, with an emphasis on enjoyment, exploration and stimulating play. This vision has been important in establishing a clear sense of direction and focus for the improvement work of the team.
- Teamwork in a strength in the nursery. Practitioners respect and value the skills and commitment of team members. They welcome the advice and guidance of the visiting early year's team teacher and the senior leadership team in the school. They are enthusiastic and hard working.
- The team leader is effective in supporting the management of change in nursery. She works with the team to set attainable goals and to establish systems to track the pace and direction of elements of change. This is contributing well to practitioners' confidence in their ability to lead improvement. The team are developing effective improvement processes based on nationally recognised improvement methodology. The development of high quality block play and play in the nursery garden are good examples of the success of their approach. They should continue to develop this further.
- Senior leaders provided good support to the nursery and work to build capacity across the early level. They encourage practitioners to develop approaches to self-evaluation using the National Improvement Framework. Senior leadership support is also helping to align professional learning activities to nursery improvement.

- As planned, senior leaders should continue to support practitioners to build on existing strengths to improve self-evaluation and practitioner leadership further. This will provide a robust evidence base for future improvement work, and enable the team to measure the impact of change with increasing confidence.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

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 work as a team to create an ethos where children are actively engaged in purposeful and engaging experiences. Children move freely and with confidence between the indoor and outdoor areas of the nursery. Learning spaces are imaginatively organised and designed to enable children to explore their interests and lead their learning through play. Practitioners have a sound understanding of the potential of open-ended materials in stimulating children's creativity and imagination. We observed good examples of this, involving children creating pictures using flowers and twigs, and 'discovering' bones in the large sand play area.
- Children enjoy their learning, and learn well, in interesting and well-considered play spaces and contexts, including woodland adventures and bus trips to town. The experiences beyond the nursery provide children with additional opportunities to challenge themselves, for example when devising ways to cross a muddy puddle during a woodland adventure. Children are developing their independence well. Practitioners should build on this to encourage children's self-reliance and early leadership skills as fully as possible.
- Practitioners are nurturing and caring in their interactions with children. They are responsive and take good account of children's interests and stage of development. Recent professional learning, around play approaches and questioning, is helping improve interactions further. Discussion prompts are displayed around the nursery and practitioners were observed using statements such as 'I wonder...' to encourage children's possibility thinking, without interrupting play.
- Practitioners have identified 'together time' as an area they would like to improve. We discussed ways that group size sometimes inhibits effective interaction, including during story times. We have asked practitioners to monitor children's involvement to enable them to make informed decisions about how to take this forward.
- Practitioners capture good information about children's learning in wall displays, floor books and individual learning journeys. With colleagues in school, and the visiting teacher, they are exploring the use of frameworks to record children's progress in learning more accurately. They should continue with this work. In doing so, they should ensure a clear focus on what they know is important for children to learn, and what is significant for each individual child. This will enable them to streamline documentation as far as possible.
- Practitioners should also continue to improve their use of observation to deepen their understanding of how individual children respond and learn during play and planned experiences. This will enable practitioners to make best use of planning to provide additional

depth, challenge, and personalisation in children's learning. Practitioners should involve children and parents as fully as possible in recognising achievements and planning next steps in children's learning journeys. They should explore imaginative ways to engage children in regular conversations about learning.

- As planned, senior leaders should work with the nursery team to continue to improve existing approaches to track children's learning in key areas of the curriculum.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children learn well through play in the nursery. Practitioners use Curriculum for Excellence to plan a range of quality learning experiences for children across the curriculum. A focus on early literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing is leading to positive outcomes for children. Practitioners are working to develop a range of opportunities for children to explore aspects of science and technology. They should now revisit the principles of curriculum design to explore ways to increase challenge and personalisation in learning for all children.
- Practitioners make good use the local area to increase the breadth and depth of children's experiences. Children enjoy bus trips to the town centre, regular visits to the local swimming pool, and extended adventures in a nearby woodland area. Links with a local farmer contribute to children's understanding of the work that people do in the community. Practitioners should, as planned, continue to build this aspect of practice. This will help children make links between the skills they are developing in the nursery and the world of work.
- Transitions into nursery are flexible and take account of individual needs. Arrangements for transitions to primary ensure children feel confident and familiar with their new learning environment. Practitioners work closely with teaching colleagues across the early level to support transitions and begin to develop shared approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.

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

- Parents provide valued support to enable children to enjoy a range of experiences beyond the nursery.
- Communication between the nursery and home is based on trust and openness. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress through daily conversations, individual learning journals and planned meetings. Practitioners should now consider how they can involve families more fully in recognising children's achievements and planning next steps in learning.
- Parents and carers are able to find out about children's experiences in the nursery through newsletters, attractive displays and notice boards. An online social media platform provides two way communication, updates and reminders about forthcoming events in nursery. Parents value the access and support this provides. Stay and play sessions, 'Get Togethers' and other opportunities allow families to find out how children learn in nursery and early primary, and what they can do to help. Story and number bags provide useful resources to enable families to continue children's learning at home. Practitioners should continue to develop this useful resource to explore other aspects of the curriculum. They should review the range of texts used to make them as accessible to all families.
- Senior leaders should now seek to develop further opportunities for family 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

### 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

- There is a strong sense of community in the nursery. Practitioners have a sound understanding of the importance of relationships, affection and fun in children's learning and development. They work together to ensure a welcoming and nurturing environment for children and families. As a result, children are happy and relaxed, and keen to try new experiences.
- Children enjoy the companionship of adults and demonstrate care and kindness to their friends. Practitioners make good use of praise and model positive interactions consistently well. They help children to become aware of their feelings and reactions, and what they can do to regulate their own behaviour. They provide good advice to families to encourage consistent approaches to promoting positive behaviour.
- The principles of Getting it Right for Every Child and the national wellbeing indicators underpin practice in the nursery. Practitioners know children and families well. They strive to ensure that they have a good understanding of any potential barriers to wellbeing children might experience. Recently introduced home visits are helping with this. Practitioners work in partnership with parents and with a range of agencies, including health, to meet children's needs. Senior leaders need to improve further the management of planning and monitoring for children who may require additional support. This will ensure that children get the support they need to make the best possible progress. It will also inform continuing improvements in practice over time.
- Children are developing their understanding of wellbeing through experiences in the nursery and beyond. They are learning about how to keep themselves safe during woodland adventures and trips to swimming and town. Recent experience with 'Ruby the Oyster Catcher' and caring conversations during play are helping children develop awareness of nurture. Children can talk with confidence about healthy choices and are learning to bake bread and prepare wholesome snacks. Practitioners should, as planned, build on this work to deepen children's awareness of what the wellbeing indicators mean and how children can use them in their daily lives. Parents are involved in this aspect of children's learning through attractively presented displays and 'Get Together' sessions. We discussed how this could be a useful continuing focus for future family learning experiences.
- Practitioners keep up to date with developments in early learning and childcare to enable them to fulfil their statutory duties. They should continue to develop imaginative ways to engage children in contributing to decision making in the nursery.

- Practitioners treat all children and their families with fairness and respect. They are aware of their responsibilities in promoting equality and diversity. We discussed how practitioners might explore different family cultures with children, for example, through baking experiences using favourite home recipes. They should also consider how an increased focus on the Rights of the Child might enable children to explore equality and diversity further.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

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

- The caring and nurturing ethos of the nursery supports children's emotional and social wellbeing well. Most children are confident and able to learn independently. Nursery experiences provide children with good opportunities to develop their early literacy and numeracy skills, through real-life and imaginary contexts. Outdoor experiences, and experiences beyond the school grounds, provide enjoyable opportunities for children to develop their self-esteem, teamwork, and resilience.
- Most children are making good progress in early literacy. They are developing their awareness of vocabulary and rhyme through initiatives such as 'word of the week' and 'rhyme of the week'. This is helping engage parents in their children's learning. Children listen well in small group situations. They enjoy singing songs, including some traditional ones. Practitioners need to review larger group sessions to involve children in more conversations around story. They should provide further opportunities and encouragement to children to deepen their love of books. Most children can recognise their name written down and are beginning to make an effort to write their own name. Children use texts for different purposes, for example, using a recipe book when baking bread. Practitioners should develop this further, to support children to learn about and use non-fiction texts, including online media, for a wide range of meaningful purposes.
- Most children are making good progress, with a few making very good progress, in numeracy and mathematics. They order, count and sort items during play. A few children can recognise numbers out of sequence and use their knowledge to solve simple problems on a number line. Children engage in maths when in the outdoor environment, for example creating symmetrical patterns. They are developing their understanding of shape through a wide range of experiences, including sewing. Children demonstrate their developing understanding of the properties of three-dimensional objects in complex block constructions. They are developing useful mathematical language, for example when weighing, and exploring volume and capacity at the water trough.
- Children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing their physical skills well during outdoor play, in the school gym, and at the local swimming pool. Children demonstrate their developing gross motor skills by balancing, climbing and jumping when using loose parts outdoors. There is a clear focus on developing children's fine motor skills.

- Practitioners celebrate children's achievements in the nursery. They encourage parents to share information about children's learning and achievements at home and in the community. There is scope to build on existing practice to ensure children's personal achievements are recognised and built upon in nursery more effectively. This will enable practitioners to provide further personalisation and challenge in learning experiences for children.
- Practitioners demonstrate an awareness of the needs of individual children and families. They are sensitive when working with parents to provide support to overcome potential barriers and improve outcomes for children. As planning, tracking and monitoring continue to improve, they will be able to measure the impact of their work and plan future interventions confidently.

## Choice of QI :1.2 Leadership of learning

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

- Teamwork is a strength in the nursery. Practitioners value and respect the professional commitment of their colleagues, both in the nursery and across the school community. They work together very well and share responsibility for the continuous improvement of their practice.
- The team prioritise the building of effective relationships within the nursery and beyond. Practitioners value opportunities for quality professional dialogue with the visiting early year's team teacher and early level teachers in the primary. The nursery team leader makes good use of network meetings to promote an outward looking culture of professional learning. The nursery team are keen to strengthen this further through the introduction of shared professional reading.
- Practitioner leadership is leading to improved outcomes for children. There is scope to develop this further. Senior leaders in the school support practitioners to identify individual strengths and areas for improvement. They are clear about the need to align professional learning more closely to improvement priorities in the nursery.
- We were able to see the impact of practitioner leadership in the development of outdoor play, aspects of early literacy and the value placed on play across the nursery. It will be important for senior leaders to support practitioners in measuring the impact of professional learning through improved self-evaluation and robust monitoring and tracking.
- Children have time and space to explore and develop their ideas through play across the curriculum. Adult interactions are effective in encouraging children to explore possibilities and begin to reason out answers for themselves. The supportive ethos of the nursery means that children are confident and play together well. Children are learning to collaborate, planning together to solve problems and celebrate successes. This was especially evident during den and bridge building play in the nearby woodland. We have asked practitioners to develop further imaginative approaches to encourage children to discuss and plan their learning.

### 1. Quality of care and support

Children were warmly welcomed into nursery by kind and nurturing staff who knew them well. This was achieved through the range of information that staff collected about children, opportunities for parents to be an active part of nursery life and open and honest communication. Effective use of keyworker systems and the opportunity for home visits had helped to forge positive and supportive relationships between staff and parents, this was further reflected in very positive comments about the nursery and staff made by parents.

Children were confident, independent and having fun in nursery. Children were supported to make choices, carry out helping tasks with each other and staff and take responsibility for their behaviour and how they treated others. This helped them begin to forge friendships and develop their sense of self. Children were engaged and busy in their play and often sought out staff to talk about what they were doing and to discuss ideas. Staff had a good understanding of these interactions versus interfering with children's play which supported children's capacity to problem solve and direct their own play.

Health and wellbeing was well promoted through healthy snacks, which children helped to prepare, significant daily opportunities for outdoor play, swimming, forest play opportunities and trips and walks in the local community. To limit the spread of infection children were well supported by staff with regard to using the toilet and hand washing. This had resulted in children on the whole having a good understanding of the importance of hygiene.

There were procedures in place for gathering information about children which we define as their personal plan. Staff knew children in their care very well but the recording of some information needed to be improved. Most essential information had been collected but was held in a number of places. Staff needed to have clear guidance from senior managers regarding personal planning and information that needed to be recorded. We have asked that they collate information in one place, making sure it is complete to provide an overview of support and the outcomes of that support. Where children need health support or interventions, these should be clearly detailed and regularly reviewed with parents to ensure that the medical care plan is still suitable. The personal plan as a whole should be reviewed at least once every six months to ensure that information is accurate and complete. (See recommendation 1 below.)

**Care Inspectorate grade: good**

### 2. Quality of environment

The staff team had worked hard and successfully to create an environment for children which provided a nurturing, inviting and attractive place to play. The nursery was relatively new and had been well designed to provide children with space to play individually, in small or larger groups. Throughout the sessions staff, with the help of children, ensured that play areas were well maintained and resourced. These valued children's right to play in attractive and well-resourced areas that would support their learning.

The layout of the nursery enabled children to access the outdoor area, toilets, get their outdoor clothes, wash their hands and brush their teeth independently. It also enabled staff to supervise children easily and offer advice or help if it was needed rather than having to accompany children

round the environment. This had helped support children's feelings of confidence and independence.

The outdoor area was easily accessible from the main playroom and was used for the majority of every session. This area provided a rich learning environment and children told us how much they liked being outdoors. Throughout the nursery, but particularly outdoors, staff had developed play to include a range of loose and real life objects for children to use. These were not toys but items to promote problem solving, cooperative play and imagination. Throughout our visit we noted that the environment enabled children to be engaged and able to sustain their play over more than one session.

Play areas and play activities were risk assessed by staff and children. Before swimming and the forest outing, children were able to discuss their risk assessment that reminded them of the risks and the responsibility to keep themselves and others safe. Parents had been given information about the policies and procedures, which were in place to help keep their children safe and secure while at nursery. These policies had been updated to include current good practice guidance.

### Care Inspectorate grade: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and three recommendations. From these, two recommendations have been met. Outstanding issues relating to personal planning are carried forward in this inspection. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and one recommendation.

### Recommendation

- To ensure that children's care and support needs are met the service should further develop a recording system to hold information about children in one place. This information should include strategies for support, which are in place, and the outcomes of that support. Information held in personal plans should be updated at least once every six months to ensure it is accurate and relevant. This is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard 1.15 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as my care plan) is right for me.'

## 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.