

Summarised Inspection Findings

New Pitsligo and St John's Primary School and Nursery Class

Aberdeenshire Council

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Summarised Inspection Findings

Section One

New Pitsligo and St John's Primary School

1.3 LEADERSHIP OF CHANGE

good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- *Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community*
 - *Strategic planning for continuous improvement*
 - *Implementing improvement and change*
- The headteacher has developed an appropriate shared vision across the school. She has worked well with staff over the last four years to significantly raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. She is committed to underpinning her ideas with research and professional learning. She has been successful in developing the confidence of staff and parents who work well together to provide strong experiences for all children. The headteacher and staff understand the challenges faced by the community and work well with parents and community learning and development to support all children and ensure they are all included in the life of the school. The headteacher and staff are committed to developing high aspirations in children and have a clear plan of how they would like to develop this further. Staff were enthusiastic about how they could link their vision for high aspiration to their focus on developing skills for learning life and work.
 - The headteacher in her four years in post has worked hard to impact on a significant number of areas requiring improvement. The school is now at point in its journey where the headteacher and staff are ready to work with the school community to refresh its approaches and develop a clearer shared vision for what it wants the school to achieve. We worked with the school to develop ideas about fostering in children ways of thinking and skills that would prepare them for learning in the 21st century. We discussed the need to strengthen the schools links with the world of work, and to look more closely at science, mathematics, engineering and technology (STEM). We asked them to create wider partnerships to develop a range of skills and expertise in children, for example, a wider range of occupations, colleges, universities, hospitals and businesses. In working with a range of partners, parents and staff they could now create a curriculum that would help them achieve their vision of high aspiration.
 - The headteacher has provided clear strategic leadership of change over the last four years which has been collegiate in its approach. She has gained the support of staff and parents in how she leads the school. She has had a clear focus in raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. There is now a need to continue with plans to identify clearly how the school is closing the gap and to have even higher expectations of what children can achieve across all curricular areas.
 - The headteacher has managed change well and has produced helpful improvement plans and standards and quality reports which are shared with parents. The headteacher and staff have used self-evaluation well to identify and monitor the impact of change. A good example of this was the review of the mathematics enhancement programme. Staff could clearly identify the real

strengths of this programme and areas where the programme needs to be supplemented.

- All staff demonstrate strong commitment to the continuous improvement of the school. Class teachers are reflective practitioners who have embraced recent changes and shown willingness to develop their practice. Staff are aware of the need to monitor standards of attainment through moderation within the school and with their cluster. We urge them to now look to moderate their work much more fully and wider to raise aspirations of what children can achieve. Staff willingly take responsibility for leading change within their own classroom and across the school. This could now be developed more fully.
- Children have a voice in helping to shape and drive forward school improvement through their committees. They are now ready to be consulted on the quality of their experiences and wider views on how areas of the school are working for them. Giving children opportunities to review lessons will help teachers to monitor the impact of new approaches and interventions.
- The headteacher manages the enhanced provision (EP) resource well on behalf of the cluster. She works well with the enhanced provision teacher and provides support and encouragement to this challenging work. We discussed ways of expanding the role of the EP teacher through using her expertise to build capacity of staff across the cluster schools including ELC settings during inset days and collegiate sessions.

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- *Learning and engagement*
- *Quality of teaching*
- *Effective use of assessment*
- *Planning, tracking and monitoring*

Learning and Engagement

- Overall most children are motivated and engaged in their learning. The inclusive ethos promoted by all adults at the school supports children to participate in their learning
- There is a warm friendly atmosphere in the school and most children report they enjoy school and are treated with respect. They in turn are respectful and supportive of their peers. Across the school, relationships between children and all staff are very positive.
- All children contribute to the life of the school and community through their roles on whole school committees. Children in the upper stages also have the opportunities to take on additional responsibilities through roles such as Young Leaders, Prefects and House Captains. There are a few clubs that children can participate in out of class to extend their interest and talents for example cheerleading and football.
- Pupils report that they feel their teachers are hardworking and interested in them and they support them well with their learning. Children's rights are emphasised across the school through the ongoing work on rights respecting schools.
- In most classes, teachers share learning intentions and success criteria with children in literacy and numeracy. There is scope to further involve children in shaping success criteria.
- Within classes teachers use a blend of learning and teaching approaches to engage pupils in learning tasks. In most classes children are aware of themselves as learners and are setting targets for themselves. Work should continue on making sure there is consistency across the school in terms of target setting and how feedback from teachers can support this.
- We have asked teachers to be aware of times when lessons are becoming too teacher led and to work with children to encourage children to become more involved in their learning. Good use was made of plenary sessions to encourage children to review and evaluate their learning.

- Children benefit from a variety of mostly appropriate learning experiences which are sometimes differentiated for their age and stage. However, there is a need to develop differentiation further and improve the pace and challenge at all stages across the curriculum.
- While pupils do get opportunities to be on committees and lead initiatives, there is scope for teachers in the course of learning and teaching to raise children's awareness of the transferrable life skills that they are developing and how these relate to career education.

Quality of Teaching:

- Overall the quality of learning and teaching is good. Across the school children are generally engaged in their learning and most are attentive during direct teaching. Most children work well together in pairs and small groups and report that this helps them in their learning.
- In the majority of classes staff members were enthusiastic and able to provide clear instructions to support children's learning. We ask that they build on the good start made to developing higher order thinking through well thought out questions and develop this further. Staff should continue to develop formative assessment strategies to support learners to identify gaps in their learning.
- Praise was used effectively in almost all classrooms and in the best examples verbal feedback and evaluation of learning were used effectively. This should be extended to all classrooms to ensure consistency across the school.
- The use of digital technologies was evident in some classrooms and in many situations supported learning effectively. Children talked positively about using ICT and expressed a desire to have more opportunities to do so.

Effective use of Assessment

- The school uses a variety of assessment strategies including professional judgement, self and peer assessment, moderation activities and a variety of standardised assessments. Moving forward staff should ensure they use the data they have to effectively plan for challenging learning experiences for all learners.
- Teachers provide feedback in pupils' jotters but a more consistent approach across the school in using formative comments should be developed.
- Children supported by the enhanced provision teacher are receiving quality support underpinned with Boxhall profiling of their strengths and areas for development. She establishes very good relationships with children and supports the development of their social and emotional wellbeing in school.

Planning, tracking and monitoring

- The school uses the Aberdeenshire frameworks in some curricular areas and commercial scheme based planners to structure and plan work across the curriculum. The school should develop its use of the Aberdeenshire frameworks for planning their curriculum to ensure consistency and rigour in identification of the learning within and across all stages.

- Standardised assessment, school assessment and professional judgement are used to track and report on pupils' progress. The school should now look to streamline its assessment strategies and use the information it has to drive forward improvements.
- The headteacher meets with staff individually and with groups of children to monitor and discuss attainment and she knows the pupils in the school well. For some pupils a more focussed and individual approach is needed to ensure there is differentiation and challenge in their learning.
- The school uses Education Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence benchmarks alongside its own benchmarks to assess progress in Literacy and Numeracy and should now use the latest national benchmarks alongside the progression frameworks to add increased, rigour, to the process. Approaches to moderation should be built on and developed fully across the levels and curricular areas.

2.2 CURRICULUM: theme 2: Learning Pathways

- Learning pathways are based on the Experiences and Outcomes of a Curriculum for Excellence. The school has developed a flexible planning framework, where the 'loose bundling' of experiences and outcomes assists staff and involves children in planning Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL). The school also uses the Aberdeenshire Progression Pathways to guide teachers as to the appropriate level of learning. The school should ensure that planning provides clarity around the expected outcomes for learners by developing the use of the Aberdeen Progression Pathways to ensure the knowledge, understanding and skills across all curriculum areas are defined.
- The school has a consistent approach to 'High Level' termly forward planning for interdisciplinary learning (IDL). A high-level overview is shared with parents and displayed in each classroom. Teachers, during professional dialogue with the headteacher justify their chosen bundles ensuring the learning has been planned with consideration of the design principles. Staff now need to develop a refreshed framework for IDL which ensures a coherent approach allowing knowledge, understanding and skills to be developed over time. This should be underpinned with the progression pathways.
- Learning is planned across most curriculum areas through the bundling of outcomes for IDL. Literacy is visible in learning across the curriculum with examples in most classes of a range of quality writing related to contexts; IDL could be further enhanced by the consideration of further outdoor learning opportunities. The school should consider the progression of learning underpinning each curriculum area. The school needs to ensure that children experience a breadth of learning in all subject areas and build up this knowledge and understanding over time in all curricular areas.
- The core areas of literacy and numeracy are planned for using specific core resources such as Active Literacy and mathematics enhancement programme. The school should now reflect on how these core resources meet key learning in the Aberdeen Progression Frameworks and ensure that the required learning at a level is what drives teaching and assessment.
- The school has made a positive start to the development of digital technologies. Most classes have access to digital technologies and use them appropriately during lessons to support children's learning, for example supporting children with dyslexic difficulties and reinforcing their learning in French. This would be further enhanced by a progressive programme that built on the digital literacy skills from early years to P7 and beyond.
- Learning for Sustainability is embedded across the curriculum. Children have a strong sense of their rights and have opportunities to make decisions within committee membership, for example developing the school values, and the outdoors environment.

2.7 PARTNERSHIPS: theme 3 Impact on learners – Parental Engagement

- The school has strong links with the wider community and effective partnerships with a number of agencies. This provide the opportunity to further build upon existing partnership engagement to develop a more structured framework of family learning.
- The school has been successful in building good relationships with parents and partners. Good links have been made with Community Learning and Development (CLD) to encourage greater home school working. We ask that that the school builds on this good work of involving parents and the community to engage parents and the community more fully in their children’s learning.
- Within the ELC setting partnership with parents is positive as parents and carers are confident in approaching staff and feel welcomed and valued.
- Staff encourage parents and carers to join in activities for example, stay and play sessions. They should build on this success and develop this further.
- Staff discuss with parents their children’s progress regularly. To support this sharing of information further children’s profiles could be improved to give parents and carers a clearer picture of children’s progress in learning. They could also be used to encourage them to contribute to learning targets.
- In developing the sharing of children’s learning staff should make better use of the Benchmarks and Aberdeenshire guidance to inform parents of clear pathways which children can experience.
- The ELC setting has established good links with other partners for example, speech and language therapy, social work and links within the community.
- At the early level the school has strong and effective partnerships with parents. There are increasing, planned opportunities for parents to be involved in the wider life of the ELC setting.

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

good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's 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 every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- *Wellbeing*
- *Fulfilment of statutory duties*
- *Inclusion and equality*

- The wellbeing of children and families is a high priority for the school and is reflected in the school's vision. There is a strong nurturing ethos and commitment to respecting children's rights. Staff and the headteacher know children and their families very well, and as such, are well placed to identify and address aspects that require support early. Restorative approaches are evident in interactions with children and this is positively impacting on the behaviour and relationships with staff and among children. The headteacher has accessed funding to support a popular breakfast club once week which allows informal discussion around emotional and behavioural needs in addition to the provision of a nutritious breakfast.
- Children in focus groups described a strong sense of respect and had a good awareness of children's rights. They can discuss how people are different within the school and community, and beyond and why this is a good thing. They are responsible learners and considerate of others. Children have good awareness of mental and emotional wellbeing and can describe strategies the school uses to help support this, for example, "stop, think, act". In a few classes, teachers use a simple and effective rating scale for children to indicate their feelings which they know will be subtly addressed. Children feel their teachers know them very well and that they can confide in them about personal concerns or worries. They feel safe and treated fairly in school. There is a strong sense of mutual respect and trust.
- Staff have benefitted from professional learning in a range of aspects of wellbeing such as nurture principles and Grow Well Choices (an NHS healthy living resource). The school should now extend the use of wellbeing indicators with all children to help support them with assessing their own progress with their health and wellbeing and set targets.
- In a number of classes most children had a good understanding of the concepts of growth mind set and could describe how this improving their own confidence, but also that they were empowered to support improving the confidence of their peers.
- The school has developed and sustains strong partnerships with a wide range of agencies and organisations to support children's wellbeing, including third sector organisations. This is leading to improved outcomes for children and their families. Partners working with the school feel their contribution is highly valued.
- The nutritional analysis provided for the school lunch menus the four week menu cycle shows that all nutrient standards are being met. However, this should be reviewed to ensure meal combinations are appropriate and realistic of the selections

that children are making from the menu. The standards for oily fish is not currently being met as this needs to be provided at least once every three weeks.

- The school ensures that there is equity of opportunity for all children. The headteacher and staff work well with families to ensure that all children can take part in school life as far as possible. The headteacher maintains an overview of children's needs and support they are receiving. The support for learning teacher knows the children well and provides valuable in class support for a range of children across the school including children who are higher attaining. Meeting children's needs is supported with a range of paper work detailing children's planned learning and progress. We ask that the documentation surrounding meeting children's needs is reviewed to ensure it further supports meeting children's needs and details their progress over short periods of time.
- Children receiving support from the enhanced provision teacher have their health and wellbeing needs met well and as a result children are improving the amount of in class teaching they are able to access. She works hard with parents and a range of partners to support children's wide range of needs.

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- *Attainment in literacy and numeracy*
- *Attainment over time*
- *Overall quality of learners' achievement*
- *Equity for all learners*

Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy

- Curriculum for Excellence attainment data provided by the school for literacy in session 2015/16 shows that the most of children attained the appropriate level for their age and stage. Teacher professional judgement predicts that most children are on track to attain nationally expected levels in all aspects of literacy by the end of session 2016/17.
- In terms of mathematics and numeracy the attainment data provided by the school shows that in 2015/16 most pupils attained the appropriate level for age and stage across the school. The school has indicated that the use of the mathematics enhancement programme scheme has been an effective vehicle for improving attainment in mathematics and numeracy, while also being aware of some of the gaps that exist within the scheme. Most pupils at P1, P4 and P7 are on track to attain the appropriate levels by the end of this session.

Overall progress in Literacy

- Overall most children are attaining appropriate levels in English language and literacy. However, at early level a few children are not making enough progress in developing their knowledge and application of phonics. At early level not enough cognisance is taken of phonological awareness developed in ELC setting to ensure appropriate progress is being made. At first and second level most children can read fluently and with expression. Within the first level most children can explain why they prefer a particular author but would benefit from further opportunities to develop an understanding of structure and authors' use of language. At second level most children can express their ideas about structure, setting and characterisation and provide personal responses to texts. However, across the school children would benefit from exposure to a wider range of texts and authors.
- Across the school children write for a variety of purposes. At early level the majority of children are using capital letters and full stops to support the meaning of their writing. Children are making good progress across the transition into first and second level and can create a range of short and extended texts for different purposes using appropriate punctuation to support meaning. At second level most children can write using appropriate style and format. Children across the school would benefit from more planned and structured opportunities to write across the curriculum. Overall children make good progress in writing across all stages.

- Across the school children listen well and respond respectfully, with courtesy and good manners. In the early stages children are demonstrating the ability to take turns when listening and talking for a variety of purposes. At first and second levels all children contribute ideas and opinions and demonstrate the ability to respond to nonverbal cues. Children across the school would benefit from structured and planned opportunities across the curriculum to develop skills progression in listening and talking.

Numeracy and Mathematics:

- The mathematics enhancement programme scheme is used across the school as they key resource to teach mathematics and numeracy and it has helped to improve attainment at all stages. However, the school needs clear guidelines to ensure that they focus on the progress in learning through the Curriculum for Excellence level supported by progression frameworks and national benchmarks and not the mathematics enhancement programme that drives the curriculum. This would ensure that there is continuity and progression in learning.
- Across the school a mathematics enhancement programme has been implemented to support the development of mathematics and numeracy teaching and has made a positive impact on how lessons are structured, taught and how children talk about and use mental maths strategies. All children are set by ability and most pupils stated that they enjoyed being taught maths. We ask the school to review the setting of pupils according to ability in mathematics across the school.

Number Money and Measurement:

- Across the school a variety of approaches to support the development of mental mathematics are evident and most pupils are making good progress in this area. Most children have a good understanding of the number system and place value and by the upper stages are able to estimate and round numbers appropriately. By the end of the early level most children count well and undertake simple addition and subtraction within 20. By the end of the first level most children are developing confidence in working with their tables. Pupils at the upper stages also show a good understanding of what strategies to apply when undertaking problem solving tasks. A significant need across the school is that children get opportunities to lay out their work in jotters to carry out written calculations. In addition they should be given opportunities to apply their learning, when faced with word based problems in unfamiliar contexts. Older children, although good with mental calculation, need to continue to develop their skills in carrying out written, multiplication and division calculations.

Shape, Position and Movement

- Children working at the early level are able to identify the properties of 2D shapes and are able to identify shapes in the environment. Most children by P5 can discuss the properties of 2D shape and 3D objects while at the upper stages pupils are able to calculate the perimeter of a variety of shapes but were not so confident with area and volume.

Information Handling:

- Across all stages most children were able to collect, sort, organise and display data using tables, graphs, charts and diagrams appropriate to their stage. They were also able to interpret and draw conclusions from information displayed in a variety of forms appropriate to their age and stage.

Problem Solving:

- Across the school children understand what strategies to use to solve problems. They are clear about what processes they would apply to solve problems and staff include reference to real life problems in their teaching. It is important that at all stages pupils have opportunities to develop the numeracy skills regularly and at the appropriate time. The mathematics enhancement programme should not drive the learning.

Attainment over time:

- The school tracks children's progress over time. Regular tracking and attainment meetings between the headteacher and staff focus on children's progress using a range of evidence, including teacher judgement and standardised test results. The headteacher and staff meet regularly to plan appropriate interventions as far as possible to ensure that barriers to children attaining are removed. Children who have additional support needs (ASN) have their progress and targets reviewed regularly. Support from ASN staff and outside agencies is used well to support children.
- Overall the mathematics enhancement programme has improved the pedagogy of mathematics and numeracy and improved attainment results. To improve further children need experience of conventions of mathematical recording and applying their numeracy in real life contexts. Staff need to be directed more by progression through the Curriculum for Excellence levels in mathematics and numeracy using a variety of resources and strategies.

Overall quality of learners' achievements:

- Children benefit from working together in whole school committees and they are supporting them to develop as responsible citizens and confident individuals. The Eco committee have improved the school grounds and are proud winners of the Buchan in Bloom four years running.
- Children in P7 are developing confidence and leadership skills through taking on roles such as young leaders, prefects and house captains. Young leaders show care and concern for their peers and exercise responsibility through leading playground activities for younger children. The House captains are developing their leadership skills through organising awards for children who undertake volunteer roles in the school and community.
- A high number of children in the upper stages gain confidence and skills in performing to an audience through the school choir who perform at many school and community events throughout the year.
- The school celebrates the of achievement children through displays, the school blog, newsletters to parents, assembly awards, awarding of house points and an annual prize giving.
- The school has a simple system in place which audits children's wider achievements and identifies children who may be missing out on opportunities to achieve out of class. The school recognises the need to further develop this to track wider achievements of children and skills gained from these over time, involving children in these discussions and reflections and planning future opportunities.

Equity for all learners:

- The school has a strong focus on providing equity for all learners including monitoring the progress of disadvantaged groups and intervening appropriately to support them. Staff, know pupils well and are aware of the challenges that some children and families face. Staff and pupils show a respectful and caring approach to all children and their families. The school is well supported by close working with other agencies and by developing strong partnership work with parents, to help them to be able to support their children at home.

SCHOOL CHOICE OF QI 2.5 FAMILY LEARNING

- **Engaging families in learning**
 - **Early Intervention**
 - **Quality of family learning programmes**
- The school and ELC (early learning and child care setting) have developed positive relationships with parents and its community. Staff are committed to the school and the community it serves. Staff encourage parents to be involved in supporting children's needs. Parents speak positively about their involvement in the school. The school and ELC has worked well with community learning and development (CLD) to improve how the school works with its whole school community.
 - Steps are taken to help parents become better informed about the work of the school and ELC setting in order that they can best support children's learning at home. For example, workshops to explain the teaching of phonics, reading and maths. Parents work with the school to improve children's and families understanding of healthy eating through the Grow Well Project.
 - As the school develops the use of target setting and learning logs, parents would be able to contribute more to children's learning and be more regularly involved on the specific learning their child is undertaking. Home activity packs have been used well in ELC setting to develop literacy skills at home.
 - Community Learning and Development (CLD) have worked with parents to develop their awareness of new mathematics scheme. A drop in, one to one tutoring service for parents in mathematics was well attended.
 - We ask that the school and ELC setting now seeks the views of parents on how family learning can be developed further to ensure that the family learning offered reflects the needs and wishes of families within the community.
 - There are plans in place to develop family learning more fully across the ELC setting. As the ELC setting expands to make provision for 2 year olds the particular family needs of parents of very young children need to be considered.
 - Across the school and ELC setting there is a need to consult more fully with parents and the community regarding their needs in family learning. The school and ELC setting would benefit from closely monitoring the impact of family learning and its resultant outcomes for learners.

Summarised Inspection Findings

Section Two

New Pitsligo and St John's Primary School Nursery Class

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 lead practitioner and head teacher have a clear vision for the early learning and child care (ELC) setting and its place within the school. They are working closely together to revise practice and promote a more collegiate approach including all practitioners. The setting is working positively with parents to share the vision and how this could be achieved, for example acting on their comments which requested more involvement in their children's learning experiences. This vision should also be shared with all staff across the school to highlight children's learning journey from 3-18.
- Through daily routines and engagement with children the lead practitioner models and scaffolds effective practice, for example in developing questioning, tracking children's learning and achievements.
- Since the beginning of this session the team led by the lead practitioner have worked on improving the learning environment which has become more welcoming for children and parents/carers.
- In order to implement improvement and change practitioners should continue to develop their skills and knowledge through professional learning which will meet their individual needs as well as the needs of the setting as a whole.
- As the new team has now been established it would be useful to define clear remits detailing specific responsibilities and how they contribute to the overall improvement agenda. Practitioners should continue to develop collegiate working and extend this to working with colleagues across the early level.
- As the lead practitioner post is now established, it would be useful if developments could be led across the early level. This would help ensure learning pathways are in place to ensure better progression from the setting into P1. The improvement plan for the ELC setting should now reflect more the work actually being undertaken in the setting. The improvement plan should reflect preparations for including two year olds in the nursery.

2.3 LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences 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*
- Within the setting, practitioners provide children and their families with a welcoming environment which is safe and secure. Practitioners use a very caring, nurturing approach which enables children to be relaxed and able to enjoy their time in this setting, participating in a range of experiences to support their learning and development.
 - Practitioners are very aware of children's individual needs and backgrounds resulting in appropriate provision being made for their wellbeing. They need to ensure that all support and intervention is documented with a clear focus on how these impact on children's wellbeing and learning.
 - Most children engage well with their learning. However, within the setting, practitioners need to ensure that all children are sufficiently engaged by the experiences provided. The quality of children's engagement in learning is variable as the environment at times is adult led and does not always meet children's interests. Most younger children would benefit from being supported in making more appropriate choices which would help them sustain interest for longer periods of time.
 - Children have opportunities to contribute to the work of the setting as they make decisions about their learning, weekly snack menu and 'rules' to ensure all children behave positively towards each other.
 - Observations of children's learning is recorded in electronic learning profiles, supported by the use of tablet computers. There is scope to develop this further by ensuring that next steps in learning are clearly identified and incorporated into subsequent planned learning. Children could be more involved, in planning what they want to do next. This will help them become more aware of themselves as learners.
 - Through planned learning experiences staff should ensure children experience real life contexts as far as possible. Overall, there is scope to provide children with greater challenge with and further opportunities for creativity and development of curiosity, to ensure that all children are fully engaged in and motivated by their learning.
 - Interactions are positive with practitioners supporting children to take part in daily routines and activities. There is scope to provide a higher quality of questioning which will help promote rich discussions about learning. This should also support

and scaffold children in talking more confidently about their achievements.

- Practitioners know children well and are responsive to their social and emotional needs. However, there is a need to develop a clearer and more systematic method of assessing and recording children's progress across their learning. Achieving this would help practitioners plan more effectively for what children will learn next. In helping to achieve this, practitioners should work closely with the lead practitioner and colleagues across the early level to make use of local and national guidance to promote continuity and progression in learning.
- Children have regular opportunities to visit a local woodland area. As part of planned adaptations to the learning environment for the admission of two year olds, we ask that practitioners also develop the outdoor learning programme to meet all children's learning and wellbeing needs

2.2 CURRICULUM: theme 2: Learning and Development Pathways

- In the setting the curriculum has a clear focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, however practitioners would benefit from clear progression pathways in these and other curriculum areas to ensure that all children make appropriate progress across all areas of learning. Practitioners would benefit from a more in depth understanding of curriculum, the developmental stages and needs of younger children.
- Practitioners work hard and demonstrate a nurturing approach towards children. They are working well together as a team to improve the learning environment. Practitioners would benefit from re-visiting national guidance, Building the Ambition, to help develop their practice and understanding of early learning pedagogy further.

2.7 PARTNERSHIPS: theme 3 Impact on children and families – Parental Engagement

- Within the setting partnerships with parents and carers are positive. Parents and carers are confident in approaching practitioners and feel welcomed and valued.
- Practitioners encourage parents and carers to join in activities to share learning such as, stay and play sessions. They should build on this success and develop this further.
- Practitioners discuss with parents and carers their children's progress regularly. To support this sharing of information further children's profiles could be improved to give parents and carers a clearer picture of children's progress in learning. They could also be used to encourage them to contribute to learning targets. In developing the way children's learning is shared with parents and carers, practitioners should make better use of the local and national guidance to inform parents of the clear pathways which children can experience in their learning.
- The setting has established good links with other partners for example, speech and language therapy, social work and links within the community. As a result children with barriers to learning receive appropriate support.

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

satisfactory

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 understand the principles of *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) and this creates a warm friendly nurturing ethos across the setting. There are very positive relationships between practitioners and children resulting in a good foundation for developing children's wellbeing. Practitioners work hard to develop a high level of trust with families who feel well supported and able to share any concerns.
- Practitioners readily identify children who may require additional support for their learning and wellbeing. They are aware of appropriate support which requires to be put in place. Practitioners are now making more effective use of the wellbeing indicators when planning for children's needs.
- To ensure that all children's emotional needs are being met, the lead practitioner is begun to introduce more time for practitioners to come together with their key children with a focus on promoting the emotional wellbeing of children.
- There are a few children in the setting who would benefit from more additional support with their learning. The support for learning teacher in school could provide guidance and expertise to assist practitioners in identifying what support is required, helping to set learning targets and tracking children's progress.
- The school has onsite specialist staff, with the enhanced provision teacher, to help support children's social and emotional wellbeing. We ask that this resource be used better to support children within this setting to intervene early to support challenging behaviour. There is scope to use the expertise of this member of staff to deliver professional learning to early years staff across this setting and within the cluster to build their capacity in meeting social and emotional needs.

3.2 SECURING CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

satisfactory

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*
- Overall, improvements which are planned to how practitioners plan children's learning and tracks their progress should help ensure that children achieve their potential in literacy and numeracy. Overall, most children are making satisfactory progress in their learning in literacy and numeracy but there is scope for a number of children to be making increased progress.
 - Most children are confident as they approach and develop their learning. They are display increasing resilience as they participate in a variety of play situations, joining in games and learning to share with each other.
 - Practitioners are aware of how well children are progressing and in most instances provide appropriate challenge. However, there is scope to develop this further to ensure that all children are supported and sufficiently challenged across the early level.
 - In numeracy and mathematics progression for almost all children is appropriate to their stage of development. Children demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a range of shapes and can identify and name a range of 2D shapes. Through their play they explore early measurement such as length and weight in different contexts.
 - A few children are using early number skills effectively in a variety of real life contexts for example, counting confidently while playing games, organising snack and baking. There is scope to challenge children more in developing early numeracy skills through their play. A few children could be achieving more in numeracy.
 - Most children display a good level of communication when talking to adults about their activities, for example, sharing their library visit from the previous day and particular stories they enjoy.
 - Most children are keen to mark make and discuss readily what it represents. A few children are forming single letters successfully, using them to record their names and captions which are displayed for others to see. These children would now benefit from further opportunities and increased challenge to develop emergent writing in appropriate real life contexts.

- Early reading skills are being developed as children have opportunities to look at and understand the printed word. Children are encouraged to 'read' stories and respond to the illustrations. Most children are at the early stages of phonological awareness as they are able to identify rhyme when listening to different texts. There are a few children across the setting who are capable of more challenge in developing their early literacy skills.
- Overall, children have good opportunities to develop relationships with each other, develop their independence and enjoy success as practitioners know them very well.
- In developing further the work of the setting, it would be beneficial if practitioners had a greater shared understanding of the standard expected at the early level, to ensure that expectations are high enough for all learners. They could enhance transition if there was more collaborative working across the early level, taking into account progression pathways in learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- In promoting equity within the setting practitioners provide a positive ethos where every child is valued. There is a focus on promoting positive behaviour resulting in children feeling more settled and confident in the setting.

SCHOOL CHOICE OF QI 2.5 FAMILY LEARNING

- **Engaging families in learning**
- **Early Intervention**
- **Quality of family learning programmes**

- The school and setting has developed positive relationships with parents and its community. Staff are committed to the school and the community it serves. Staff encourage parents to be involved in supporting children's needs. Parents speak positively about their involvement in the school. The school and setting has worked well with community learning and development (CLD) to improve how the school works with its community.
- Steps are taken to help parents become better informed about the work of the school and setting in order that they can best support children's learning at home through for example, workshops to explain the teaching of phonics, reading and maths. Parents work with the school to improve children's and families understanding of healthy eating through the Grow Well Project.
- As the school develops the use of target setting and learning logs, parents would be able to contribute more to children's learning and be more regularly involved on the specific learning their child is undertaking
- Home activity packs have been used well in setting to develop literacy skills at home.
- CLD have worked with parents to develop their awareness of new maths scheme. A drop in one to one tutoring service for parents in maths was well attended.
- We ask that the school and ELC setting now seeks the views of parents on how family learning can be developed further to ensure that what is offered reflects the needs and wishes of families within the community. The school and ELC setting would benefit from closely monitoring the impact of family learning on resultant outcomes for learners
- There are plans in place to develop family learning more fully across the ELC setting. As the setting expands to make provision for 2 year olds, the particular family needs of parents of very young children need to be considered in these plans.

PARTICULAR STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

- The leadership of the head teacher in securing improvement over time and in establishing good teamwork between enthusiastic staff, parents and the community.
- The care and wellbeing of children in the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting and the positive start made to improvement due to the leadership of the lead practitioner.
- The positive school ethos demonstrated by well-behaved, respectful children who are supportive of their peers. They enjoy learning and are proud of their school.
- The school's success in including all children and supporting children with barriers to learning. In recent years there has been a sustained focus on continuing to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy.

AGREED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR THE SCHOOL

- Improve and streamline the school's approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment across the ELC setting and school.
- Refresh the curriculum ensuring appropriate focus on progression in learning through the Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- Ensure the needs of all children are met through an increased focus on pace and challenge in learning across all classes.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE INSPECTION?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Aberdeenshire Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.