

Summarised inspection findings

Netherburn Primary School Nursery Class

South Lanarkshire Council

21 January 2025

Key contextual information

Netherburn Nursery Class provides early learning and childcare within Netherburn Primary School in a small rural village within South Lanarkshire. Children attend the nursery from the age of three until they start primary school. Full day, term time sessions are offered between 8:45 am and 2.45 pm. The nursery is registered for 27 children and the current roll is 21. The single playroom is accessed from a cloakroom area which is separate from the school entrance. Children can choose to play indoors or outdoors and regularly access spaces in the school including the gym and lunch hall. The headteacher and team leader work in close partnership to lead and manage the work of the small team of staff.

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 team have worked effectively with children and families to create and adapt their vision and values. Children and staff show high levels of care, compassion and empathy towards one another as they play and learn. Practitioners promote kindness in all aspects of the work of the nursery. There is a well-established culture of mutual respect. All children, parents and staff members are treated with high regard for their individual strengths and capabilities. Practitioners and parents collaborate to develop accessible vocabulary which the team then use frequently to reinforce their values. Parents, practitioners, and children are all highly positive about the tangible impact of the work of the nursery on children's development.
- The supportive and experienced team leader and headteacher involve and encourage all practitioners to improve their practice and lead improvements. The team are very well supported in their personal and professional development. The headteacher and team leader work as an effective team to facilitate a wide range of useful quality assurance and monitoring activities. Practitioners regularly reflect on their practice together. They make improvements based on useful feedback from rigorous monthly and termly monitoring, regular playroom observations and focused meetings that help to identify children's progress. Children and parents' views meaningfully influence improvement planning. Practitioners are highly motivated about their leadership responsibilities. They use professional learning opportunities very well to inform improvements to indoor and outdoor spaces. This is leading to increased opportunities for creativity and is refining the team's deep understanding of nurture and attachment informed practice. This ensures children access interesting play experiences in highly supportive environments.
- Practitioners, parents, and children identify areas of practice accurately and promptly that would benefit from new approaches. They do this through a range of informal and formal self-evaluation opportunities. Recently, this has included a focus for the nursery, school, and parents on important work to develop further children's literacy and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills. Practitioners are curious, reflective, and constructive as they enthusiastically implement new ideas from visits to colleagues in other settings. Children

also enjoy visiting other nurseries and discussing what they would like to learn more about. The team suggest and make well-judged improvements alongside colleagues in the school to facilitate highly effective transition programmes. All practitioners should develop further their skills in gathering, analysing, and using information to capture and celebrate the impact of improvements on children's progress.

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

- Children are eager, independent, and increasingly confident in their small nursery class. They settle quickly and support one another frequently to follow the well-established routines. Children confidently post their name in areas where they choose to play and enjoy sharing how they feel each day with practitioners and parents. Children make choices, express their needs and interests, and try new things with carefully judged levels of support from the team. Practitioners support children well to concentrate for extended periods of time. Children build tall towers, predict the outcome of science experiments or care for babies in the home corner. A few children play alongside their friends as they begin to learn to share resources and space with others. The team should continue to reflect on the routines across the day to maximise opportunities for children to lead their play and learning throughout the whole session.
- Practitioners are consistently focused on what children need, are motivated by, or are trying to communicate to them. All team members use eye contact, gesture, touch, and tone of voice with sensitivity and skill to engage or reassure children. Practitioners use observation well to identify when children need support from adults to resolve disagreements or work together to complete a task. The team frequently role model, reinforce and comment on positive behaviour and children's achievements. Practitioners engage children well in using digital technologies as they find out more about topics they are interested in or play educational games.
- All team members know children very well as individuals. Practitioners regularly observe children at play. All keyworkers record general observations within children's learning journals. Parents regularly share what children are interested in learning or would like to do next. The team leader has accurately identified the need to support the team to develop further their confidence in assessing and documenting children's progress more fully. Practitioners are now beginning to record observations that are focused on learning and identify more specific and personalised next steps in learning. The team benefit from discussing children's progress at daily and weekly meetings in addition to individual, focused discussions about the progress of individuals. As planned, the team should continue to refine and develop their approaches to observation and assessment of learning. Practitioners should use these approaches to fully inform their planning of all spaces and experiences.
- Senior leaders collaborate effectively with practitioners, parents and visiting professionals to create clear, up to date plans for children who may be experiencing barriers to their learning. All team members are aware of, and implement effectively, creative, and personalised strategies to support children to participate fully. In particular, the proactive partnership working among practitioners, parents and partners, supports children well to thrive.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners work well together to plan a wide breadth of planned and responsive learning experiences. The team use their regular discussions with parents and children alongside their own observations of children's needs and interests to inform their planning of learning. Practitioners have a well-developed understanding of the importance of secure attachments as a basis for learning. The team have a detailed curriculum rationale, developed previously with the school. This details many aspects of the approach to developing children's literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing skills. The team have rightly identified the need to revisit this with practitioners, children, and families to ensure it is understood by everyone and fully reflects their approach. Practitioners ignite children's curiosity and creativity through STEM activities, a renewed focus on music and expressive arts, outdoor learning and increased opportunities for children to cook and bake.
- Practitioners implement a thoughtfully designed, highly effective, flexible transition programme. This programme supports children and their families as they start nursery or move on to their next stage of learning. Practitioners work in a close partnership with colleagues in P1 before, during and after children move into school. The team spend time working with children and teaching staff in the early weeks of P1. Keyworkers visit children in P1 and share helpful information about children's talents and progress. All staff across early level work very well together to ensure continuity and progression for children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Families are well informed, actively involved and highly valued in the work of the nursery. Children are motivated to learn in nursery and at home due to high levels of trust, mutual respect and engagement between practitioners, families and children. Parents share important information daily with practitioners and the management team. This helps practitioners support and challenge children using important up-to-date information. Parents contribute regularly to all aspects of the work of the nursery. They participate enthusiastically in a range of parental groups including family reading sessions. Practitioners value the views and engagement of parents in the life of the setting. Parents suggest improvements that are promptly acted upon by staff to benefit children.
- Families demonstrate high levels of engagement and enjoyment as they use home learning bags or attend masterclass learning sessions with their child. Parents organise fundraising events and attend group sessions about mental health or sleep strategies for children. Practitioners should continue to identify, celebrate, and evaluate the impact of parental involvement on the progress of individual children.

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

- Practitioners prioritise the wellbeing of all children as they support children to learn how to understand and improve their own and others' wellbeing. Children feel very secure in their nursery and develop a highly positive sense of self-worth and confidence in their own abilities. Practitioners support children well to know when they are successful learners. Together they notice and spotlight everyone's strengths and achievements. All children have a strong sense of belonging as a result of highly positive and nurturing relationships they have with practitioners. Children form secure attachments with adults and one another in short, regular group times. They benefit from being able to make choices throughout their day where they persevere, work as a team, and develop their imaginations.
- The team use their everyday routines, experiences shared from home and planned activities to increase children's understanding of most of the national wellbeing indicators. Most children are beginning to develop a good understanding of the concept of their own and other people's rights. A few children talk with understanding about how to ensure their own and others' privacy. Children very much enjoy the responsibility of helping prepare for snack, get ready for lunch, or look after their playroom. Children are active contributors to the work of the nursery as they share their views, likes and dislikes. Practitioners should continue to increase opportunities for children to develop further their leadership skills to use their skills and strengths to support others.
- Practitioners are confident and well informed about their statutory duties in relation to early learning and childcare. The team implement a range of up-to-date policies that are shared regularly with parents. Practitioners are consistent, professional, and conscientious about their clear responsibilities for specific aspects of their work. Every child has an up-to-date care plan that clearly details their specific needs. The team leader regularly monitors plans to ensure they are current and reflect strategies for individual children.
- Practitioners have an inclusive, welcoming, and open approach. The team are non-judgemental and treat all children and families with respect. Practitioners focus on children's individual stage of development, capabilities and needs as they work very well together with visiting professionals. The team implement agreed strategies creatively and work well with families to identify and reduce barriers to involvement or learning. Children who require additional help with their learning have specific plans in place with clear, appropriate targets to direct the work of the team. Practitioners should now develop further their work on inclusion by increasing planned opportunities for children to learn about diversity.

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

- Almost all children make good progress in communication, early language and literacy. Younger children increase their vocabulary and communicate their ideas using gesture, single words, and short sentences. Children are confident communicators. They talk with adults about how to stay safe around fireworks and share key events in their lives. Children confidently request to learn new sign language words. Most children concentrate intently to frequent stories and rhymes. A few children demonstrate a very good understanding of the language of books and stories and confidently describe the roles of authors and illustrators. Children are motivated to express their experiences and ideas as they draw detailed pictures. A few children would benefit from activities to explore environmental print. They need further opportunities to create and record their own stories and rhymes and continue to increase their phonological awareness.
- Almost all children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children accurately recognise, name and match numerals as they explore shoe sizes. Children use and extend their mathematical language as they build tall towers. Children begin to correctly use the language of measure as they compare height and length of natural objects in the forest and use real tools in the woodwork area. A few children recall how they gathered and displayed data using tally marks. Children should now develop further and apply their numeracy and mathematics skills in challenging play and real-life contexts.
- Children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. Children develop their gross and fine motor skills well as they challenge themselves to navigate uneven surfaces and balance and climb on trees in the forest. Children have a well-developed understanding of how to use real tools safely as they create complex models and structures in the woodwork area. Almost all children share spaces and resources very well, they work very well as part of a team and frequently offer support or praise to their friends. All children frequently reflect on their strengths and next steps with practitioners and parents. They draw pictures, discuss, and compare skills as they comment on their learning journals, floorbooks and reports of their progress.
- Overall, children make good progress across their learning. The team frequently celebrate children's everyday achievements. They use online records, displays about children's achievements, home learning evaluations and assessment activities to demonstrate children's progress over time. Children are motivated to share their achievements and successes at home, they enjoy being part of the whole school 'star of the week' awards. The team should

now continue to implement their new local authority tracker to develop an overview of the progress children make across their learning.

- Practitioners have a detailed understanding of the home lives and individual needs of children and of the needs and views of their extended families. They support children, their local community, and individual's families very well. The headteacher and team leader are respectful and sensitive as they ensure they minimise costs for families who participate in nursery events. A good range of practical support such as access to nursery uniforms or support to make connections and referrals to other agencies supports families when they need it. Children who require extra support are identified quickly and supported effectively through personalised support. The team should continue to assess the impact of universal and targeted support to individual children and families on children's progress.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children benefitted from a nurturing staff team who worked very well together to ensure they created a welcoming, inclusive environment. A strength of the setting was that staff undertook home visits with families to discuss and support children's initial transition into the setting. A similar approach was taken when children later made the transition into primary one. Building close relationships with staff from an early stage helped children feel safe and secure, therefore contributing to their emotional wellbeing. The approach promoted genuine partnerships, which respected parents' knowledge of their children.

Parents told us staff involved them meaningfully when making shared decisions about their children's care, learning and development. Staff were skilled in recording shared information within children's personal plans to meet their individual needs and preferences. Where children had additional support needs, staff took account of external professionals' assessments and suggested strategies. For example, educational psychologist and speech and language therapist had shared strategies to enhance children's communication development and emotional regulation. This ensured everyone was working together to help children enjoy positive experiences and outcomes. Personal plans were regularly reviewed and monitored by management to ensure that care support strategies and next steps for learning were relevant to children's changing needs.

Staff were responsive to children's interests and ideas. As a result, children were happy and settled within the setting. The whole school community was committed to attachment informed practice. We observed that children were spoken and listened to by staff in ways that encouraged them to feel valued, respected and loved. Children were supported to understand and express their emotions through a range of resources, such as daily emotional check ins. This meant children were developing valuable emotional literacy skills, with the ability to recognise and describe their feelings.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Promoting play-based learning was a priority for the setting. Children's voice was valued by staff, who had high aspirations to enable children to be successful. We observed some staff using well-timed, open-ended questions to challenge children's thinking around their play interests. As a result, children were confident, happy and motivated to learn.

Children's learning was enhanced through wider play opportunities within the local community. This included a forest school programme in the second term, visits to other nurseries and outings on the local bus to shops in the next town. This gave children a sense of belonging to their community and an appreciation of their wider world. Children's activities and experiences within and beyond the setting were documented within the children's floor books and wall displays. This supported children to revisit their learning with friends, staff and families. It also provided children with ideas for topics they would like to explore next.

Through discussions with staff, it was evident they used their own professional development to deepen their understanding of early years pedagogy and how they could use this to extend the breadth and depth of children's learning. Examples of training included Froebel, forest schools, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). We observed how staff had used their

learning in the organisation of resources and activities they had planned for children, such as a STEM activity making silent fireworks. It was good practice that children could choose whether they wished to participate in organised activities, rather than a structured group interrupting their own play.

Staff regularly met together to discuss children's experiences and reflect on how to further enrich children's play and learning. Detailed individual observations of children's learning journeys and next steps were shared with families via an online platform. Families were encouraged to upload children's play and learning from home, which respected children's wider progress and achievements. We encouraged the setting to use the platform to capture children's voice about their play experiences. This would support children to reflect on their learning and set their own goals for what they would like to learn about next.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was based within a purpose-built school with high quality fittings and furniture so that children felt they mattered. There was plenty of natural light, which created a welcoming atmosphere. Children were kept safe within the building through various safety measures, including secure door entry systems. Children had accompanied access to facilities within the school that included the gym hall and cosy library area. Supporting children to become familiar with the geography of the school and the people in it helped them feel safe and included in the school community as well as easing their transitions to primary one.

Staff had organised each area of the playroom to reflect children's abilities and interests. This supported children to lead their own play and have fun with their friends. There were little nooks and soft furnishings so that children could relax and spend time alone, supporting their emotional wellbeing. Both indoors and outdoors, there was a very good balance of commercially produced and natural materials or 'loose parts'. Loose parts are open ended or scrap materials that children can experiment with, be creative, problem solve and experience a sense of achievement.

Children were confident moving around the spaces available. They had free flow access to outdoors and were responsible for putting their names on the display board as they moved through different areas. The setting provided outerwear and wellies in an outside store that was easily accessible by children, so that they could independently decide how to dress for the weather. Children were learning other life skills about keeping themselves safe through SIMOA the elephant resources, including a little book they had made for the book corner. The Care Inspectorate's SIMOA (safety, inspect, monitor, observe, act) campaign offers guidance on promoting a child centred approach to safety.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place to support everyone's health and wellbeing. For example, children were supported to wash their hands at appropriate times. Staff frequently washed their own hands, role modelling for children the importance of good hygiene to prevent the spread of germs that might make them unwell.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Strong leadership across the school community, supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children to reach their full potential. Staff told us they felt very well supported by management, both personally and professionally. The manager followed an inclusive and supportive approach to quality assurance and improvement. They worked with the team leader to regularly observe and monitor key aspects of practice within the setting. Staff participated in peer evaluations, which had helped create conditions where they felt confident to initiate change and share responsibility for the process.

The manager sought and valued children's, staff and parents' contributions to any consultations. They had extracted key themes, to inform the development of a shared vision and improvement plan for the whole school. From these, clear priorities for the setting had been set, captured and shared with families on wall displays. These featured children's own words about the vision and values of the setting. Regular and purposeful communication took place with parents and families. In addition to face-to-face chats, the staff team hosted stay and play sessions and chat groups that enabled parents to build trusting relationships with them. The setting used social media and newsletters to share information, including photos of activities and experiences children had enjoyed within the setting. In their feedback to us, parents confirmed that they felt they had been meaningfully consulted.

Staff had clear remits and leadership roles that were based on their strengths and interests as well as the individual needs of children and service priorities. This was underpinned by access to professional development activities. Staff spoke passionately about their area of expertise and how they were taking forward their ideas or implementing best practice guidance. This contributed to high quality care, play and learning experiences for children. Staff were familiar with national quality frameworks for early learning and childcare. They used these for shared professional reflection within their team and to evaluate outcomes for children.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

4.3 Staff deployment

There was a strong staff team within the setting, where staff had developed respectful relationships with each other and welcomed new members to the team. There was an induction programme in place to allow new staff to familiarise themselves with procedures and expectations of their role. We suggested the manager encourage all new staff, on an early learning and childcare career pathway, to access the national induction resource. The guidance serves as a reminder of Scottish Government's expectations of national standards for early learning and childcare, and how these contribute to the safety of children, their wellbeing and progression.

Effective staff deployment across the setting meant that children's individual needs were being met by the right number of staff throughout each element of the day. Staff flexibly supported each other to ensure the team were responsive to children's needs. For example, staff always positioned themselves, whether within the playroom or outdoor areas, in a way that effectively supervised children's play. Staff communicated with each other to maintain engagement with children as they moved around the spaces available. The small size of the setting and high adult to child ratios meant children were comfortable and familiar with all staff in the team. This contributed to children being confident to access different spaces, and to feel safe and secure in their environment.

Staff photographs and their role were displayed at the accommodation entrance, which helped families get to know who would be caring for their children. We could see by how families were welcomed into the playroom, at the start and finish of each day, that staff had clearly built very positive relationships with them. Parents who responded to our survey agreed they had a strong connection with staff. Parent involvement helps establish a supportive learning environment for children. Staff were warm, caring and nurturing in their interactions with children, which had created a calm, homely atmosphere throughout the setting. Staff were playful, listened attentively to children and were responsive to their ideas. As a result, children were settled and felt included.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no area for improvement.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.