

# Summarised inspection findings

**Strathburn School Nursery Class**

Aberdeenshire Council

16 September 2025

## Key contextual information

Strathburn School Nursery Class is based within the Strathburn School building with separate access to the school building. There is one main playroom with a separate room used for mealtimes. Children have free flow access to an open conservatory and enclosed outdoor area. Additionally, the nursery children access the school facilities such as gym hall, sensory room and early level play space. Children attend from the age of three until starting primary school. The setting is registered for 30 children aged 3 - 5 years at any one time. Children can access their 1140 hours in a variety of attendance patterns between 8 am and 6 pm for 48 weeks each year. Currently, there are 48 children on the register. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the setting. The early years senior practitioner has responsibility for day-to-day management of the nursery and is the named manager. The wider team includes two early years lead practitioners, four early years practitioners and one early years support worker. The setting also has regular support from a principal early years teacher.

### 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 know all children very well. They are sensitive to their individual needs and are positive role models. They use skilful and carefully planned interventions to support children regulate their behaviour. All children benefit from warm, nurturing relationships with practitioners. Children are engaged, motivated and happy to explore their environment independently or with their peers. As a result, almost all children act respectfully and with kindness towards each other.
- Practitioners provide children with a wide range of exciting and purposeful play opportunities both indoors and outdoors which support them well to be creative and curious. A few children would benefit from greater challenge in their learning. Most children lead their own learning and take forward leadership roles. For example, as a snack helper or an outdoor risk assessor. All staff value children's rights and opinions which they display across the setting. They involve children in making improvements to the setting through the recently established children's voice committee. Their suggestions have helped develop areas across the playroom. Practitioners extend children's learning by developing links with the local community for example the pet shop. This is resulting in children understanding how to be a responsible citizen.
- Practitioners are proactive at responding to children's individual interests in a respectful and supportive manner. Most practitioners skilfully ask open ended questions to extend and challenge children's deeper thinking skills to sustain learning.
- Children have access to an interactive whiteboard. With support from practitioners children use tablet devices to complete surveys well. For example, a shoe survey to record information.

Practitioners should plan more effectively on how digital technology can support and enhance children's learning.

- Each child has a 'learning jotter' which contains observations of learning and next steps linking with the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Children's voices and experiences are also captured well by practitioners in floor books. Practitioners share children's experiences, and planning on an online platform, parents are encouraged to contribute learning from home. Consideration should now be given on how children and parents are able to contribute more consistently towards discussions about progress and planning. This should support parents and children to know understand the next steps in learning for each child.
- Practitioners plan regularly for children's learning. They use a balance of intentional and responsive approaches alongside the experiences and outcomes of CfE and national practice guidance. Practitioners are responsive to children, encourage them to share their views and follow their interests as part of daily practice. Practitioners' planning reflects children's individual developmental needs and the national wellbeing indicators. This results in children being supported through the use of targeted and universal supports within the playroom to ensure children make the best possible progress.
- Senior leaders support practitioners to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing using a whole school tracking system. Senior leaders and practitioners review these regularly. Senior leaders should consider how they can support the nursery team to streamline systems for planning, tracking and monitoring.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

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

- Most children make good progress in communication and early language. A few children make very good progress. This is evident in their understanding of texts, and in their early writing skills. Most children use a wide range of mark making tools across all areas of the playroom. A few children add detail to their drawings and talk confidently about their creation. Most children listen attentively to stories. They use props and puppets as part of a group and explore books alongside practitioners to research an interest. Practitioners confidently use sign language and visuals to aid communication. This is resulting in all children feeling confident and happy to communicate their needs in a variety of ways.
- Children make good progress in mathematics. Most children use and recognising numbers confidently throughout their play and across the environment. Children use resources such as height charts and rulers to measure using appropriate mathematical language. Most children recognise colour and shape in the environment counting to 10 and beyond. Children enjoy using numbers during real life experiences outdoors. Practitioners have correctly identified that a few children would benefit from additional challenge to develop their mathematical skills.
- Children make good progress in their health and wellbeing. They enjoy free flow access to outdoors participating in appropriate risky play. Children have an awareness of health eating and can confidently share what being healthy means to them. Most children are independent during a relaxed unhurried lunchtime experience. Practitioners sensitively support children to become increasingly independent through preparing snack and recycling food waste. Children use a variety of outdoor balancing equipment. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to develop their gross motor skills.
- Children make good progress over time appropriate to their stage of development. Most children enthusiastically share what they are learning. Practitioners should continue to support all children to plan and reflect on their own learning. This will support them to identify themselves as independent learners. Senior leaders meet termly to discuss children's progress. They support practitioners well to make professional judgements and ensure they build upon children's significant learning.
- Children's achievements at nursery and at home are valued and displayed on their 'wow wall'. Practitioners should now track children's wider achievements. This will help to ensure all children have equal opportunities to experience the feeling of success. Practitioners should be better able to identify the wide range of skills children are developing.

- Practitioners know their families well and take very effective account of their cultural, linguistic and socio-economic background. They have created a nurturing and inclusive ethos to ensure all children have equal access to learning opportunities. The nursery team work closely with a range of partners to ensure that children and families are well-supported. As planned, practitioners and senior leaders should continue to make robust use of available data to plan and evaluate interventions.

## 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.