

Summarised inspection findings

Sunshine Playschool

Angus Council

12 November 2024

Key contextual information

Sunshine Playschool is a voluntary provider in partnership with Angus Council to provide funded early learning and childcare (ELC). A parents committee has legal responsibility for the management of the playschool and its finances. The playschool is situated in the community of Kirriemuir and has been part of the community for 30 years. The group operates from a community hall. Practitioners need to set up and clear away all resources at the beginning and end of each day. They are unable to put any displays of children's work on the walls. The setting consists of a large playroom, small side room and a small outdoor area. Children are not able to free-flow between the playroom and outdoor area due to the layout of the community hall.

Children travel to the setting from Kirriemuir and the surrounding villages. They can attend the setting from the age of two until starting primary school. The setting is registered for 24 children at any one time. The current roll is 20. Of this number, six children are eligible for funded early learning and childcare (ELC). Most children attending the setting are under three years of age and are relatively new to the setting. Most children access privately funded placements and have various patterns of attendance. The playschool operates from 8.30 am – 4 pm, Monday to Thursday during school term-time.

Staffing consists of a full-time manager who has the day-to-day responsibility of the setting and a team of four practitioners. The manager is included in the staff to child ratio. All practitioners work two days per week in various patterns. The manager has worked in the playschool for 10 years. Initially as a practitioner then the manager from 2020.

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 setting's vision, values and aims have been recently reviewed with staff and the parents committee. The team bring these to life through their practice and interactions with children. They strive to ensure children have fun through play and positive relationships with the team and other children.
- Most of the team have worked together for a number of years. They are supportive of each other and have created a culture of respect and trust. The manager and practitioners value each other's knowledge, experience and skills and share these to upskill the team. As a result, children have good learning experiences which support them to develop and learn according to their stage of development.
- The manager provides good leadership and direction for the team. She is well-organised and supports and guides practitioners to carry out their role. The manager encourages practitioners to engage in self-reflection activities and professional learning to ensure they continue to develop personally and professionally. To support this further, practitioners have very recently

identified 'champion roles' to give themselves more ownership of improvements within the setting.

- The manager and practitioners demonstrate commitment to continually extend their knowledge and practice in relation to ELC. They attend a range of professional learning and most of the team are currently undertaking further qualifications. As a result of training on schematic play, the team identified this as an area for improvement within the 2023/24 improvement plan. This provided a focus on play experiences to support children's developmental stages more effectively. Children now have a wider range of opportunities to explore and investigate using their senses and engage in developmentally appropriate experiences.
- A well thought out quality assurance calendar enables the manager to take a systematic approach to self-evaluation. The team is fully involved in regular self-evaluation activities. The manager and practitioners make good use of challenge questions from quality frameworks to support critical reflection of practice. This enables the team to identify what is working well within the setting and highlight areas for further development. They welcome feedback from external reviews and parents to support further improvement. Currently, the playschool has one focused priority for improvement which is to support listening and talking skills. By increasing the number of priorities, the manager will be able to take forward identified improvements at an increased pace. This would support continuous improvement, particularly related to practitioners' champion roles.

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

- Positive relationships are evident between the team and children. The manager and practitioners value what each child brings to the setting as individuals with prior experiences. They support children well to share their thoughts and ideas. As identified, practitioners should continue to extend their knowledge of children's rights and use this to inform rights-based practice.
- Children explore the range of experiences enthusiastically both indoors and outdoors. Overall, they engage well and will spend extended periods of time exploring and investigating, for example to find out how a microscope works. Practitioners provide learning spaces that include natural and open-ended materials. They could increase the range available both indoors and outdoors to support children's creativity more effectively. This should support children to make decisions and lead their own play consistently.
- The team are caring, nurturing and responsive to children's needs and their ideas. They engage with children in a natural way, commenting on their play. The team adapt their use of vocabulary well to meet individual children's communication needs. They use meaningful open-ended questions at the right time and give children time to think and respond. This approach supports children well to deepen their learning. A few children support their learning through effective use of digital technology.
- The manager and practitioners make observations of children at play and record these within children's individual folios. They have a clear focus on the skills children are developing which helps practitioners to identify relevant next steps in learning. Currently, children's folios are text heavy which limits children's engagement. Moving forward, the team should seek ways to make the folios more engaging for children. This could help children to reflect on their learning and be meaningfully involved in planning what they might want to learn next.
- The team take good account of children's interest when planning for their learning and respond positively by adapting learning spaces, experiences and their interactions. They use experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) to ensure a focus on learning across the curriculum. The team meet weekly to discuss children's experiences and learning. They use this information effectively to support planning for children's learning. Local authority tools are used well to track children's learning over time. This supports practitioners to identify the progress children are making since starting the playschool.
- The team have in place effective support plans for children who require additional support with their learning. These plans are created in consultation with professional partners. Clear strategies to support children are identified with long and short-term targets. These plans are

reviewed regularly to ensure children continue to make progress in their learning and development.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Learning through play is at the heart of the curriculum. The team make effective use of national guidance CfE alongside, Realising the Ambition: Being Me to ensure children experience a breadth of learning and develop a wide range of skills. They now need to ensure children receive suitable levels of challenge to enable a quicker pace of learning for a few children. Practitioners' new champion roles should support this as there will be a stronger focus on literacy and numeracy.
- The team are sensitive to the needs of children and families during key transition points. When children enter the playschool, the team has a flexible approach which meets the needs of each individual family. They gather information from parents on children's prior experiences, likes and dislikes which enables them to support children effectively through the transition process. When children are ready to move onto school, the team plan visits to the school to familiarise children with the school building and their classroom. The manager shares key information with P1 colleagues including children's individual folios to support continuity and progression in learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- The manager and practitioners believe strongly in developing positive relationships with families. Parents feel very welcome in the setting. A few parents are members of the parent committee which supports with the management and operational matters of the setting. They help raise funds for special events and resources to give children a wider range of experiences. Practitioners should continue to seek ways to increase opportunities for parents to be engaged in the life of the setting. This could include parents sharing their skills and expertise to enrich children's learning experiences.
- Parents receive regular updates on their children's experiences within playschool and the progress they are making. This includes regular opportunities to view their children's individual folios. Parents feel well-informed. They welcome the use of communication diaries which has increased their awareness of their child's experiences and learning. Practitioners provide opportunities for parents to borrow story books and resources to support their child's learning at home. They should continue to extend these resources to support learning and interests across the curriculum.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The setting 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 setting and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- The team has the wellbeing of children and their families at the centre of their work. At transition points, practitioners take time to build positive relationships with families and to gather information on children's health, wellbeing and previous experiences. All practitioners are attuned to children's emotional needs and respond in a caring manner. They have created a 'cosy corner' which gives children a quiet space for rest and relaxation. All children are settling very well into the setting as a result of the welcoming, nurturing and reassuring approach of the team. The manager and practitioners are positive role models for children which is supporting them to build friendships with each other.
- Practitioners model the language of some of the national wellbeing indicators during real-life experiences. At this early stage in the academic year, children are beginning to become familiar with a few of the indicators and use them in the correct context. For example, children know how to be safe when walking to the woods and within the woods. Practitioners should continue to promote this further and support children to be familiar with the range of wellbeing indicators. Over time, this may help children to talk confidently about their wellbeing.
- All children receive a breakfast at the start of each day. At lunchtime, all children have a packed lunch. Children's lunchtime is a calm and social occasion where good manners are promoted. Children are independent at snack and lunchtime, pouring their milk or water and clearing away after themselves. The Parents' Committee and the nursery team should keep lunchtime provision under review to ensure it continues to meet the needs of children and families.
- The manager and practitioners are fully aware of their statutory duties relating to ELC and have undertaken a range of relevant professional learning. They understand their responsibilities in keeping children safe and the necessary procedures to follow. The team keep children's care plans up to date and review them with parents at least every six months or sooner if required. This enables the team to be fully aware of children's individual needs or changing circumstances and to put strategies in place to support.
- The team has created a positive ethos where everyone is welcome. They demonstrate well how they respect and value the uniqueness of each child and their family and what they bring to the setting. The manager recognises that there are important events in each child's life and ensures this is reflected through children's experiences. For example, practitioners have sourced dual language books and books in children's first language to enable them to feel secure and have a sense of belonging.

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

- Due to the small number of children accessing funded ELC and their different stages of development, progress will be expressed in general statements.
- In early communication, language and literacy, children make good progress. Children engage enthusiastically in spontaneous singing of songs and rhymes. They choose books independently and will repeat familiar words. Practitioners could make consistent use of visuals to support all children with their communication skills. A few older children are able to recognise the initial letter of their name. Building on this, ensure children can see their name in various parts of the playroom and outdoors. All children engage in mark making and a few are beginning to form recognisable shapes.
- Children make good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Younger children are developing an awareness of size and can identify correctly items that are big or small. Older children use the correct mathematical language when making comparisons of weight, height and length. They show an interest in shapes and can match and sort by colour, size and shape. Older children can name and recognise basic shapes. Most children rote count to five with a few counting beyond five. Older children are beginning to recognise numerals and match them to corresponding amounts.
- In health and wellbeing, children make good progress. They are developing the skills of sharing and taking turns which helps them to play cooperatively with their peers. They are able to identify their likes and dislikes relating to food, verbally or through gestures. Children are practising getting themselves ready for outdoors with a little adult support. All children develop fine motor skills well through manipulating playdough, using scissors and threading. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to explore and identify their emotions. During woodland visits, children could be developing their gross motor skills further through outdoor play.
- Since starting nursery, children continue to make progress in their learning. For children new to the setting, they are becoming more independent and confident within the environment. They explore the different areas of the playroom and outdoors confidently. The manager and practitioners discuss children's learning on a weekly basis and record their progress on local authority trackers. This information demonstrates that children make progress since starting the setting.

- The team celebrate children's successes and achievements through appropriate praise and encouragement. They record these on an achievement board to ensure children recognise their success. In addition, achievements are recorded in children's folios, communication diaries and through a secure social media site. Building on this, the team could seek ways to develop children's skills further through early leadership and citizenship opportunities within the local community.
- The team ensure children have access to all experiences within the setting, taking full account of children's stage of development. They are getting to know their new children and have a very good knowledge of children who have returned to the setting. The team are aware of where potential barriers to learning may exist and act swiftly to provide targeted additional support.

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.