

# Summarised inspection findings

**Doonfoot Early Years Centre**

South Ayrshire Council

29 April 2025

## Key contextual information

Doonfoot Early Years Centre (EYC) is part of Doonfoot Primary School and provides early learning and childcare (ELC) in the Doonfoot area of the town of Ayr. The EYC is registered for 60 children at any one time. It caters for children aged three to those not yet attending school. There are currently 58 children on the roll. The EYC offers a variety of attendance patterns including different timings and days and the choice of either term-time or 50 week placements. The headteacher of the school has overall responsibility for the EYC, supported by a full time depute manager. Further staffing includes two part-time senior early years Practitioners (SEYP), six full time and seven part-time practitioners. A part-time peripatetic principal teacher works within the EYC one day each week.

The EYC is in a separate building next to the school and consists of one large playroom with direct access to an outdoor area. Children make use of the school hall for lunches.

### 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 headteacher and depute manager provide effective strategic direction and support a collegiate approach to improvement. Practitioners are passionate, committed and provide high quality ELC through continual improvement.
- The EYC shares the school's vision and the values of respect, honesty, kindness, inclusion and resilience. There is a clear focus on positive relationships, culture and learning. All practitioners demonstrate the values in their day-to-day work with children and their families. The language of values is skilfully threaded through quality interactions as children play. Practitioners bring these concepts to life through their positive nurturing ethos and the highly motivating experiences they provide within the EYC and local community. This makes values meaningful for children in an age-appropriate way.
- Senior leaders have developed a detailed calendar to monitor the quality of provision. This is supporting ongoing improvement very effectively. Practitioners alongside the senior leaders place high priority on improving the EYC. They use a range of audit materials to evaluate what is working well and what needs to improve. Children are involved in the process of auditing their provision and are continually consulted on areas they feel need to change or develop. Areas identified for improvement are relevant and work carried out is having a positive impact for children and families. The garden has been developed as a result of these planned improvements leading to children who are excited, motivated and enthused as they play outdoors. Practitioners engage in dialogue at set times throughout the year to identify improvement. The headteacher should continue to be fully involved to ensure rigorous self-evaluation to support ongoing reflection and to measure the impact of improvement.

- All practitioners are enthusiastic, highly motivated and demonstrate a commitment to improve practice. They have been empowered to take on leadership roles relating to the development needs of the setting. As a result, the quality of environments and children's learning experiences have improved. They engage with a range of professional learning opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. Practitioners should continue the strong practice of sharing their learning through ongoing professional dialogue leading to sustained improvement. Practitioners look outwards and have made links with local EYC settings to share practice and develop further the outdoor learning environment.
- Children have leadership opportunities including risk assessing the garden, being snack helpers and welcoming visitors to the EYC. Practitioners could support children to build on these experiences further as appropriate to their stage of development.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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 have created a warm, welcoming environment and, as a result, children feel safe and secure. Relationships are positive and nurturing among, children, practitioners and families. Children play well with their friends and are kind and respectful to each other. The pace of the session is well considered with extended periods of self-selected play. Practitioners carefully plan a range of experiences across the day. Children play cooperatively with a wide range of natural, high quality open-ended resources.
- All children engage well within a stimulating, exciting learning environment that supports their curiosity and independence both indoors and outside. Children sustain focus for prolonged periods of time particularly during block play, and junk modelling creating high-quality, intricate models. Children experience fun and laughter as they play throughout their session.
- Almost all practitioners provide high-quality questioning and commentary to support, extend and challenge children's learning. Practitioners know children very well. They listen to children and seek their views. Children's voice is visible in floor books, learning plans and in e-journals. Digital technologies are beginning to enhance children's learning. The recently borrowed resources from the local authority digital lending library have inspired practitioners to develop digital learning further.
- All practitioners observe children during play and small group activities to assess children's skills and progress across their developmental milestones. Observations and next steps are shared with families using the e-learning journals and through regular meetings to discuss their care and learning plans. Robust tracking procedures across all areas of the curriculum take account of both developmental milestones and early level experiences and outcomes. Children's progress is monitored effectively with support and challenge provided for those who need it. Children with additional support needs are identified early and clear planning ensures they are engaged in quality learning experiences and making progress.
- Curriculum planning takes account of children's interests during play which are recorded for responsive planning purposes in large floor books. All practitioners respond to children's interests in the moment to ensure the right knowledge and resources are available to extend play. Practitioners plan intentionally over a fortnightly cycle to ensure breadth across the early level. This is leading to meeting the individual learning and care needs of all children. Practitioners should continue to monitor the pace of learning to ensure appropriate challenge for all children.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners are passionate about play. They have a thorough understanding of pedagogy and practice which influences their curriculum design and frameworks. Practitioners use local authority policies to support their work very well. Practitioners plan effectively across the all curricular areas. The curriculum takes account of children's ideas and interests which staff develop through interesting experiences. Practitioners have a sound understanding of Curriculum for Excellence and ensure that children benefit from a broad range of learning experiences.
- The EYC makes regular use of their local area through a 'education without walls' pedagogy. Practitioners offer a wide range of outdoor learning experiences including the beach, sensory garden and wooded area. They make use of well-established partnerships with a local nursing home. Children are active participants in their local area. The senior leadership team ensures there is a clear focus on the development of children's skills in early language, communication and mathematics. Skills for learning life and work are taken account of through tracking wider learning at home and in the EYC.
- Practitioners provide a very personalised approach to settling children into the EYC. They work with staff across the early level to provide transitions that are responsive to the needs of individuals. Enhanced transitions are planned for where this is required. Children from Primary 6 support their buddies in EYC to develop their skills in digital technologies. This project will continue as children transition into Primary 1.

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

- Practitioners have established productive links with a range of partners, including, parents, professionals and those within the local community. These are supporting children's development and leading to positive outcomes.
- Practitioners engage parents well in the life of the setting through a variety of approaches. 'Stay and play' sessions provide opportunities for parents to engage in play experiences and share in their child's learning. Practitioners encourage learning in the home through the online learning journal and helpful guide sheets, most recently focusing on STEM learning. Parents support the EYC and contribute to the life of the setting. As identified by senior leaders and practitioners, there is scope to deepen this work and increase opportunities for parents to be involved further.
- Children's experiences are enriched by partnerships within the local community. Intergenerational work between the EYC and local nursing home has supported children to develop a range of skills.

## 2.1 Safeguarding

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

### 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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 have created warm, caring and supportive relationships throughout the EYC. This is a key strength of the setting. All practitioners demonstrate high levels of nurture and a clear understanding of the needs of young children. They model positive, respectful relationships leading to children who consistently show kindness and a high level of care towards their friends. If a child is upset, practitioners carefully and sensitively intervene to support them. A range of developmentally appropriate interventions are used to support children to identify and understand their emotions. This includes stories, check-ins at the start of the day and yoga. Children are happy and settled as they learn to share, take turns and negotiate with their friends.
- Almost all children can name and talk about a range of emotions they experience. Practitioners use the national wellbeing indicators as children transition into the setting to build a holistic picture of their care and learning needs. Practitioners could further support children to talk about the indicators of wellbeing in a developmentally appropriate way. Children are supported to learn about their rights using an EYC charter and rights mascot. Children understand how to be safe and healthy through real-life experiences. They keep themselves safe when using tools and carry out risk assessments in their outdoor spaces. Children are becoming increasingly independent as they self-serve their own snack and lunch and make their own playdough using visual instructions.
- Practitioners, guided by the senior leadership team, are aware of their statutory duties relating to ELC. They understand their responsibility in keeping children safe and the necessary procedures to follow. They work effectively with families and a range of agencies to develop individual plans to support children's health, care and wellbeing needs. Children's care plans are reviewed regularly and parents are involved in this process.
- Practitioners provide an inclusive, nurturing and welcoming ethos that supports children to reach their full potential. They recognise the uniqueness of each child and their families and celebrate all that they bring to the setting from home. The team values diversity and make use of resources in the setting and from home to ensure children feel included and supported. They should now continue to work to provide a range of experiences that support children to understand differences out with their immediate environment.



### 3.2 Securing children's progress

very 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

- Children are making very good progress in communication and early language skills. Almost all children are confident speaking to their friends and sharing their ideas for play. They listen well to adults and their peers. All children are confident to speak with a range of adults and are excited to talk about their learning with their friends. A majority of children use more advanced vocabulary.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in literacy. They enjoy reading stories on their own, in pairs and in small groups and can talk about familiar stories, recount and retell events. They can make decisions and vote for their favourite character in a story and access non-fiction books to learn facts about the body. Most children, through a focus on mark making, can write and identify a few letters in their name. Almost all children can draw emerging detail of people in their drawings.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They count to ten with a majority of children counting beyond. A few children can talk about the concept of fractions. Almost all children use recipes in the mud kitchen to identify the amount of each ingredient they require. They have an awareness of measure and use this effectively in their play for a purpose. All children are aware of different weather and almost all have an understanding of the seasons. Children confidently use loose parts to create repeating patterns. Most children are using data handling in real life situations. Children confidently name two-dimensional shapes and a majority are beginning to name three-dimensional objects.
- Children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. Almost all children are independent during snack preparations, pouring water and learning to chop fruit. They have an awareness of their body and how to stay healthy. They demonstrate how to feel for a pulse and know that this impacts on their heart rate. Almost all children understand that exercise supports their health and wellbeing. They independently follow daily care routines such as tooth brushing, handwashing and getting dressed for outdoor play. Almost all children participate confidently in gross motor play outdoors, balancing, digging, running and creating with loose parts.
- Practitioners encourage parents to share their child's achievements from home. These are recorded on the achievements wall in the corridor. Practitioners should continue to embed the interesting work started to identify and track the skills being developed through these achievements.

- There is strong emphasis on community and support for families. The nursery team provides a supportive and inclusive ethos that promotes equity for children. Practitioners know families very well and are aware of children's socio-economic circumstances. They are proactive in reducing potential barriers to learning. Families with children who have additional support needs are well supported through regular meetings, timely referrals and partnership working with professionals.

## 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.