

# Summarised inspection findings

Hillhead Primary School Early Years Centre

East Dunbartonshire Council

23 April 2024

## Key contextual information

Hillhead Early Years Centre (EYC) is situated in the grounds of Hillhead Primary School, Kirkintilloch, East Dunbartonshire. The EYC provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for a maximum of 109 children aged from birth to those not yet started school. It is open from 8 am - 6 pm and children attend over a variety of attendance patterns. The ELC consists of a number of rooms and spaces, which includes extensive outdoor space. There is a large team of full and part time staff, who work over a number of shift patterns in order to deliver 1140 hours. The EYC has experienced significant staffing challenges, including changes to staff and attendance issues.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**satisfactory**

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

- Staff have developed a welcoming ethos and a rights-based approach across the setting. Practitioners develop positive relationships across the nursery environment with children and families. Their nurturing approaches allow children to feel safe and secure. Children and families are offered bespoke settling in procedures to meet their individual needs. Transitions across the setting and on to school are well planned, with key information shared well.
- Across the setting, children have access to a range of interesting spaces and resources to support their play. The majority of children engage well in their learning, with an increased focus when supported by practitioners. Children have choice across the indoor and outdoor environment to engage with resources and provocations provided by adults. Children have opportunities to engage in free play, planned group times and targeted support groups. At times, children are not engaged fully in their learning. Practitioners should consider further development of the environment indoors and outdoors to further enhance the experiences and engagement of children. They should offer increased opportunities for children to be motivated and challenged in their learning.
- Sensitive interactions between practitioners and children are nurturing and caring. Children are listened to, and their views are valued. Practitioners continue to develop skilled questioning, with the majority of practitioners asking open ended questions. A few practitioners use language and communication friendly strategies to scaffold and enhance children's learning well. Children access digital technology to enhance their learning through the use of interactive boards. Practitioners should continue to develop the use of digital technology to support and extend learning.
- Practitioners observe and capture observations of children's learning in learning journals. They should continue to develop their observation skills, building on what children already know and capture significant learning on a regular basis. Practitioners know children well as individuals and should continue to develop their knowledge of children as learners. Practitioners share learning informally and through the use of learning journals with families. As planned,

practitioners should continue to develop approaches to ensure families are kept up to date with their children's progress.

- Approaches to planning differ across the setting depending on the age and stage of children. Practitioners plan learning experiences for children aged three to five years informed by a mixture of children's interests and adult initiated planned learning. Practitioners are based in an area of the ELC for six weeks and are responsible for developing the area, taking account of children's interests. This is working well in developing practitioner skills and sustaining children's interest and engagement. Children who may require additional support with their learning have individual plans, which detail their targets and next steps. Practitioners should implement regular reviews of impact of these interventions to ensure these effectively meet the needs of all children and improve outcomes for children and families.
- An extensive system for planning, tracking and monitoring is in place. The ELC team would benefit from spending time collectively reviewing and reflecting upon all aspects of the observation, planning and assessment cycle. In doing so, they should consider how to streamline approaches to ensure they are manageable and achievable.

## 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

### 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

- Toddlers are growing in confidence, supported by nurturing interactions. Importantly, this includes opportunities to sing. Children are learning to play alongside others within play spaces. They are supported to make simple choices and engage in early play experiences with practitioners. Younger children would benefit from further opportunities to engage in schematic play.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in language and communication and can talk about their experiences and ideas. A few children display confidence as they initiate conversation. Children are supported to engage with different forms of stories in small groups and respond well to questions. They are becoming aware of written language, understanding that print carries meaning. A few children's drawings are increasingly complex and detailed. Children would benefit from increased opportunities to mark make across the setting.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. They are supported to explore counting in small groups and in daily routines. Children recognise and name colours, with a few associating colour names with the colours of their group name. Children are beginning to experiment with different forms of measure during play and are developing an understanding of mathematical language. For example, children discuss size through block play. Moving forward, practitioners should provide further opportunities for children to develop their numeracy and mathematical skills across all areas of the playroom and apply their learning in different contexts.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They enjoy opportunities to develop their gross motor movement, balance and coordination, outdoors and in the gym. They build strength when manoeuvring wheeled toys and negotiate different levels. Children are supported to consider risk and are developing an understanding of how simple rules help to keep them safe. Children benefit from supported opportunities to talk about their feelings. Practitioners should continue to offer children opportunities across the day to talk about their thoughts and feelings.
- Children come to the setting with a range of skills and abilities across different aspects of their learning. Senior leaders recognise that environments for learning do not yet enable children to make the best possible progress. Practitioners are at the early stages of demonstrating the progress children are making in individual learning journals. As practitioners develop their

observation, planning, tracking and assessment cycle, this will support them to secure a clearer picture of children's progress over time.

- Practitioners recognise and acknowledge children's successes and achievements through praise and encouragement in the moment. Children are supported to achieve through carefully considered experiences, which meet their individual needs. Practitioners and families capture and celebrate achievements from home and nursery in children's learning journals. There is scope to develop this further through a wider range of communication methods, including digitally.
- Senior leaders and practitioners know the community and families very well. They are proactive in working with families and other partners to identify what support is needed. A re-focus on the key indicators of a language and communication friendly environment would be effective in supporting practitioners to maximise, and consistently implement, universal support within the setting. This will reduce potential barriers to learning and ensure that all children make the pace of progress of which they are capable.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, settled and confident within the environment. Warm, kind and supportive interactions from staff helped children feel safe and secure. Staff knew children well and shared strategies used to support them and their individual needs.

Staff had developed positive relationships with families, supporting trusting connections. The use of daily diaries and verbal communication helped ensure parents were informed of their child's day. We discussed with the service developing approaches to invite families into playrooms at key times. This could enhance opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning and further strengthen a sense of belonging for both families and children.

Mealtimes took place in the dining room and children were familiar with these routines. Snack times were carried out in response to children's needs. For example, when they were ready to eat. However, this meant there were lots of movement within the 3–5-year-old playroom with children and staff moving between rooms. We discussed reviewing day to day transitions and daily routines to ensure these were supportive of children. This has been reflected under 1.3 Play and Learning.

Younger children experienced unhurried and sociable lunchtimes within their playrooms. However, we found lunchtimes in the dining room busy, with an increased noise level. At times, staff were task focused and not always sitting with children. However, the service had been going through a period of improvement. We encouraged the service to continue on this journey, reflecting on changes to evaluate the effectiveness of these.

Personal plans contained important information to help staff get to know children and their individual needs. These were developed in partnership with families and reviewed regularly to ensure information was current and reflective.

Sleep routines for children were reflective of their needs and safe sleep procedures in place contributed to children being protected from harm. Personal care for children was carried out in a sensitive manner and in response to children's needs.

We reviewed medication procedures and discussed some minor adjustments to help ensure there was consistency. For example, the storage of medication and more detail in some medication forms.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: good**

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children enjoyed playing with toys and materials available to them. Some play spaces had been developed to support children's play and learning. For example, natural materials in the art area supported children's creativity. Further developments to all play spaces would help children engage in exciting and stimulating play.

Children had developed positive peer relationships and engaged well with each other. Staff interacted with children and were responsive to their requests and cues. Some staff used effective questioning to support children's learning. For example, during imaginative play. However, this

was not always consistent. This resulted in missed opportunities to support children to explore their ideas.

The majority of children were engaged with experiences within playrooms. This included building towers with blocks, jigsaws, sand, water and playdough. This helped support their problem solving, sensory development and natural curiosity. However, at times children's level of engagement was low. For example, during day-to-day transitions.

Children were able to choose where to play in the playrooms, supporting their choices and wishes. However, daily routines in the 3-5 room meant that there were interruptions to children's play. For example, tidying up for group time and mealtime routines. During these transitions, the noise level was significantly high, and staff became task focused. We discussed the impact of day-to-day transitions and suggested reviewing these to ensure daily routines supported all children.

Staff used best practice guidance to support planning of experiences for children. Some staff had recognised where children would benefit from frameworks that reflected their stage of development and supported their development. However, we discussed reviewing planning for all children to help ensure these were reflective of a child led approach. Staff would benefit from having more autonomy on the whole planning process, contributing to their confidence, knowledge and skills. (See area for improvement 1).

The use of learning journals provided opportunities to share some play experiences and learning. These should be reviewed to ensure parents receive regular updates of children's learning and progress.

**Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate**

### **3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.**

Management and staff were welcoming during the inspection and were receptive to feedback. They were committed to making improvements to help get it right for every child. Both were open and honest in relation to the challenges the service had faced.

An improvement plan was in place, highlighting key areas of priority. This included, reviewing planning of experiences and tracking of children's learning. Whilst this was not yet embedded within the service, we agreed this would help improve children's play and learning. Quality assurance systems were in place to help support the delivery of service. This included room observations, audits and reflecting on best practice guidance. These were in the early stages and the service should continue to reflect and identify any actions needed to achieve improvements.

Some staff meetings took place to provide opportunities for staff to share important information. This included discussions on routines, staff movements and outdoor experiences. Staff would benefit from increased opportunities to come together and discuss practice, engage in professional dialogue and reflective discussions.

Staff appraisals were in place and contained information to support staff in their role. This included responsibilities and training aspirations. For example, further opportunities to enhance knowledge. These could be further developed to include more details on staff's strengths and areas for development.

Leadership roles helped give staff opportunities to develop initiatives. For example, developing home link bags to support literacy skills and, health and wellbeing. These provide opportunities to



build upon staff skills and promote good practice for children. Continuing with this will contribute to good outcomes for children and their families.

Staff had participated in core training, such as child protection. Some other training opportunities included working with families, outdoor training and pondering pedagogy. Staff should reflect on training and consider learning taken from these and the impact this has on their practice and experiences for children.

### Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and one area for improvement.

### Area for improvement

1) To support children's learning and development, management should review planning systems to ensure children's experiences are reflective of a child led approach, interests and individual needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity. (HSCS 2.27).

## 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.