

Summarised inspection findings

Bowhouse Primary School Early Learning and Childcare

Falkirk Council

14 February 2023

Key contextual information

Bowhouse Primary School early learning and childcare (ELC) is located within the main primary school building. The ELC moved to its current location in 2018 to accommodate the 1140 hours provision. The setting provides 1140 hours of ELC between the hours of 8:45 am to 2:45 pm during term time. Children attend from the age of three. The ELC is registered for 56 at any one time and the current roll is 44 children aged 3-5 years old. Staffing has undergone a period of change in recent years but is now stable. The Senior Early Years Officer (SEYO) provides day-to-day management under the leadership of the headteacher and depute headteacher. The ELC provision consists of a playroom that has direct access to well-resourced outdoor areas. Practitioners also make use of spaces in the wider school environment and local community.

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 ELC setting has a shared vision. This sets out clearly practitioners' and parents' aspirations for children who attend the setting. Children are at the centre of this approach. Practitioners have a clear vision for change and improvement. This is based on important values, aims and strong use of the settings' context. Senior leaders and practitioners model the values very well through their everyday interactions. Children and parents respect practitioners. This is developing trusted relationships between practitioners and families. Practitioners should continue to extend the range of areas for improvement that parents influence.
- Senior leaders manage and lead the setting very well. They are visible in the setting and approachable. They give very clear direction and strategic guidance. The SEYO uses her time very well to add capacity to the strategic and day to day running of the setting. Practitioners value this support and feel empowered and confident to lead improvements.
- Practitioners are very committed to their professional development and this builds their knowledge and influences their practice. They share their practice, research and extensive professional learning during 'daily huddles' and evaluation meetings. This reflects the very strong, effective teamwork and collaborative working across the setting. Practitioners value each other's skills, knowledge and expertise. In addition, senior leaders and practitioners are supporting improvement priorities between the ELC and the early primary stages. They are sharing professional learning.
- The ELC improvement plan is based on robust self-evaluation activities and quality assurance processes linked to local and national priorities. Practitioners lead areas of the plan in small 'community groups'. Senior leaders, working with practitioners, have a range of processes in place to ensure strategic planning is delivering well-paced change. Practitioners have successfully implemented 1140 hours of ELC. They use the national guidance, Realising the Ambition: Being Me very well. This results in children influencing their play for

some of the time. Children learn in an environment reflecting the principles of the guidance. Practitioners have improved outdoor spaces and experiences. Practitioners need to continue to analyse data related to children's experiences, interactions and use of spaces. For example, ensuring that all children access outdoor play and achieve intended outcomes.

- Children having the best start in life is a clear priority for the setting. Current priorities focus on language, mathematics and wellbeing. Practitioners take forward these priorities with families so that children are supported in the setting and beyond. Families are involved in activities that raise their awareness of children's learning, while developing key skills for life, such as cooking. Practitioners are focusing on priorities that reduce the gap between the least and most disadvantaged.

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

- All children enjoy their time in the setting. They are motivated, highly engaged and enthusiastic in their play and learning. All practitioners are caring, nurturing, and support children effectively in their learning. The well organised indoor and outdoor environments support children's independence and opportunities for personalisation and choice. Senior leaders and practitioners have developed successfully a visualised and communication-rich environment. Their planning of the environment supports children to lead their own learning, develop their skills, play imaginatively and be creative. Children take part in regular walks around the local community. They are developing their understanding of risk, road safety awareness and an appreciation of nature. Overall, practitioners provide experiences which meet the learning needs of all children. Senior leaders and practitioners are trialling targeted approaches for a few children who need greater levels of challenge to help ensure they make the best possible progress.
- Most practitioners use a wide range of open-ended questions to extend children's thinking and learning. Their professional knowledge results in confident, well-informed interactions. Children's voice is strong and included consistently in a variety of interactions. These include choosing books for the story area, informing planning and making choices in their play. Practitioners could develop further the impact of 'together time' at the end of sessions and make more use of formative assessment approaches. This would help further their review of learning and inform intentional planning.
- Practitioners prioritise the use of digital technology to research children's interests. They have a pedagogical commitment to prioritise the use of resources that are not reliant on digital technology. Their inclusion of science, technology, expressive arts and mathematics (STEM) experiences and provocations enhances and supports children's deeper learning. Senior leaders and practitioners need to review the use of digital technology to ensure children have opportunities to be involved in expected Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes.
- Practitioners know children very well as learners. They record individual observations of children's learning within personal learning journal documents. Practitioners share these with parents who record their views on the documentation. Parents can view the learning wall and this supports their inclusion and engagement in their children's learning. Practitioners have identified the need to increase parental voice within their children's learning profiles. Practitioners use a local authority assessment and progression framework very effectively which is underpinned by National Benchmarks and guidance documents. They track children's learning in early language, early mathematics and self, social and emotional wellbeing. This provides robust and detailed information to clearly show progress in learning. Senior leaders have identified correctly the need to work with school staff across the early level. This should support practitioners further to check children's progress.

- Practitioners plan well for children over a variety of timescales and prioritise planning in the moment. They provide a balance of adult-initiated and child-initiated experiences. Practitioners meet for a 'daily huddle' to discuss and analyse significant observations, agreeing initial responses linked to possible lines of inquiry. Practitioners evaluate planning including skills observed and what is working well in the planning cycle. They reflect and review how they can evidence children's engagement and the role of the adult. This allows practitioners to have a shared knowledge and understanding of the provision, interests and experiences in each area of the setting.
- Senior leaders and practitioners have established and implemented robust processes for tracking and monitoring children's learning. They agree next steps for individual children during termly meetings. These processes are enabling practitioners and senior leaders to make increasingly confident judgements about children's progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Children learn through play across a curriculum which is child-centred and responsive. They benefit from a well-resourced environment with a calm atmosphere. All children have a strong sense of ownership of the spaces. These spaces enable children to play and learn in a variety of ways which promote independence and skills for life. Practitioners use local authority progression frameworks for all curriculum areas and use holistic curriculum planners for their continuous provision. Practitioners have embedded a focus on music and singing to support nurturing approaches. They need to regularly review children's coverage of all of these curricular areas to ensure identified next steps are achieved.
- Senior leaders and practitioners have a charter based around their interactions with children, analysis of data, findings from research and practitioners' understanding of child development. This summarises and outlines key principles very effectively to support a high-quality learning experience. It outlines the image of the child at Bowhouse and practitioners' promise to the children and families as partners. Information is also included around teamwork and an observational charter. Practitioners share this document with parents and carers. Senior leaders and practitioners plan to update the document to reflect recent developments and the impact of professional learning and research.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parental engagement is a strong feature of Bowhouse ELC. Senior leaders and practitioners are committed to delivering high-quality experiences for children and families to support meaningful parental engagement. This has been outlined in the setting's improvement plan as a priority. The range of engagements include family breakfasts and lunches. These events provide informal opportunities for practitioners to develop family engagement and build positive and trusting relationships. Practitioners provide opportunities for children to highlight their skills for learning and life. Family members are invited to observe children's levels of independence. 'Stay and play' sessions with a recent focus on STEM, give parents and carers the opportunity to take part in planting, wood working, sewing and cooking alongside their children. Parents also look at their child's learning profile with their child and key worker and at times contribute.
- Practitioners have a well-established lending library which supports children and families to share stories and develop early language skills as a partnership at home. Families are developing further their awareness of the importance of sharing and exploring stories with their child. Practitioners provide sessions which support families to develop their use of familiar stories. These are very well attended. Practitioners share the use of repetition and rhyme and inform parents on how these support early literacy skills.

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. 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

- Children's wellbeing is an important driver in learning for practitioners. Children use the national wellbeing indicators to share their experiences. Children learn in calm, relaxed and nurturing spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Each child is recognised as a unique individual, with their own needs and rights.
- Children settle well into the playroom. They feel safe and secure in a relaxed, caring and homely environment. Children are comfortable to talk about their wellbeing in the trusted environment that has been created. Practitioners have invested in making snack and mealtimes a social and happy time that promotes independence and a wide range of life skills. Parents report the impact this is having on mealtimes and eating choices at home.
- Children are at the centre of transitions. In longer term transitions, practitioners work closely with families and staff across the early level. The creation of P1 mascots, Bow and Beau was welcomed by children and their families. They helped children to feel comforted during points of transition. Parents appreciate the range of communication approaches including videos. They value the variety of family engagement opportunities planned and delivered each week.
- Senior leaders and practitioners visit homes prior to children starting at the setting. This reduces potential barriers and anxieties for families and children. In so doing, practitioners build very effective relationships with families at the earliest stage. They gather information on what matters to children. Children's 'Being Me' folders evidence that children receive individual, personalised and targeted support to help them make appropriate progress.
- Practitioners are fully aware of statutory requirements in relation to ELC. They are confident and highly skilled in identifying needs and using a wide range of strategies to meet well children's additional needs. This is underpinned by the sound use of professional learning and a consultative approach amongst all practitioners. Children who require additional support have individualised support plans. These outline relevant personalised targets and key strategies to meet their needs. Parents and partners are involved in plans. Practitioners have very strong links with Speech and Language Therapy specialists. These links are centred on meeting children's needs through professional learning, self-evaluation and individual feedback. Practitioners are making changes to their practice so that improving communication is sustainable to reduce barriers to learning. This should assist with accelerating long-term progress.
- Children and adults respect each other. They provide various experiences to promote and help develop children's awareness and understanding of diversity.

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

Progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing

- Almost all children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing friendships and play cooperatively in areas such as block play, role play and exploring loose parts outside. All children benefit from eating socially at snack time and lunchtime through the setting's 'Marvellous Meals' initiative. As a result, children show high levels of independence at mealtimes and understand the need for personal hygiene. They explore different foods using their senses and have a good awareness of where some of our foods come from. This is achieved through their involvement in planting of herbs and vegetables in the garden area which are cooked in the setting. Children manage and assess their own risk during outside play and during local walks in the community. Most children have well developed balance and coordination.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in early language and communication in line with their own stage of development. They listen and follow simple instructions and routines well. They make marks in floor books and draw various recognisable pictures which represent themselves and other people. A few children write words and use texts appropriately to communicate. For example, they write out recipes and use environmental print increasingly for different purposes. A few children create stories with adult support and know the roles of author and illustrator. Almost all children enjoy 'reading' familiar books with adults and can retell and extend stories very well when playing.
- Most children are making very good progress in mathematics and good progress in numeracy. Most children can identify and recognise numbers from zero to 10. The majority of children use one-to-one correspondence to count a given number of objects to 10 with a few recognising numbers to 20. Children use a wide variety of measurement and positional language in physical activity, using loose parts and block play. Most children are confident in linking daily routines and personal events to time sequences. They are aware of the features of the seasons. Almost all children apply elements of their mathematical and numerical knowledge across their learning. For example, children use a wide range of early mathematics, including measure, estimation and comparative language when using the woodwork bench and tools. Plans for further development of practitioners' knowledge and understanding of conceptual numeracy should help extend children's progress and experiences in early numeracy.

Children's progress over time

- Overall, children make very good progress in health and wellbeing, communication, early language and mathematics. Senior leaders and practitioners are developing further systems for children who require extra challenge. This is ensuring they make the best possible progress and achieve their potential.

Overall quality of children's achievement

- Children's achievements are celebrated in the ELC on displays and through staff's use of praise and sharing successes within key groups and by key workers. Children are developing early skills for learning and life. They are becoming very independent when playing and learning. There is scope to share more children's achievements at home. Children's individual achievements are recorded and tracked. Senior leaders and practitioners now need to develop systems to enable them to have an overview of children's skills to help identify overall strengths and areas to develop to support further children's achievement.

Ensuring equity for all children

- The awareness and promotion of equity is a strong feature of the ELC. Practitioners provide sensitive, regular and valued support and advice. Senior leaders and practitioners know the local community context very well. This includes the impact of barriers to learning that children and families experience, more recently linked to cost-of-living pressures. Practitioners have a clear focus during family learning events on skills for learning and life. This is supporting families and children's understanding and development of these key skills to support and improve life chances. As a result, almost all parents feel comfortable approaching senior leaders and practitioners if they have concerns, queries or advice.
- Senior leaders and practitioners know where the challenges are in children's progress resulting from economic hardship or COVID-19. Children, receiving support, make progress through practitioners' interventions to remove barriers for learners and increased support for families. As a result, individual children are on track to achieve in line with their own stage of development. At early levels, the gap is reducing and children's progress is improving. Continued intervention is required to support those children who need extra help. Children who have additional support needs, are making appropriate progress.

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.