

Summarised inspection findings

St Andrew's Primary School Early Childhood Centre

East Ayrshire Council

29 August 2023

Key contextual information

St Andrew's Early Childhood Centre (ECC) is situated within St Andrew's Primary School and is part of the St Joseph's Campus. The ECC has a large playroom and two adjoining smaller rooms. Children have direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area. Children attend from the age of three until they start school. The setting is registered for 64 children attending at any one time. There are currently 64 children registered at the centre. Children have access to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare during term time. Children attend the ECC between 8:45 am and 2:45 pm.

A senior lead practitioner has day to day operational responsibility for the centre. There are nine early years practitioners, two support assistants and a peripatetic teacher who supports the centre currently for a three-week block of time.

1.3 Leadership of change	weak
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community■ strategic planning for continuous improvement■ implementing improvement and change	

- The Early Childhood Centre (ECC) vision has been in place for over five years. The vision helps to drive some aspects of the work of the centre, for example in providing children with an enjoyable experience. Practitioners have identified that they should now work together and involve parents and children to refresh and update their vision and values. They have focused on creating an enjoyable, caring environment for children. Building on this, they should now consider how they ensure that their vision and values reflect high aspirations for children's learning and achievements.
- The senior lead practitioner is very supportive of practitioners and creates a positive ethos and culture in the team. The staff team support the senior lead practitioner and each other well when implementing change to improve the service for children and families. Building on this, staff should now work together to review and streamline their systems for planning and record keeping. This will make them more manageable and accessible. Practitioners are keen to take on leadership roles across the centre including learning journals and digital leadership. They demonstrate their commitment to professional development. Almost half of the practitioner team hold, or are working towards, an additional degree qualification.
- The senior lead practitioner has worked hard to provide leadership and direction to practitioners, children and families in the centre. As a matter of urgency, the senior lead and practitioners in the ECC should receive guidance and support from the registered manager in managing and taking forward the centre. This should help to clarify planning for continuous improvement and implementing change.
- The ECC team use self-evaluation tools such as How good is our early learning and childcare? (HGIOELC) to recognise what is working well and identify areas for improvement. The senior lead and practitioners would benefit from support in using these tools in a planned way. This

will help them to reflect more accurately on the quality of children's experiences and learning, and the progress children are making.

- There is very limited impact of outcomes on children from the planned improvement priorities. The ECC have two plans in place. The joint school and ECC improvement plan and one developed by the ECC team. There are a large number of priorities and significant areas that have not yet progressed. Staff have participated in taking forward changes over the past year. This includes priorities such as wall planning and learning journals. Most changes are at an early stage and are not yet impacting on children's outcomes. As a priority, the staff team need support to take forward key priorities and manage the process and pace of change more effectively.

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

- Practitioners create a caring ethos which supports children to settle well in the ECC. Children are happy and enjoy their time in the ECC. Most children engage well in play and choose from the range of experiences in the playroom. There are a few children who require more support to help them engage fully with the experiences on offer. Children are familiar with their daily routines and confidently make choices at snack time. They access the interesting areas within the outdoors where they have opportunities to be curious and creative. Practitioners should develop further the experiences available for children, particularly in the outdoor area. This will ensure all children receive a sufficient level of challenge.
- Relationships are positive between practitioners and children. The majority of children talk confidently about their day and share their experiences. Practitioners listen attentively to children and engage them well in conversations. Children have time and space to follow their interests and use digital technology to practise their skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. There is a range of sensory and developmentally appropriate experiences to suit the needs of the majority of children. Practitioners' interactions with children are nurturing and supportive. There are a few examples of practitioners using questioning effectively to make children think about their learning. Practitioners now need to consider how they ensure all interactions are high-quality to support children to extend and deepen their learning.
- During play, practitioners observe children and record information on observation sheets. The quality of observations is inconsistent. Practitioners do not always evidence the key skills children are developing. Children's next steps in learning are not always clear. Practitioners would benefit from further support to improve their skills in observing and recording significant learning. This will help them to identify and plan for children's next steps in learning. Practitioners have recently started using electronic learning journals to record children's experiences. They do not yet show children's learning and progress. Practitioners share the journals with parents and encourage them to comment and add information. Although this is at an early stage, there are a few positive examples of parents' contributions. Moving forward, practitioners should explore how they can build on this positive start and involve children more fully in this process.
- Practitioners have developed a transition plan for children entering the school, but this has not yet been taken forward. Practitioners should, as planned, work with school staff to implement effective procedures for transition.
- Practitioners have recently introduced learning walls to record children's experiences. These are at a very early stage of development. Practitioners provide adult led activities in response to children's interests. These do not always build on children's prior learning and should be more focused on improving outcomes for children. The practitioner team need support to

review and streamline their approach to planning to ensure they provide breadth, depth and challenge for all children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners provide a range of play-based activities and experiences for children. These are mostly responsive to children's interests. Under the guidance of the senior lead practitioner the team have embraced the national practice guidance *Realising the Ambition: Being Me* (2020). Using this guidance, they have developed their environments to promote curiosity and creativity.
- Practitioners link experiences and activities retrospectively to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This helps them identify gaps in coverage across the curriculum. They now need to make better use of the experiences and outcomes of CfE and the National Benchmarks. This will help practitioners to ensure that all children are accessing experiences that support the progressive development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Practitioners make good use of the local community including the library and park to enhance children's learning. They promote aspects of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum but are not sufficiently developing children's skills progressively.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents speak very positively about the work of the team to support children in the ECC. Almost all parents report that they feel comfortable approaching the centre with questions, suggestions or problems. Parents have opportunities to visit the centre and, at times, contribute to children's learning by sharing their skills. Practitioners have re-introduced opportunities for parents to participate in 'stay and play' sessions which are well attended. Almost all parents feel they receive helpful feedback about their child's progress.
- Practitioners communicate very well with parents at the start and end of the session. They take time to listen and support individual parents. They share information about activities that children will be involved in through display boards at the ECC entrance.
- The senior lead practitioner and the team are proactive in establishing partnerships and seeking appropriate support, advice and guidance from other agencies to improve outcomes for children. They make effective use of people in the community and businesses to gather resources and enhance children's experiences.

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

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

- Wellbeing underpins the ethos of the centre. All practitioners speak passionately about promoting children's wellbeing as a key priority and they demonstrate this through their practice. Working as a team, they have developed an ethos that ensures that children feel safe and cared for within a sensory play environment. Children respond well to the calm and relaxed environment this provides. Children participate regularly in mindfulness activities that support them to have a sense of belonging. The staff team are very caring towards children and respectful to parents. As a result, very positive relationships and behaviour are evident.
- Practitioners are very attentive to children's personal care needs. As a team they are aware of the wellbeing indicators and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Children need more support to develop an awareness and understanding of their rights and the wellbeing indicators. This will support children better to reflect on the language of wellbeing as part of their everyday experience.
- Practitioners know children well. All children have Care and Learning Plans in place. Staff complete these with parents when children start the centre. They review and update children's targets termly are reviewed and updated to demonstrate progress. Practitioners record updated information on children's care needs. They review and update the actions and outcomes termly. Information on children's observations and progress, targets and care needs are kept in different places. Practitioners should streamline recording systems to make them more manageable and accessible, particularly for children and parents.
- Individual Child Plans are in place for those children facing barriers to learning. Practitioners are proactive in accessing services to help children develop. Where appropriate, they work with others to support individual children. Practitioners should continue to ensure that targets and outcomes are clear, they identify next steps and show the progress children are making.
- Practitioners have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in keeping children safe and have attended training. Over the past year, the team have updated procedures to ensure the efficient and safe operation of the service. This includes effective procedures for medication and food allergies.
- Practitioners value and respect diversity and actively promote resources that reflect our world in the inclusive play environment. This work is supporting children to learn about different cultures and beliefs.
- Children are actively involved in preparing healthy snacks. Practitioners use pictures with the menu to help children to choose their lunch. Children enjoy taking responsibility for setting the

table and becoming independent at serving themselves. With support, they are beginning to socialise with one another at lunch.

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

- Practitioners have a very strong focus on children's wellbeing. As a result, most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Practitioners provide interesting experiences for children across all areas of the curriculum. They now need to have a greater focus on promoting learning and supporting children to develop their skills. This will ensure all children make the progress of which they are capable.
- Children develop physical skills as they run, jump and balance in the outdoor area. They ride bikes confidently and cooperate well as they build in the block play area. Children are developing independence as they put on their coats and help with snack and lunch. They demonstrate their fine motor skills using scissors, tongs and pens.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language and mathematics. They enjoy using books and listen well to stories. Children are starting to recognise their names, and a few are attempting to write letters and copy words. A minority of children are at an early stage of mark making and need encouragement and opportunities to develop their skills.
- Most children can count to 10 and a few are starting to recognise numbers. A few children are developing their understanding of numbers beyond 10. Children can name common shapes and are learning about weighing and measuring while making dough. Practitioners should continue to develop their interactions and the strategies they use to support all children to make progress in their learning. They should also continue to provide real-life opportunities for children to develop and use their skills.
- Children enjoy taking part in singing and making music. They are developing their creativity as they use a variety of materials to draw pictures and make models. Children have opportunities to develop leadership skills such as being the special helper at lunch time. Practitioners should explore how they can build on this, and support children to develop these skills in other areas of the centre.
- Children's progress over time is not fully evidenced and therefore, hard to capture. Practitioners should, as planned, streamline their current processes for recording and tracking children's learning over time. This should help them to demonstrate the progress children are making more effectively.

- Practitioners recognise and praise children's achievements in the playroom and reward them with stickers and certificates. They are at an early stage of recognising children's achievements from outside the centre. They should explore how they can work with parents to identify children's achievements from home and celebrate and build on these in the centre.
- There is a supportive and inclusive ethos across the centre. Practitioners know children and their families very well and take account of the differing cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Children benefit from input from a range of partners including those who support children for whom English is an additional language. Their caring and respectful approach results in a supportive and inclusive ethos for all children and families. Practitioners ensure children can access all nursery experiences.

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.