

Summarised inspection findings

Kingcase Early Years Centre

South Ayrshire Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Kingcase Early Years Centre (EYC) is situated within Kingcase Primary School in the town of Prestwick. The centre has one playroom with two large sections and an outdoor area. Children also have access to the school dining hall and gym.

Children attend from the age of three until beginning primary school. The centre is registered for 60 children. The current roll is 53. Almost all children access their 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) during term time by attending daily from 9 am – 3 pm.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the centre. This has been delegated to an acting principal teacher who undertook leadership of the EYC in March 2023. The EYC team consists of a senior practitioner and eight practitioners.

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

- Practitioners have created a strong professional team and work very well together and with senior leaders. They are proud to be part of 'Team Kingcase'. As a team, they have children and families at the heart of their decision making to improve outcomes for all. They know their children and families very well and offer highly-effective support to meet their needs.
- Senior leaders and practitioners demonstrate the values of honesty, compassion and respect through their very positive and respectful interactions with children, parents and each other. Within the last year, practitioners have reviewed the centre's values in consultation with parents. In future reviews, it would be useful to include children in the consultation to ensure the values, vision and aims are reflective of the aspirations of all. The values would be more beneficial to children if represented in child-friendly language. This would help children to understand what the values mean and how they can demonstrate them in their daily lives.
- Practitioners access professional learning regularly. This includes training courses, in house sessions and visits to other settings. They value these opportunities which have increased staff's knowledge and improved their practice. This is particularly evident in how practitioners help children who require additional support with their learning. Practitioners have also improved learning spaces which offer children high-quality learning experiences. Children's learning spaces are literacy-and-numeracy rich and support independence, curiosity and creativity.
- All practitioners take part in meaningful professional review and development sessions. This provides them with the opportunity to talk about their strengths and areas where they would like to develop their skills further. Senior leaders and practitioners value the skills and experience within the EYC team. Together, they make very good use of individual's knowledge and expertise to take forward key programmes and areas for improvement. All practitioners

have relevant leadership roles. These roles were implemented following self-evaluation, observations of children, professional learning and improvement plan priorities. Practitioners' leadership roles include communication and language, children's rights, nurture, block play, woodwork and family engagement. As a direct result of these roles, learning experiences have improved and children are continuing to make significant progress in their learning.

- Senior leaders are very supportive of the EYC team. They are highly visible and motivate and inspire the team. Senior leaders guide and direct the team very well to ensure continuous improvement at an appropriate pace. The principal teacher spends a considerable amount of time within the centre. She is a very good role model and is supported by the senior practitioner very well. Senior leaders monitor the quality of learning and teaching and provide individual practitioners with helpful written feedback with clear next steps. Practitioners find this process extremely useful in helping them to continually improve their practice. Senior leaders make sure practitioners have frequent opportunities for meetings and professional dialogue. These worthwhile meetings support practitioners very well. As a team, they plan for children's learning, discuss children's progress and undertake regular self-evaluation.
- All practitioners and senior leaders seek ways to improve. They undertake regular self-evaluation activities using a range of tools such as quality frameworks, surveys and audits. Practitioners seek the views of parents systematically when planning improvements to the EYC. They are clear on what is working well and what needs to improve. In addition, they look outwards to other settings to identify good practice. This has influenced change within the setting. For example, improvements to profiling and lunchtime experiences. The team work collaboratively with senior leaders and primary colleagues to influence the school and EYC improvement plan. Moving forward, the team could be more consistent in demonstrating the impact of change on improving outcomes for children and families.

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

- In the setting, nurturing, respectful relationships are visible between practitioners and children. Practitioners know children very well, listen carefully to them, and are sensitive and responsive to their individual needs and preferences. This ensures all children feel safe, secure and valued. Children are beginning to explore their rights. Almost all children are respectful towards each other during play, as they begin to understand some of their own rights, and those of others.
- Children benefit greatly from the rich, well-planned, high-quality learning experiences that extend and sustain their learning very well. Almost all children are thriving, and are becoming more independent and resilient through play, both indoors and outdoors. The team should now review the number of transitions that children experience over the day, and plan creatively to reduce these.
- Overall, practitioners understand early year's pedagogy, linking new developments and improvements to theory and research. They communicate effectively and use their professional noticing, knowledge and understanding of child development, to make sound judgements surrounding children's progress. Almost all practitioners use responsive communication methods, commenting, or questioning, to develop children's engagement in the world around them. Children navigate the functions of interactive digital boards confidently and use these to enrich their learning. Practitioners, building on this good practice, could support children to engage in a wider range of digital technology.
- Children enthusiastically share learning profiles with each other, and with adults, confidently recalling achievements and experiences through photographs. The team should develop profiles further to make visible, children being given time and space to follow through their own lines of enquiry. This could support children more effectively to have a key role in understanding and leading their own learning. All parents are aware of their child's learning targets. They contribute to these, with a few parents commenting on children's learning and development. The team are taking positive action to develop children's profiles further, in response to parental feedback. This can ensure they celebrate each child's unique personality and achievements.
- Practitioners assess and record children's progress at regular points across the year using a wide range of strategies and local authority assessment approaches. Using this data, senior leaders and practitioners provide very good early interventions and targeted support to children who require additional help with their learning. The team regularly review strategies with partners and parents, ensuring children are continuing to make very good progress across learning. They should continue to make sure that approaches to assessment are proportionate and sustainable.

- There is a strong link between planning and children achieving success. Building on this work, staff should now review and amend planning for learning to ensure a more balanced approach towards responsive and intentional planning. At present, intentional learning is based on robust tracking, monitoring and data analysis, with some consideration given to children's interests. Practitioners should develop further their approaches to capturing responsive learning and plan appropriately to extend this. In doing so, they could make visible children's thoughts, ideas and capabilities more effectively.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Children's learning is linked to local authority milestones and Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. Practitioners track curriculum coverage through learning profiles to ensure children are receiving breadth across the curriculum. All practitioners use their leadership roles well to enhance learning pathways for children and to enrich and extend children's learning. Practitioners should now reflect on how these approaches could be measured to demonstrate improved outcomes for children. They should continue to increase opportunities to provide greater depth and challenge for children during play. The impact of this could be made more visible in children's individual learning profiles.
- Practitioners assist children and families well as they make the transition from home to the EYC and into primary one. This offers families well planned, personalised support. Practitioners are flexible in their approach to ensure children's individual needs are the focus for careful, joint planning. This helps children to settle into their new environments very well. Practitioners share helpful information with colleagues in P1 on children's progress to aid continuity and progression in their learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners ensure parents are informed about their child's learning and development in a variety of ways. This includes personal plan meetings, learning profiles, sharing 'magic moments' and learning targets to celebrate successes within the EYC and from home. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning by sharing information from experiences at home. Senior leaders and practitioners have built strong connections with other services in the community. Very effective communication between practitioners, parents and other professionals ensures improved outcomes for children. Parents receive regular communication in the form of newsletters and the setting seeks their opinion on a variety of topics. Building on this positive work, practitioners should now look further at how they share the impact of their improvement work with parents.
- Families engage very well in an effective programme of shared learning opportunities such as 'song and rhyme' and 'stay and play' sessions. Practitioners lead family learning events very well. This includes 'make and taste' sessions which provide purposeful learning experiences that support parents to meaningfully consider their child's health and wellbeing. Families comment very positively on these experiences and the efforts of the setting to include them. They value the help they receive and comment that the setting collaborates very well with them as partners.

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

- Senior leaders and practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to the promotion of wellbeing for all. This underpins their daily practice and support for children and families. There is a strong sense of community in the centre. Children are confident to communicate their needs, feelings and emotions verbally, through actions or signing. Practitioners pay close attention to how each child is feeling throughout the day. They adapt their interactions, experiences and spaces skilfully to support children's emotional needs and levels of engagement. Practitioners are very good role models for children. This encourages positive relationships between children. Overall, most children play well together. They are kind and offer help to each other, for example, when getting ready for outdoors.
- Practitioners continue to promote children's rights and their awareness of national wellbeing indicators. Children are confident when talking about how to keep safe and what helps them to be healthy. They are becoming aware of some of their rights such as a right to a name and privacy through meaningful learning experiences. Moving forward, practitioners should build on this positive practice and embed this important work through routines and real-life experiences. This will help children to become familiar with the relevant language and use it to help them to talk confidently about their wellbeing. Children are developing confidence, team working and sense of responsibility through their leadership roles and experiences such as loose parts play and block play.
- Children have lunch in the school dining hall. Practitioners have used self-evaluation to continue to improve the quality of children's lunchtime experiences. As a result, children are more comfortable, independent and enjoy the social experience. Practitioners sit alongside children offering just the right amount of support. For example, to help children develop their skills and confidence when using cutlery.
- All practitioners understand their statutory duties relating to ELC. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. Practitioners know what is expected of them in relation to personal planning for each individual child. They have created plans with specific targets which helps them to be clear on individual children's care, welfare, health and learning needs. These plans are reviewed regularly with parents.
- Children who require additional help with their learning are supported very well. Practitioners' close observations and knowledge of children enables them to identify where children may require additional help with their learning. They are proactive in seeking advice to ensure children receive help when they need it. Practitioners have very effective partnership working with support agencies. They use the expertise of partners to seek advice and guidance on strategies to help individual and small groups of children. This includes joint working on children's individual plans. Senior leaders and practitioners evaluate the impact of strategies

regularly to ensure children's needs are being met. This highly effective partnership working results in children making very good progress in line with their developmental stage.

- Senior leaders and practitioners have created a highly inclusive EYC. They know children and families very well and are attuned to their needs. Practitioners offer very good support to reduce barriers to inclusion and signpost families to community partners who can offer advice and guidance. They value diversity and celebrate this in a range of ways. Practitioners use resources effectively and the knowledge, skills and experience of parents to help children learn about the world in which they live.

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 strong progress in their health and wellbeing underpinned by the strong sense of belonging, community and mutual respect. Children take turns, and are caring towards each other, as they prepare and self-serve their snack independently. They demonstrate a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe during rich adventure play, within the centre's high quality outdoor learning space. They assess risk confidently, when walking to and from the local leisure centre for swimming sessions. Children visit the local park and beach, and exercise during regular gym and yoga sessions. They master moving their bodies in a range of ways and develop physical skills such as climbing and balancing.
- Overall, almost all children are making very good progress in early communication and language. They listen attentively during group activities and contribute very well. A majority of children use a wide range of vocabulary through play and conversation to articulate their ideas, preferences and wishes. During spontaneous play, children explore rhyme and rhythm, within the inviting music area. Almost all children are developing a love of reading as they explore stories and traditional tales in cosy spaces. Children recognise letter symbols and identify words that start with the same letter and sound. Almost all children's representations and drawings are showing increased detail over time. They mark make for a purpose during real-life and imaginary situations, resulting in a few children writing their names clearly. Children use their imagination very well to create their own stories and perform these confidently to their peers.
- Children are making very good progress in developing mathematical concepts and language. Children measure, compare size, gather data, discuss tall, taller, more and less using open ended, natural resources and materials. For example, as they build and create structures within the block play and workbench areas. Children have fun estimating and testing out their own theories. They explore number and pattern in their community when out on walks. Children engage in real-life situations such as using stop watches to time each other during obstacle courses. A few children explore symmetry confidently using technology. Outdoors, children explore volume as they fill and empty containers in the mud kitchen. They estimate, weigh and measure as they bake pancakes, make up playdough and paint.
- Children are making very good progress across all aspects of their learning and development, over time. This includes those children who may be facing barriers to learning. Practitioners'

data shows a significant increase in early communication, language and literacy over time for individual children.

- Practitioners place high value on capturing and recognising children's individual achievements. Children and practitioners come together to celebrate 'magic moments' that capture their skills and wider achievements. They explore sustainability through food waste awareness as part of cooking and snack experiences. Senior leaders and practitioners monitor achievements very well and take steps to ensure barriers to achievement are reduced.
- Senior leaders and practitioners know individual children very well and take full account of the differing circumstances of children and families. Practitioners use a wide range of strategies to support children who may require additional help with their learning. They are clear about gaps in children's learning and implement strategies timeously. For example, practitioners' observations identified that there were gaps in a few children's communication and language skills. They took advice and guidance from partner agencies and primary one colleagues to support children more effectively by introducing key programmes and strategies. As a result, children made very good progress in their learning and continue to do so because of the targeted approach taken by the EYC team.

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.