

Summarised inspection findings

Fintry Primary School Early Years Centre

Dundee City Council

25 February 2020

Key contextual information

Fintry Early Years Centre is an integral part of Fintry Primary School building. The Early Years Centre is registered for 97 children aged two to those not yet attending primary school of which no more than 15 children can be under three. The provision consists of a playroom for children aged two to three years and a playroom for children aged three to five. Both rooms have direct access to a large outdoor play area. The Early Years Centre recently implemented the provision of 1140 hours per year of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). The delivery of additional funded hours has resulted in a significant increase in staffing. The management team has put a range of strategies in place with the aim of developing consistency of high quality approaches across the early years team.

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 teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Across the early years centre there is a warm and welcoming culture and ethos. Practitioners have established positive and respectful relationships with children and families who attend the setting. As a result, children feel safe and secure and all families are included. Practitioners are respectful of children's rights and listen and respond to children's ideas and interests.
- Children aged two to three years are settled and are supported by staff who know them very well. Practitioners are nurturing and responsive to children's needs. They give children time and space to explore and follow their interests. Practitioners plan learning experiences which promote curiosity and communication skills and track children's development. Open-ended resources stimulate engagement and learning. Practitioners have a good understanding of child development and support learning effectively. Additional training for new staff members in schematic play should support consistency of interactions and experiences provided.
- Children aged three to five are enthusiastic and almost all are engaged and motivated in play. Almost all children are happy and confident and clearly enjoy their time in the setting. Most children are independent and are able to make choices and decisions about their play. The use of open-ended and real-life objects enable children to develop their creativity, curiosity and inquiry skills indoors. All children have daily access to outdoor play. Practitioners should develop the outdoor environment to ensure it invites excitement and more effectively supports depth and challenge in children's play.
- Practitioners extend children's interests within the different contexts of learning indoors. They document learning in floorbooks and support and encourage children to share their ideas. Children can explore and revisit learning during purposeful and real-life play experiences. The setting should ensure practitioners are more consistent in the use of open-ended questions to deepen children's thinking skills. Practitioners use a range of programmable toys, interactive boards and computers to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

- Practitioners work well as a team and welcome the opportunity to take on leadership roles. This includes leading family learning and literacy interventions. The team recognise and value the skills and strengths of individual team members. Commendably, they are keen to learn from each other as well as from reflecting on video footage of their practice. New practitioners are supported well through opportunities to observe others delivering interventions and group times. Further use of national guidance will help extend practitioners knowledge of pedagogy and develop a consistent approach within the new staff team.
- Sensitive to children's socio-economic backgrounds, practitioners plan appropriate interventions to improve outcomes for children and families. Effective work to improve practitioners' skills in supporting children's early language and communication is having a positive impact on children's progress, particularly in listening and talking skills. As planned, practitioners should develop further their skills in supporting children's progress in mathematics.
- Practitioners meet regularly and use their knowledge of children's needs and interests to plan learning. There is a balance of child-led and adult-directed experiences. They observe children and record information about their learning in individual learning journals. Observations contain narrative about what children have been doing and capture some aspects of learning linked to skills and the curriculum. Practitioners do not yet use observations effectively to inform children's individual next steps in learning.
- The early years centre manager has recently audited the tracking of children's learning. She has identified the need to review tracking to give a clearer picture of individual progress over time. This should support practitioners to identify specific next steps in learning for children in order to secure better progress in learning. Observations need to have a sharper focus on children's significant learning and skills. Practitioners should share individual next steps with the children and families to help them understand what they need to do to be successful in learning.

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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Securing children's progress

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

- Most children aged two to three years are making good progress in their learning. They benefit from strong attachments to the adults who care for them. As they explore their environment, most children demonstrate confidence and natural curiosity. Most children can communicate their needs and wants and are developing a range of vocabulary to support this. Practitioners should continue to develop children's independence skills, for example by pouring their drinks and serving their snack.
- Almost all children aged three to five years are making good progress in communication and early language. They benefit from a range of intervention programmes to support their skills in listening and talking and to develop an awareness of print. For example, the highly effective programme of activities, developed in partnership with speech and language colleagues, which are developing children's listening skills well. Most children listen well at group times and enjoy sharing books with adults. They can express their thoughts and ideas clearly. The majority of children choose to engage in mark-making activities. They are developing pencil control and are beginning to draw recognisable pictures. The majority of children recognise their own name. Practitioners should ensure they provide challenging provocations to extend children's interest in early mark-making. This will help develop further their early literacy skills.
- Most children aged three to five are making satisfactory progress in mathematics. They know the number sequence to ten and are beginning to recognise numerals to ten. A few children have an awareness of larger numbers. Most children are developing the language of measure using loose parts resources. Most children recognise basic two-dimensional shapes. Practitioners should develop further children's understanding of the properties of shapes and introduce the names of three-dimensional objects. Most children are developing a good understanding of the language of position using programmable toys. Children need to develop their understanding of money and recording information using tally marks or charts.
- Almost all children aged three to five are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They have strong attachments with key practitioners, they are developing friendships and show care for one another. Children are aware of good hygiene practices, almost all remember to wash their hands before snack and take part in the tooth-brushing programme. Almost all children are developing their independence skills well through taking ownership of their learning environment, for example setting out paints, preparing snack, and tidying up at the end of the session. Most children are developing good control of their balance and movement as they move their bodies in a variety of ways. The majority can confidently pedal a two-wheeled

bicycle. Practitioners should support children to develop further ways to express their feelings and develop their emotional literacy. They should review snack provision to ensure it is always in line with national guidance to develop further children's awareness of healthy eating.

- Overall, most children are making good progress in learning across the curriculum. The quality and variety of experiences particularly in science, technology and expressive arts results in children developing good problem solving, exploration and inquiry skills. For example children explore forces and movement using balls and guttering and are developing problem solving skills using loose parts materials to construct models.
- Practitioners use 'Play at Home' books to suggest learning activities children can engage in at home such as den building and making playdough. Most families record children's achievements with these activities and a few record other achievements such as swimming certificates or helping to tidy up at home. Through taking part in these activities, children are developing their confidence and creativity skills as well as their ability to work with others. Practitioners should track and monitor children's achievements in order to support further planning for gaps in the development of their skills.
- Practitioners are very aware of children's socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and the impact this can have on children's learning. They make discrete provision and effective support to families where this is required. Practitioners use a range of data to review and evaluate the impact of intervention programmes, such as the effective programme to improve children's listening and talking. Overall the strong approaches to equity are having a positive impact on the attainment and achievement of the most disadvantaged children. In particular there are significant improvements in children's listening skills and vocabulary acquisition.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- Reviewing video footage of practice with a critical colleague (buddy) to improve interactions with children.
- The setting has worked closely with speech and language therapy colleagues to improve practitioners' skills in supporting children's language and communication. As part of this work, all practitioners took part in self-assessment using video footage of their practice. They were filmed interacting with children in a variety of situations. They evaluated the video footage with a buddy practitioner using a set of good practice criteria. This has impacted very positively on practitioners' skills. The video footage allows them to analyse and reflect on their practice and has highlighted things that they do that they were unaware of. They use this reflection to make conscious changes to their practice and repeat the process of filming and reviewing to secure improvement.
- Practitioners spoke positively of the experience and the benefits of using video footage to evaluate their practice. Although this was initially daunting and practitioners felt vulnerable their confidence has grown and it is contributing to a strong ethos of professional learning and trust. Practitioners reported that they also reflected on their own practice when undertaking the role of the critical buddy.
- The expansion of early learning and childcare has resulted in a significant increase in staffing. The setting is now effectively using the 'video with a buddy' strategy to upskill new practitioners to ensure consistency in approaches to supporting children's learning across the whole team.

1. Quality of care and support

There was a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that helped families to feel comfortable in the nursery. Staff knew children very well. They were responsive to individual needs, recognising when additional reassurance or support was needed. They had established strong relationships with families and were warm, respectful and most nurturing in their care of the children. Children had clearly formed strong and trusting attachments with key staff and felt safe, settled and valued in the service. Children were spoken to with kindness, they were praised and encouraged and staff listened to children with interest.

Children were seen to be purposeful at play and motivated by the very good learning environment that gave them opportunities to be creative, to investigate and problem solve. Children confidently led their own play and learning, making choices and decisions. They were achieving through their diverse play experiences. They had space, time, open-ended resources and good adult support to develop their interests and extend their learning. The busy playroom was calm and children were respectful and considerate of others. They had made good friendships and played cooperatively.

All children were able to access outdoor play in the fresh air. We discussed how the outdoor area could be further developed to extend challenge and breadth to outdoor play experiences.

Children had a varied menu and healthy menu. We saw that children had plentiful amounts of food and even the very youngest children attending fed themselves confidently. The service had continuously reviewed and adapted their approach to lunch times, to accommodate the larger number of children now attending. We suggested that the service continue to monitor lunchtimes to enhance the quality of the experience and consistently support children to be independent and develop self-help skills.

Two year old children were cared for in a warm and nurturing atmosphere and were thriving. The group welcome and goodbye sessions which included parents gave children a sense of belonging. We suggested that staff further review the routines and pace of the day to ensure that children remain interested and engaged and are not sitting for too long.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

3. Quality of staffing

Staff were enthusiastic and motivated. Key staff demonstrated strong passion and commitment to the service, taking a clear pride in their work. Staff were kind, nurturing and genuinely cared about the children. They wanted the best outcomes and spoke about children with great respect and consideration.

The team had expanded rapidly within recent months and was still rebuilding and striving to embed consistency to the quality of children's experiences. Some staff were less experienced and confident in their roles and this led to some missed learning opportunities and inconsistencies to the quality of staff engagement. Most staff held appropriate childcare qualifications and there were plans for recently appointed assistants to start relevant training. They were being well supported and inducted into the service through effective mentoring that included being linked to a more experienced 'buddy' to work alongside. There were some strong and highly competent practitioners who were modelling good practice, setting clear expectations for new staff and

playing a key part in developing expertise and quality within the team. There was good team work, a respectful and professional culture and a range of life and work experience that was contributing to team development. We were confident that the structures in place to develop the team would be effective. Some staff were undertaking extended training and bringing their learning into the service to share with the wider team. All staff had good opportunities for training and developing their skills and knowledge through internal professional development. This included annual appraisals, individual support meetings, team meetings, peer discussions and feedback, including the use of Verp. Staff also had good opportunities to network with colleagues with shared interests in other Dundee City Council early years settings, this was positive in introducing fresh viewpoints and sharing good practice. There was a positive culture of continuous learning and development.

Staff ratios were well met throughout the inspection, ensuring that all children received individual attention and good levels of care and support.

There were robust staff recruitment procedures in place that protected children.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and recommendations.

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.