

Summarised inspection findings

Mauchline Primary School Early Childhood Centre

East Ayrshire Council

1 April 2025

Key contextual information

Mauchline Early Childhood Centre (ECC) is situated within Mauchline Primary School in East Ayrshire. The ECC comprises of a large playroom, a quiet room and outdoor space. There is free-flow access to an enclosed outdoor environment. Children have access to facilities within the school building, such as the gym hall, STEM room and music room. Children attend aged between three and those not yet attending primary school. The ECC is registered to have a maximum of 40 children at any one time. There are currently 34 children on the roll. Most children attend full days, between 8.45am and 2.45pm, during term time. A few children have shared placements with other settings and childminders.

The headteacher has overall strategic leadership for the ECC. The depute headteacher supports planning for children with additional support needs and transition activities. There is a newly appointed acting senior lead practitioner who oversees the day to day running of the setting. There are five early learning and childcare practitioners as part of the team. There is one support assistant who has recently been appointed. There have been significant staffing changes over the last year.

1.3 Leadership of change

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

- Senior leaders reviewed the vision, values and aims last session with children, parents and practitioners. Practitioners focus appropriately on the values of respect, honesty, friendship and determination, to support children to be familiar with these. Practitioners bring the values to life through the calm and positive ethos and culture of the ECC. Senior leaders and practitioners should now plan creative ways for the children to fully understand these in a developmentally appropriate way.
- The headteacher drives forward strategic improvements well. The headteacher and senior lead work well together to lead the ECC. They provide effective support and guidance to promote all practitioners to have 'champion' roles to drive forward strategic priorities. For example, practitioners are leading aspects of curriculum development including outdoor learning and communication and literacy. Practitioners have a strong sense of ownership of these priorities and feel empowered to support significant improvements and change. Senior leaders and practitioners should now work together to further develop their pedagogical approaches in the ECC. This should ensure that there is clarity and clear expectations for all staff to support children to experience consistently high-quality interactions. This will support senior leaders to identify and monitor outcomes for children and shape the future direction of improvements.
- Senior leaders and practitioners ensure there are effective systems in place for continuous improvement. They have robust systems and processes of self-evaluation. Senior leaders use a well-planned quality assurance calendar to ensure that all aspects of the nursery are kept under review. Practitioners place a high priority on improving the nursery. They use a

worthwhile range of audit materials to evaluate what is working well and what needs to improve. They use their findings to make changes and develop the improvement plan.

- Practitioners ensure children have opportunities to lead their learning and take responsibility for their environment. They have developed appropriate plans to support children to continue to make progress in their learning. Children have leadership roles to develop their skills and independence. Practitioners listen respectfully to children's views and take these into account effectively. For example, children vote for a story and practitioners consult them on their views for 'learning together' groups and activities. This is supporting children to feel included and have ownership of their environment. Practitioners should now develop further children's leadership opportunities by identifying an increased range of responsibilities.
- Senior leaders and practitioners engage in a range of appropriate professional development opportunities. Recent examples include literacy interventions and learning for sustainability, linked to the approaches being developed in the school. As a result of high-quality training opportunities, practitioners have increased their understanding of children's wellbeing and early language and communication. Their work on communication has led to an increased range of experiences to develop children's spoken language. Almost all practitioners have undertaken further qualifications. As a result, they understand the positive impact of nurturing approaches and developing secure relationships with all children and families. Practitioners engage well in professional dialogue and share their learning confidently with each other to have a shared understanding of approaches.

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

- Practitioners provide a nurturing and welcoming environment. They engage each child on a personal level, ensuring they feel safe and secure. Practitioners model very effectively respectful relationships. Children demonstrate calm, caring relationships with each other. Older children support sensitively younger children as they play together. Practitioners have formed very supportive relationships with families which is benefitting children's wellbeing.
- Practitioners are continuing to reflect on and review the learning environment, indoors and out. Children readily choose what they would like to do and direct their own play. They move independently between the play spaces, including outdoors. Younger children are learning to make their own choices and select the materials they would like use. Older children use the learning environment purposefully, concentrating for more extended periods on their interests. At times, they need encouragement to select play spaces and materials which offer greater challenge and flexibility in their learning.
- Children and practitioners interact purposefully and with ease. They listen respectfully to each other. Practitioners make very good use of gesture and facial expression to support children who are developing language and communication skills. Older children appreciate engaging in more extended conversation where they can relate their own experiences and interests. Practitioners are continuing to reflect on and deepen their questioning skills. At times, a few children would benefit from greater challenge through their dialogue with practitioners. Children readily use a large digital screen to access the internet to find out information. They show a keen interest in learning about their local area and the natural world, including sea creatures.
- Practitioners observe children closely throughout the day in different environments. They use a key worker system to ensure each child has an adult who knows them well and focuses on their needs. Practitioners make accurate observations of children, noting their responses and engagement in learning. They add these to electronic learning journals regularly to share with families, who they invite to comment. Practitioners devise next steps in learning for children and encourage families to share progress from home. They now need to use the information gathered through observations to respond effectively to children's needs and plan interventions to address any gaps in development. For example, a next step is to provide support for younger children and increased challenge for children who demonstrate strong progress in their learning. This will improve the richness of play spaces and ensure planned experiences meet the developmental needs of all children.
- Practitioners have made recent changes to the way they plan learning. They collaborate well together and share information about their key worker group, children's learning and progress. Children who need extra support for learning benefit from individualised planning and targeted experiences. Practitioners work well to enable children to meet their personal targets.

- Practitioners track and monitor children's progress using a local authority digital tool. This is helping them to evaluate and report on children's progress. Practitioners would benefit from more guidance from senior leaders to support them in engaging with the tool. This will help ensure tracking and monitoring processes are manageable and reflect more clearly how well children are progressing across the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum is based firmly on developing children's wellbeing, capabilities and interests through play. Practitioners plan for children's learning experiences using the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence. They have defined roles in early language and communication, early mathematics and health and wellbeing. This ensures children experience thoughtfully planned opportunities to develop these skills.
- Practitioners provide a secure outdoor learning space which is resourced to match children's interests. There is scope to develop this further to ensure children can access independently a wider range of materials to enrich and extend their learning. Older children take part in 'Woodland Wednesdays' and all children take part in 'Fresh Air Friday.' These well-planned experiences are building resilience, independence and a joy of the outdoors.
- Practitioners are beginning to develop children's curiosity, inquiry and problem-solving skills through a newly introduced STEM approach. This is at an early stage of development.
- Practitioners have recently adapted their approaches to planning children's learning opportunities across the curriculum. They need to continue to review how well they ensure children experience high quality learning opportunities in all areas of the curriculum.
- Alongside staff in the school, practitioners organise well-planned bespoke transition arrangements. They nurture young children very sensitively when they are settling in. Children who are moving through to the primary stages do so confidently. Practitioners and teachers work together closely to promote continuous learning for children as they start school.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have developed strong, positive relationships with parents and children. There is a welcoming and calm ethos in the mornings during drop off time, and at the end of the day. Practitioners engage very well with all family members and know their families well. Parents are encouraged to join in with a wide range of family learning opportunities, such as STEM activities and Woodland Wednesdays, to learn along with their children. Practitioners welcome families for stay and play sessions. They support families to attend parents' groups, such as strategies to support behaviour and restorative approaches. These are well attended and valued by families.
- Senior leaders and practitioners actively involve parents in self-evaluation activities. There is a high level of communication with families and a clear plan of engagement. They listen to their views and make effective and efficient changes to support better outcomes for children.
- Practitioners regularly share information and learning with families using social media and a digital platform. Parents are able to comment on these. Practitioners should look at and explore ways to encourage all parents to be involved. Practitioners should continue to provide ways for parents to continue learning at home through suggested learning experiences.

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. 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 have developed strong, positive relationships with each other and with practitioners. Children know what is expected of them through clear, shared expectations and values which promote positive behaviour. Children make good choices and this is having an encouraging outcome on their experiences at the ECC. All children cooperate very well with each other and are thoughtful and considerate in their interactions. These interactions are based on respect, trust and honesty. Children feel confident to share their views and ask for support when needed. Children show high levels of engagement and excitement through feeling valued and respected during their play.
- Children are developing their language of wellbeing. They are deepening their understanding of wellbeing very well through emotional check-ins and discussions about their feelings. Most children talk confidently about the nursery values and the nursery charter. Most children understand the wellbeing indicators through daily opportunities to learn about these. Children have named their own characters, such as Nurtured Nick and Safe Sam.
- Practitioners are fully aware of and comply with their statutory duties. They understand their responsibilities and are knowledgeable about what is expected of them. They attend relevant training and confidently and accurately follow correct procedures. Practitioners' consistent and rigorous approach ensures they are continuously improving outcomes for children.
- Practitioners have developed an inclusive culture in the ECC. Practitioners are skilled at identifying concerns for children's development in a sensitive manner. They treat children, families and each other with a high level of respect. They are kind, fair and considerate of one another. Practitioners ensure effective and tailored strategies are planned and reviewed regularly. Practitioners involve parents fully in developing well considered targets for children with additional support needs. Together they review these regularly. This is helping to ensure children are making the best possible progress.
- Practitioners ensure resources are inclusive to all children and appropriate to meet the children's needs. Practitioners have started to introduce children's rights to the children. They focus on the 'Right of the Month'. Practitioners should now plan how they build children's understanding in this area through relevant and real-life experiences. This could help children understand how these rights help them. Practitioners should continue to further develop valuing diversity and challenging discrimination.

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
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- Most children are making good progress in their learning and development. A significant number of children are new to the ECC and are settling well.
 - Most children are making good progress in early communication and language. A few children demonstrate stronger progress. They would benefit from more experience using relevant and exciting contexts to ensure they make the continuous progress they are capable of. Younger children make their needs known and are benefiting from targeted approaches to develop their speech sounds. Older children engage well in extended dialogue as they play. Most children follow instructions well and show respectful listening. They are attentive when listening to favourite stories. The majority of children can identify a favourite author through the 'Author of the Month' initiative. A few children identify sounds and letters in words as they share these stories. Most children take part in mark-making for a variety of purposes. A few children need more experience in using the skills they already have for consistently meaningful purposes.
 - Most children are making good progress in early mathematics. Children enjoy using and learning about number. Younger children are making positive progress through simple routines and the modelling of practitioners. Older children identify numerals and use counting skills confidently to enhance their play. A few children are beginning to understand number bonds. Most children experiment with measure. They are learning to use appropriate vocabulary and have fun practising their skills using measuring tools. Most older children recognise shapes around the playroom and use familiar routines to help them understand time. Overall, children need more consistent experience across all aspects of early mathematics to ensure they can make even better progress.
 - Most children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. A few children have a strong sense of self and demonstrate this through their actions and interactions. Most children are good at following visual prompts to brush their teeth and access their snack. Most younger children are learning to dress themselves appropriately for outdoor learning. All children eat lunch together in the dining hall and are learning to serve themselves. Children are beginning to express a wider range of feelings and emotions.
 - Practitioners demonstrate children's progress over time through entries in children's learning journals and data from the local authority tracking tool. They are learning how to use these more effectively and incorporate professional judgement. Working with senior leaders,

practitioners would benefit from using this tool flexibly to capture all aspects of children's progress. This will help them ensure that the information they collate will secure the progress children are capable of across all curricular areas.

- Practitioners work hard to recognise and celebrate children's achievements. Children's individual successes are celebrated through 'Proud Cloud' and through daily recognition. Practitioners use stickers and awards to recognise successes and the ways in which children demonstrate the ECC values. Children are good at giving each other compliments. Practitioners continue to develop children's leadership roles and the opportunities to achieve a wider range of skills and successes. A few families share children's achievements from home through learning journals or when participating in stay and play sessions.
- Practitioners demonstrate strong values in the promotion of equity. They ensure children do not miss out on experiences. Practitioners use targeted activities well in the playroom and in small group situations to help address any barriers children have. This is helping a few children become independent, make their own choices and improve their communication skills over time. Where children receive additional support, this is done in effective collaboration with families and outside professionals. Practitioners are attuned to the needs of families and readily offer support in the ECC or signpost sensitively to local services.

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.