

Summarised inspection findings

Colmonell Primary Early Years Centre

South Ayrshire Council

20 June 2023

Key contextual information

Colmonell Primary School and Early Years Centre (EYC) is located in the rural village of Colmonell in South Ayrshire Council, 13 miles south of Girvan. The school catchment area takes in the communities of Colmonell, Pinmore, Pinwherry and surrounding areas. It is partnered with Ballantrae Primary School and EYC. The EYC can offer places to eight children aged from two years to those not yet attending primary school. The EYC can also offer 10 places to children aged three to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of the inspection the roll was nine. The centre is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. five days per week during term time. It operates with two full-time equivalent practitioners at all times and is managed by the headteacher. Three out of four practitioners in the EYC have different working patterns across the week.

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 team of practitioners in the EYC are knowledgeable, reflective and skilled. They work very effectively as a team, sharing children's learning and progress. Practitioners are attentive to the needs of every child. They have autonomy in making adaptations to practice and the environment to ensure children's wellbeing and rights are upheld. Practitioners share important information about children to ensure the changes to the team throughout the week give consistent experiences for all children.
- Practitioners worked alongside school staff recently to review the school and EYC values. Children and their families had a strong voice in determining the values. Children demonstrate the values actively and use them to reflect on their learning, wellbeing and relationships.
- The headteacher provides skilled strategic leadership to the EYC. She is experienced and knowledgeable in early years pedagogy. The headteacher knows all of the children and families. She supports the EYC with Forest Kindergarten weekly as they build their expertise. The headteacher guides practitioners in professional learning and offers well-judged support and challenge. This enables practitioners to reflect on and continuously improve their practice. They do this increasingly well through self-evaluation and professional review and development.
- Practitioners collaborate on the annual school improvement plan with their colleagues in the school and partner school. The current focus on outdoor learning and science is underpinned by helpful professional learning. Practitioners recognise the very positive impact of these initiatives on children's wellbeing, learning and progress. A day each week outside in the forest is enabling children to learn in new ways, for example, observing nature over time.
- Practitioners look outwards through collaborating with their colleagues at the partner school and local EYCs. Officers within South Ayrshire Council provide skilful support. This helps

practitioners to improve their work. Practitioners engage in professional learning together to safeguard children, learn more about early years pedagogy and improve delivery of the curriculum. Practitioners demonstrate working with other EYCs is supporting them well as they develop their expertise in using learning journals. Through these partnerships, practitioners are also able to moderate their understanding of the expected developmental stages children reach at each stage of development.

- Families play an active role in self-evaluation through their regular feedback in learning journals and by responding to 'key questions' within the newsletters. They have a clear understanding of what is working well and can see the impact of new initiatives such as Forest Kindergarten.

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

- Children are thriving in their beautiful indoor and outdoor environments. They make purposeful, confident choices based on their interests and what inspires them. Children sustain these interests very well. They are happy, have good friends and actively encourage each other through their session.
- Practitioners have a deep understanding of each child as an individual. Their nurturing, respectful interactions are based on what they know each child needs at their individual stage of development. Practitioners are skilled at recognising what each child brings to the EYC and plan the day around what suits children best. They show deep respect for all children, their personalities and characteristics. Practitioners continue to build on their professional knowledge of learning and teaching. This helps them to be reflective and continuously improve their practice.
- Overall, practitioners use their interactions with children very well to challenge children's thinking, help them make connections and extend their learning. Their skills in questioning help children to demonstrate what they already know from home and what they want to learn in the moment. Children are curious, imaginative and excited. They are learning at a pace which suits them as individuals. This is because practitioners plan learning for, with and alongside them.
- Practitioners share children's learning with families using online learning journals which have been developed in recent months. They make detailed observations about what children say, make and can do. Children contribute with interest to the entries in their journals. Families share photographs and comments about what children do at home. Practitioners and children plan learning together in 'Our Learning Journal'. This captures children's interests and outlines how they agree to take their learning forward.
- Practitioners keep a careful check on children's progress. They observe children closely and record how well children are overtaking their milestones at each developmental stage. Practitioners collaborate regularly with colleagues in local EYCs to ensure their professional judgements are accurate. They share this information with families continuously to ensure there is a shared understanding of children's progress. Practitioners continue to learn how to use the learning journey tool to help them plan, record and report on children's learning. As they gain more confidence, they should be in a position to reduce the levels of bureaucracy in their documentation.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners offer learning experiences in all areas of the curriculum within a play context. Alongside the school, they place a strong emphasis on early communication and language, early mathematics and health and wellbeing. Practitioners use South Ayrshire early level guidance and Curriculum for Excellence early level National Benchmarks. This ensures children have access to all the experiences and outcomes at the right level.
- The school and EYC have a strong focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Cross cutting themes of learning for sustainability, outdoor learning including Forest Kindergarten, and skills for learning, life and work underpin the curriculum. This helps to bring about experiences which reflect the locality, for example, farming and forestry.
- Practitioners take full account of the information families share with them when children are new to the EYC. Children settle in at their own pace and engage with significant experiences such as visits to the forest when they are ready. Practitioners and teachers work seamlessly together to plan transition programmes for children moving through into P1. Children visit their new classroom environment each week and share their successes in learning frequently with their new teacher.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents are thrilled with the work of the EYC and the relationships they have with practitioners. They feel their children are making very good progress based on their individual needs and targets. Parents feel well informed about their child's progress and the arrangements for each EYC day. They are welcome to participate through accompanying the children to the forest or to stay and play.
- Practitioners seek the views of families regularly through daily conversation and direct questions within newsletters. This is helping to ensure that improvements and changes reflect the wishes of families. Practitioners are grateful to families for all the offers of support.
- Families appreciate the Parents as Early Education Partners Programme (PEEP) sessions. These sessions help parents to explore how to make the most of routines at home and a deeper understanding of managing children's behaviour. The EYC has positive links with health visiting services.

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

- Practitioners prioritise children's wellbeing and promote it in everything that they do. They have created an ethos of respect where every child is valued as an individual for what they bring to the EYC. Children demonstrate that they feel safe and enjoy high levels of self-esteem. They speak openly about their preferences and feelings. Children respect the expectations and responsibilities practitioners negotiate with them. Children play freely and confidently in their outdoor environment and forest.
- All practitioners use the wellbeing indicators and children's rights in their conversations with children. This helps children learn how to develop positive relationships which are inclusive. Most children share well. They are learning to take turns of favourite resources. Practitioners are highly sensitive to children's developmental stages. They nurture children very well to understand relationships and positive behaviours at their own pace.
- Children demonstrate high levels of physical wellbeing. They pedal, run and clamber outdoors daily. Children love their Forest Kindergarten experiences. They respect boundaries and are learning to appreciate nature as an individual and as part of a collective. Children take turns to be a responsible snack helper where they prepare snack for their friends.
- Practitioners use a range of thoughtfully planned approaches to support children who, at times, need extra support. They provide small group times. Children are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings and concentrate in a calm space. Practitioners adjust readily the rhythm of the EYC day to help children settle or have enough time to take part in experiences which interest them. They liaise with the school to ensure children access mealtimes when it suits them best.
- Practitioners are well trained and vigilant. This enables them to carry out their duties very well to safeguard children. All children have personal plans which are reviewed with families termly. Practitioners value the information families share and use it very effectively. All children have individual learning targets set by practitioners and families together. Children contribute their own voice about how well they feel they are doing.
- Practitioners and children work well together to explore sensitively equality and diversity. Children recognise that they have similarities and differences. Through the thoughtful modelling of practitioners, children listen well to each other's views and choices. They are learning about tolerance and self-respect.

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 good progress in early communication and language. Almost all children use a wide range of vocabulary relevant to their interests, discoveries and understandings. Most children ask questions confidently with appropriate expression and know how to wait for a response. They use words and gesture effectively to express their feelings and emotions. Most children engage with books that interest them. They enjoy story times and these help them to recall the main characters and plot. Children need continued encouragement from practitioners to help them include print in their play as much as possible. Almost all children show an interest in making marks. They understand that their early writing is valued and carries meaning.
- Children are making very good progress in early mathematics. Most children count with understanding and use natural materials inside and outside to make number lines. Children, as they work closely with practitioners, use numbers confidently to complete routine tasks. All children show a high level of interest in measure. They use loose materials, water and soil to deepen their understanding of concepts such as full and empty. Children use data handling to chart the colour of each other's eyes as they explore similarities and differences.
- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is very good. Children and practitioners work well together to talk about 'risky business' as they learn about making safe choices in their outdoor play spaces. Children show competence on a range of wheeled toys in the playground. Most children are learning to follow instructions to improve their safety and control on bikes. Children enjoy a quality mealtime together in the school dining hall. They take turns preparing a healthy snack for their friends.
- Children are making very positive progress in STEM. They show great teamwork in operating their pulley. Children are very curious about the natural world, investigating plants and mini beasts. They find wonder in tree stumps and vegetation.
- Children are making very good progress since starting at the EYC. Practitioners keep a close check on children's progress over time and share how well children are doing with their families. Practitioners work continuously to share children's progress through learning journals. They are learning how the learning journey tool can be used to help them monitor and report on children's progress over time.

- Children and families readily share children's achievements from home. Practitioners celebrate these on displays and in learning journals. Children are confident individuals and responsible citizens as they learn in their village environment.
- Practitioners enjoy very close relationships with families based on mutual trust and respect. They are quick to act where families need support or adjustments. Practitioners are very aware of the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of this. They are mindful of the busy lives of children who live on farms and the impact of living a distance from their peers.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Practitioners' work on health and wellbeing is having a very positive impact on children. Their seamless use of the wellbeing indicators, children's rights and their knowledge of barriers to learning are leading to effective learning and teaching for all children. There is a very good balance of adult-led, child-led and spontaneous learning over time. Practitioner knowledge of children and families and their deep understanding of pedagogy enables them to respond to children in the best way possible. As a result, children lead their own learning across different environments. Children are making connections and using their own ideas. This is resulting in children having a very strong sense of self whilst recognising the needs of their peers.

Practitioners are taking a lead, alongside their headteacher, in supporting local EYCs to develop science. They have engaged in professional learning. Practitioners are guiding children's learning in STEM successfully.

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.