

Summarised inspection findings

Alloway Primary School Nursery Class

South Ayrshire Council

25 March 2025

Key contextual information

Alloway Early Years Centre is situated within Alloway Primary School, in Alloway, Ayr. There is a large playroom, a quiet room and access to a secure outdoor environment. The centre is registered for 60 children, with currently 59 on the roll. Children aged three years to those not attending primary school attend. The headteacher has strategic responsibility for the early years centre. The deputy headteacher has responsibility for the daily leadership and management. There is a senior practitioner, 11 practitioners and one support worker.

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 refreshed the vision, values and aims of the early years centre with all stakeholders in 2024. Practitioners promote the values of kind, respectful, safe and inclusive. Practitioners are starting to support children's understanding of the values. For example, they use 'Values Champions' and engage in meaningful conversations with children about how they can demonstrate and live the values. As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should now explore ways to further support all children to understand and talk more independently about their values.
- Senior leaders have developed a clear distributed leadership approach across the early years centre. Most practitioners confidently lead developments suited to their interests and strengths to impact positively on outcomes for children. Practitioners look outwards by seeking out effective practice visits to other settings. They share their new learning and ideas with the rest of the team. Practitioners motivate and inspire each other well to achieve their shared vision through their individual leadership roles. This has a positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes. For example, practitioners and children have developed a sustainability garden successfully in collaboration with outside agencies and partners. As planned, senior leaders and practitioners could further develop children's leadership roles. This will support them to develop further children's skills and help them to feel empowered and more involved in the life of the early years centre.
- The headteacher collaborates with senior leaders to drive forward strategic improvements. They have established relevant and specific priorities for this session. Senior leaders have clear areas of responsibility and have robust quality assurance systems in place. They support all practitioners successfully to make improvements at an appropriate pace of change. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate improvements effectively to demonstrate the positive impact of change on children and families. Senior leaders should now consider further training and development for practitioners to enhance their skills. This will support them to develop their interactions, experiences and use of spaces to improve children's outcomes further.

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 have created a welcoming and inclusive ethos underpinned by their shared values and a commitment to 'Getting it right for every child'. Practitioners have established caring and nurturing relationships with all children. As a result, children are safe and secure in their learning environment.
- Practitioners have created a range of learning opportunities accessed through free play. A variety of resources are used to motivate and interest children. Most children explore confidently the different play experiences offered indoors and outside. Most children sustain their play independently and are kind and caring towards each other.
- All practitioners engage in conversations with children and interact positively with them in a calm and caring manner. Practitioners give children the time and space to explore their own interests. Building on this, they should explore the use of open-ended questions to extend children's thinking and ensure appropriate challenge for all children. Practitioners observe children's learning regularly and are beginning to document children's progress using online learning journals and floorbooks. They should develop these processes further to ensure their observations are specific and fully capture children's learning.
- Practitioners have developed block play successfully enabling children to demonstrate creativity and problem-solving skills. The team are at the early stages of using digital technology to enhance learning. A few children use digital cameras and tablets to document their learning. Practitioners use the interactive whiteboard to explore children's ideas further and review their learning. Practitioners should build on this good practice to increase opportunities for digital technology to be used across the curriculum. This will enhance children's learning and develop their digital skills.
- Practitioners track children's progress using local authority milestones and early level benchmarks. Practitioners meet with senior leaders three times each year to review formally children's progress. Senior leaders ensure all staff are aware of all children's learning targets through comprehensive overviews. They review interventions to support children's learning regularly.
- Senior leaders and practitioners hold regular meetings to plan learning and assessment and discuss children's progress. As planned, the team should review planning processes including the use of floorbooks to further support child-led planning. This will ensure a clear balance between child-led, adult-led and adult-initiated experiences. The team should also revisit group time to maximise learning and ensure that it is relevant to all children.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners plan children's learning using Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes across all curricular areas. Practitioners and senior leaders may find it useful to review how practitioners observe children's learning. This will help them to ensure they do not miss learning experiences from a child's learning journey. The team use local authority milestones effectively to support their planning in literacy, numeracy and, health and wellbeing.
- Children make regular visits to the local woodland area and to the local library. These community-based visits enhance the learning taking place in the centre. As planned, practitioners should continue to review and develop visits to the local woods and their use of the outdoors. This will help them to ensure they challenge children's thinking.
- Senior leaders have developed a robust transition programme which helps children to form positive relationships with staff prior to children starting the centre. Practitioners support children and their families very effectively as they settle into their new learning environment. Practitioners share relevant and robust information with P1 teachers to ensure continuity in children's learning as they transition into the primary.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners develop strong, positive relationships with families. They welcome families warmly and sensitively, sharing relevant information about children's experiences and wellbeing during the day. Senior leaders and practitioners communicate effectively with families through newsletters, display boards and digital platforms. Practitioners share children's progress with families regularly through parent contact sessions and an online learning journal. Parents have useful opportunities to comment on these.
- Practitioners provide a wide variety of well-planned opportunities for parents to join children in their learning. For example, stay and play sessions, coffee and chat and family learning programmes that focus on literacy skills. Practitioners encourage parents and children to join in with local trips to build community links. These activities are widely attended and have a positive impact on children and their families.
- Senior leaders and practitioners provide highly responsive parental feedback. They share learning ideas regularly with families using a digital resource. This helps families to support children's ongoing learning and development at home. Senior leaders and practitioners listen to families' views and act responsively to their suggestions.
- Practitioners work very well with a range of partners. They communicate effectively with them regularly to support children's learning and development. These partnerships are leading to improved outcomes for children.

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

- All practitioners fully understand that strong relationships support children to make progress in their learning. They know all children very well, responding sensitively to their individual needs. Practitioners intervene and promote children's positive behaviour appropriately, when required. Practitioners support the wellbeing of all to help children feel safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.
- Practitioners create a warm, nurturing and positive ethos where children feel valued and trusted. Children play confidently and independently in their play. Practitioners encourage and support children effectively to take risks and try new experiences. Children choose successfully where and when they want to play within a range of developmentally appropriate experiences.
- Practitioners manage children's play sensitively to ensure there are smooth transitions during their sessions. A strong example of this is during lunch. Children choose when they wish to go and eat their lunch. This gives children time to explore and be curious during activities they enjoy without interruption. Children experience a very calm, settled and nurturing lunch time experience whilst listening to classical music and enjoying a choice of food. Practitioners value and carefully consider children's needs during full day sessions.
- Practitioners implement their firm understanding of statutory duties to support children to feel safe and secure. Practitioners understand the policies and processes they should follow to care appropriately for all children. Senior leaders and practitioners recognise the importance of clear, robust procedures and use these effectively to support all children to achieve their potential.
- Senior leaders and practitioners promote skilfully equality and inclusion across the early years centre. Practitioners support children, families and partners to feel included in decisions and respect their views and ideas. Practitioners create a culture where diversity is valued and barriers to learning are effectively addressed and managed. They provide effective support to children and families and recognise the need for sensitivity where required.
- Senior leaders and practitioners have established clear, measurable and appropriate targets for all children with additional support needs. They review these regularly and update children's targets to ensure children make effective progress in their learning. They work strongly in partnership with families and outside agencies to ensure children receive support as early as possible.

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

- Overall, most children make good progress over time in early communication and language, numeracy and mathematics and, health and wellbeing.
- Most children communicate confidently with practitioners and peers and enjoy sharing ideas as they explore learning spaces within the setting. Most children show a keen interest in mark making and writing and contribute their thoughts and ideas to floorbooks. Most children enjoy listening to stories and are beginning to talk about the key features of stories. As planned, practitioners should explore how to make the environment more language and communication rich. This will further enhance children's early communication and language skills.
- Most children demonstrate their understanding of numeracy and mathematics as they play and learn across the setting. Most children count with one-to-one correspondence and are beginning to develop an understanding of subitising. Children order objects by size and demonstrate their understanding of measure using a variety of tools, for example containers, tapes and rulers. Children are beginning to explore their understanding of data and how to present this in different graphs and charts.
- In health and wellbeing, most children make good progress. Most children play cooperatively with friends, sharing, turn taking and developing teamwork skills. Most children confidently talk about their feelings. Most children demonstrate their agility skills confidently in running, jumping and climbing. Children are developing their fine motor skills through a range of high-quality creative activities. For example, children use paintbrushes, pens, cutting tools and playdough successfully.
- Most children develop a sense of wonder about the world around them through indoor and outdoor learning experiences. Children lead improvements in the outdoor area, helping them understand how to care for a garden. Most children take pride in this work and enjoy talking about what they have planted and grown. A minority of children are beginning to develop attributes of responsible citizens through task roles such as snack helper. The team should explore how these opportunities can be developed further to increase opportunities for children to take on responsibilities confidently.
- Practitioners encourage families to share children's achievements from beyond the setting and celebrate these on the 'WOW' wall. They could further develop a system to track wider achievements linking this to skills for learning, life and work.

- Senior leaders and practitioners know children and families very well. They take account of the different learning needs of children and have robust plans in place to support identified children including those affected by socio-economic circumstances. This ensures children make progress in their learning.

Practice worth sharing more widely

In the early years centre, practitioners manage children's play sensitively to ensure there are smooth transitions during their sessions. They manage children's lunch experience particularly well. For example, children choose when they wish to go and eat their lunch. This gives children time to explore and be curious during activities they enjoy without interruption. Children experience a very calm, settled and nurturing lunch whilst listening to classical music and enjoying a choice of nutritious food. Practitioners consider children's experiences and value their needs carefully during their full day sessions.

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.