

Summarised inspection findings

Dalrymple Primary School and Early Childhood Centre

East Ayrshire Council

18 December 2018

Key contextual information

Dalrymple Early Childhood Centre (ECC) is located within Dalrymple Primary School in the village of Dalrymple in East Ayrshire. It is registered to provide a service to a maximum of 30 children from 3 years to those not yet attending primary school, and 10 children aged 2 to 3 years. At the time of inspection there were 35 children aged 3-5 years on the roll, and less than 5 children aged 2-3 years.

There has been a vacancy for a senior Early Learning and Childcare Practitioner since January 2018. There are two playrooms, a parents meeting room and a large enclosed outdoor area within the ECC. The ECC also have use of the school gym hall for energetic physical activities.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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 strive to do their best for children and work well together as a team. Whilst they are strongly committed to delivering a quality service for children and families, there is a need for prompt, structured and planned action to improve learning experiences for children.
- A vision, values and aims statement is shared across the whole school and displayed in the ECC. Practitioners have embedded a developmentally appropriate way for children to state the vision 'Reach for the Stars'. The weekly allocation of star of the week is supported with a home-link resource and song.
- Practitioners are keen to take on leadership roles for various aspects of the ECC's work. This includes the recently re-instated 'Communication Champion' and the delivery of Book Bug for which the majority of staff are trained. Clear roles, remits, and guidance for practitioners who have a leadership role will support them to carry out their roles. Practitioners have undertaken professional learning that responds to children's health requirements. In addition, all practitioners have completed training to support pupils with communication difficulties. As discussed, the manager and practitioners need to evaluate the impact of these roles to ensure they improve outcomes for children and deliver high-quality early learning and childcare.
- Children come to the ECC with a range of experiences, interests and prior learning. There is potential to increase significantly the leadership opportunities for children. For example, within appropriate Leading Learning Groups that exist for primary school pupils.

- Practitioners and the headteacher receive on-going advice and support from the Early Years Peripatetic Teacher, on various aspects of early learning practice and guidance. This has had a recent focus on the use of floor books, developing literacy and numeracy in children's play and the ECC environment. Practitioners will require support from the leadership team to develop further their confidence and practice.
- Practitioners are aware that the ECC is on a journey of improvement. They are eager to learn and improve their practice. Currently, the school improvement plan focuses mainly on primary school priorities. Moving forward, it will be important for the ECC to be more explicit within the plan. There is a need to regularly and robustly monitor this to identify where effective progress has been made, and where additional planning is required. This will support the establishment and implementation of a more robust self-evaluation cycle. Where appropriate, the views of children, families and other partners should be included.
- Commendably, practitioners have independently undertaken self-evaluation activity. This is beginning to enable the team to look more critically at their practice in an informed way, with priorities identified using a collegiate approach. Overall, effective self-evaluation is at the early stages of development and is not yet leading to robust and evidence-based evaluations that accurately reflect the ECC. Effective strategic direction and leadership is now required from the leadership team. This will ensure that there is a well-judged pace of change to make the necessary improvements that are understood by all.
- There is no formal monitoring of the ECC to support practitioners in recognising what is working well, areas for improvement and the impact of changes. The headteacher is kept informed by the Early Years Peripatetic teacher of work undertaken in the ECC. However, the headteacher now needs to take a more active and informed approach in the quality assurance process. This will ensure practitioners are supported to deliver high quality learning experiences.
- There is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of roles and responsibilities in fulfilling the range of statutory duties required. This will better reflect current thinking and best practice. As identified during inspection activity, and discussed with the manager and local authority, robust approaches and systems need to be created and consistently applied to ensure children's needs are met fully.

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

- Relationships across the ECC between practitioners and children and their parents are warm and positive. Children are safe, secure and developing confidence as they take part in their play. Most children are seen to be caring and kind to each other and play well together.
- The majority of children are engaged and enjoy learning as they choose from the resources available. Access to outdoors has recently been reviewed to include more time for free flow play in the garden. The recently installed mud kitchen is proving to be a positive addition to the outdoor provision, with some children showing sustained engagement when playing in this area. Practitioners should now consider developing the resources and experiences available outdoors, to ensure they are sufficiently challenging for all.
- Indoors, a few children were observed to move from area to area without being involved in play. Practitioners did not always identify this, and opportunities to help children become more purposefully engaged in play were sometimes missed.
- Overall, practitioners know children well and have an understanding of their needs. Practitioners explore, identify and access professional learning with the early years peripatetic teacher. They continue to develop their knowledge and skills around higher order thinking skills and have created practitioner question prompt lanyards. There are some examples of practitioners making effective use of interventions to develop children's thinking and help sustain their interest. This should continue to be encouraged further so that learning opportunities are maximised for all children.
- Children have regular access to an interactive white board, but there is scope to have a wider range of technology regularly available throughout the ECC to support and extend learning.
- Practitioners use learning journal books to record observations about each child's progress. They include photographic evidence, descriptions of children's learning activities and some samples of children's work. Practitioners should now continue to develop their skills in observing and recording observations of significant learning for each child. Increased opportunities for practitioners to engage in professional dialogue about assessments and observations will help support their professional judgements of children's progress in learning.
- Parents and children are encouraged to contribute towards target setting in learning journal books. Children should be encouraged to take increasing ownership of and interest in their learning journal books as this will enable them to reflect further on their learning. Parents are at the very early stages of adding children's achievements from home to learning journals.

Practitioners should work with parents to explain the purpose of the learning journals and the observations of learning in them.

- End of year summary reports are completed for each child and used to support transition from the ECC to primary. This helps provide an overview of each child's key strengths and interests as they move within, and from the ECC into P1.
- Practitioners use an early level literacy assessment tool to gather information about children's developing literacy skills. In conjunction with the peripatetic teacher, practitioners are beginning to use the information collected to develop future learning experiences for children to develop specific literacy skills.
- Practitioners have recently streamlined planning processes and are now using floor books as the main method of planning and recording children's learning. This method is allowing practitioners to build on prior knowledge as well as develop children's interests. Practitioners should now consider how they record responsive planning to take forward the particular interests of individuals.
- Practitioners use tracking documents for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to record children's individual progress. This information now needs to be used more effectively, to inform future planning for individual children and identify next steps in learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- The headteacher and practitioners need to develop a curriculum framework to reflect the ECC's expectations for children's learning and achievements. This should take full account of the design principles of Curriculum for Excellence to provide greater depth, choice, challenge and progression in children's learning.
- Appropriate account is taken of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes in planning. There are opportunities for children to develop skills in health and wellbeing, numeracy and literacy across their play. Building on this, these experiences now need to be developed and enhanced to ensure children experience a range of meaningful contexts to develop and apply their knowledge across the curriculum.
- While positive changes have been made to the learning environment, practitioners now need to consider how they will promote curiosity, inquiry and creativity as a key feature of developmental pathways. Practitioners are developing their use of national guidance to support the implementation of the curriculum, and to plan for children's learning.
- The ECC benefits from extensive outdoor grounds which are attractive, and offer considerable potential for rich learning experiences. This now needs to be capitalised on more fully, by providing an increasing number of planned learning experiences to realise the learning potential across the curriculum.
- The ECC benefits from baby and toddler groups hosted in the building. This supports a smooth transition as children progress to start nursery in the same environment. Transition to P1 is coordinated with a planned timetable of activities and visits. There is considerable scope for the development of a shared pedagogy across the early level within Dalrymple Primary School to support continuity and progression in learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents responding to inspection questionnaires comment positively about the service, and are happy with the provision their children are receiving. They report that their children are settled and happy in the ECC. A few parents would welcome improved communication as some feel uncertain about their child's progress, learning and development. Information sharing is mostly informal and on a day to day basis at the end of sessions. An end of year summary report is provided. More information could be provided to parents about how they might support learning within the ECC, and at home. The re-introduction of home link communication bags would support this. Regular newsletters and use of social media would enable parents to know more about what their children are learning and any planned activities including 'Stay and Play' sessions, Lending Library information and parent and carer groups organised by the community practitioner.
- To help support the improvement of the ECC, practitioners should consider the benefit of establishing a parents' group.
- Positive links with a few partners in the local community are beginning to support children's wider experiences. There is scope to increase the number and range of partners to support and motivate learning further. A focus on skills for learning, life and work will support the promotion of high aspirations 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

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 work hard to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere within the ECC. Building caring, respectful and supportive relationships with families secures a partnership approach and a sense of community. Practitioners know each child and their family well and are responsive to their needs and interests.
- Children are happy and enjoy the company of their friends and adults. They are able to make choices about where they want to play and every child is treated as an individual. Practitioners model and encourage respectful behaviour, and use a variety of strategies to resolve conflicts and promote a caring ethos. At their own developmental stage, most children are developing the skills required to play together, including sharing and taking turns.
- Practitioners are developing their knowledge of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) national guidance and the wellbeing indicators. The majority of children can talk about how to be safe in the ECC and are aware of healthy foods. The ECC 'High Five Rules' are clear and understood by most children. Practitioners are aware of the importance of nurturing children's wellbeing and respond appropriately to children's needs. Practitioners should continue to ensure a developing awareness and understanding of the wellbeing indicators with children. Consideration should be given to making links with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Children self-register and take on the role of daily snack helper. They are observed to be capable and enthusiastic. There is scope to develop children's early leadership skills further, particularly in the context of the whole-school environment. This would better realise their potential and allow them to take a more active and meaningful role in the life of Dalrymple Primary School.
- Discussions during the inspection outlined the benefits of the development of more robust and coherent systems that support effective record keeping. This will better support planning for individual children's care and learning, and reflect the effective support provided for children and families by the ECC.
- Children and families are treated fairly and with respect in the ECC. Practitioners have all completed local authority mandatory equality and diversity online training. Practitioners should continue to develop approaches to engage children in a way that is age and stage appropriate through their play.
- Personal care plans incorporating the wellbeing indicators are in place for all children, and updated within expected timescales. Overall, children who may experience potential barriers to

their learning are supported to take a full and active part within the ECC. The Acting Principal Teacher for Additional Support Needs encourages practitioners to seek support and make links with external agencies. This helps to support children's overall learning and development, and secure positive outcomes for families.

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

Progress in communication, early language, mathematics and health and wellbeing.

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in learning.
- Children aged 2–3 years are making appropriate progress in their learning and development. They are growing in confidence through exploring their environment and making choices from the activities that are on offer. The range of age appropriate outdoor toys and equipment is helping to improve children's physical development. Nurturing interactions from practitioners, and daily access to stories and songs are supporting children's early communication skills.
- The majority of children aged 3–5 years can talk with increasing confidence about their experiences with an adult, and when playing with each other. Most children enjoy taking part in rhymes and songs at group times. Children are encouraged to self-register and a few are making a good attempt to write their name when registering at the start of the session. As planned, practitioners now need to develop and apply early literacy skills through meaningful contexts.
- In early numeracy skills, children are making satisfactory progress. Children join in with counting songs and games, and are using interactive smartboard games to count amounts and identify numbers. They are beginning to use a programmable toy to explore direction and position. Through their play, children are developing mathematical language as they talk about the size, shape and capacity of containers at the sand tray. Practitioners should now provide more rich and real-life experiences to develop early numeracy and mathematical skills.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. Practitioners promote a positive and caring ethos in the ECC, and encourage children to be kind and caring towards each other. Children are aware of the benefits of healthy food choices, hand washing and tooth brushing. They now have daily access to outdoors for energetic play. Practitioners should continue to review outdoor provision to ensure the interests and needs of all children are met.
- Children enjoy being creative at the art table where they can self-select from a range of art materials. Through exploring mini beasts, they talk about simple life cycles and the needs of growing things.

Children's progress over time.

- Overall, most children are showing increasing confidence, resilience and independence as they learn. Practitioners are developing the use of floor books to begin to help children talk about their learning. This is not yet embedded across the ECC.
- As practitioners become more consistent in documenting significant observations of each child's learning, a clearer profile of progress will emerge.

Overall quality of children's achievement.

- Children's efforts and successes are celebrated through praise and encouragement. Each week, children are nominated to be 'Stars of the Week' for their contributions towards the ECC. They take home a soft toy for a weekend and are encouraged to write and draw about it. Practitioners capture some children's individual achievements within learning journals and share these, along with future targets, with parents. Parents are starting to celebrate children's achievements from home, through contributing to an achievement tree. There is significant scope for children's wider achievements and interests from home to be encouraged more. This would further promote progress in learning.

Ensuring equity for all children.

- Practitioners provide an inclusive and supportive ethos, and have warm and caring relationships with parents. Practitioners are gathering data about children's early language levels. Senior leaders now need to work with practitioners to use this data and other information to monitor the overall development and progress of children in the ECC.

ECC choice of QI: 2.4 Personalised Support

- Universal support
- Role of practitioners and leaders
- Identification of learning needs and targeted support

- Children enjoy warm and supportive relationships with practitioners. Key workers are proactive in working with parents to understand and support the emotional needs of children. Children's interests are taken into consideration and increasingly inform planning. The ECC is reviewing approaches to encourage parents to increase their engagement in their child's learning. In moving forward, practitioners should continue to develop learning conversations with all children and ensure that they all make progress in their learning.
- Children are encouraged to lead their own play by accessing a range of available resources. Practitioners are increasingly aware of the benefits of uninterrupted play and this is starting to work well for some children. There are a few missed opportunities where children's learning could be extended further. For example, through adult intervention either during or after a self-directed play activity.
- There is recognition of, and commitment to providing universal support to children. This session the ECC is re-starting work to support the development of vocabulary for all children, through an ECC Communication Champion. Strong partnership working with speech and language therapy colleagues is supporting this initiative.
- Practitioners ensure children have daily access to the outdoor area, and are embedding the recently introduced free flow access approach in the learning environment. The outdoor area has the potential to promote children's curiosity, creativity and inquiry skills. The use of open-ended and creative resources should be maximised and developed further both indoors and outdoors.
- Effective approaches, recently updated, have been implemented to ensure children who may face barriers to their learning are identified and supported appropriately.

1. Quality of care and support

Relationships between children, staff and families were positive. Children were warmly welcomed into the ECC and encouraged to settle until group time. Staff were responsive to children and we saw how they reassured children who were upset, efficiently using a nurturing, calm and sensitive approach.

Staff had some records in place which meant that they held basic information about children's needs. We found that the personal plans we sampled were ineffective and did not accurately reflect the knowledge held by staff informally. Staff used a range of documents to record children's likes and dislikes as well as targets for their development. However, we found that not all information was in place to provide a robust personal plan for each child. (See recommendation 1)

As there was no designated senior practitioner in post, pastoral information was not readily available for ECC staff.

Children were encouraged to share snack which was a sociable gathering and one which children clearly enjoyed. Staff need to make better plans to encourage children to be independent and responsible by having improved set up and preparation roles for children.

Children had daily access to energetic play in the fresh air. Children enjoyed the rich environment of the mud kitchen, using open-ended resources and real life equipment to good effect. We saw that the dressing process took too long and children were waiting around to go outside. We found that staff did not respond quickly enough to offer children outdoor play, particularly for a group of energetic boys who would have benefitted from it.

We sampled children's folders and profiles and found that not all had clear and smart targets, and observations lacked focus.

We saw that staff had developed good relationships with children and parents/carers and that positive communication was on-going between home and the ECC. We saw how praise and encouragement was used to good effect. The majority of parents had provided the ECC staff with emergency contact details as well as medical history which helped staff meet their needs and keep them safe.

Although the staff team benefitted from annual refresher training about safeguarding children, not all staff were confident in their responsibilities for keeping children safe from harm or abuse. There was no flow chart within the ECC to guide staff about the actions should abuse be suspected. One ECC staff member held a current certificate for administering first aid. Good practice would suggest that at least two staff hold such a qualification. (See recommendation 2)

Staff were kind and caring towards children and spoke to them at child level. They offered good opportunities for children to voice their views and we saw how their ideas were used through regular communication with them. Partner agencies were actively engaged, when support needs were identified. This meant that the right support was delivered at the right times for children.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

2. Quality of environment

We found the Early Years centre to be a bright and inviting place for children and families. The purpose built facilities meant that both playrooms were presented for children of pre-school age. Staff had worked hard to develop the playrooms into interesting places to learn and develop. We found that there were some areas of the forest room that were less effective for children to explore and learn. The number of large tables hindered expressive play at times during the day; the block area could be increased. Staff now need to use their skills to assess and improve the rooms. They should review and improve the pace of sessions as the gathering times meant some children had to leave their play. Some of the resources did not encourage children to use critical thinking and encourage them to be creative. Resources should follow best practice, such as Our Creative Journey and Loose Parts Play-A toolkit.

Children were kept safe in the building by use of a secure entry system and a fully enclosed garden for outdoor play. Staff monitored entry and departure. Children knew where to find their name to sign in and for snack registration, helping them feel responsible. Parents we spoke with told us they were happy with the entry arrangements and that they were confident with how staff managed this. We found that routine daily risk assessments or risk: benefit analysis were not in place to assure a safe environment. (See Requirement 1)

Children had daily access to energetic play in the fresh air. Children enjoyed the rich environment of the mud kitchen, using open-ended resources and real-life equipment to good effect. Although children had daily access to the outdoors for energetic play in the fresh air, we saw some children who would have benefitted from this on arrival.

Children benefitted from independent use of toilets in the ECC room and staff were vigilant in reminding children to wash their hands during the session.

As part of the inspection process, we reviewed records staff kept for medication and gave some advice about improving the recording system further, following current good practice guidance. We looked at the accident and incident recording process which showed that staff had sought parent's signatures on receipt of the information.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

3. Quality of staffing

Staff were warm, welcoming and kind. They worked well together as a team and used each other's strengths to support each other. Most children were happy to seek staff out when they needed help or reassurance.

We saw some good examples of information sharing between staff and parents/carers showing they had developed trusting relationships with them.

Staff were committed to on-going professional development and had accessed training to help them in their role. Staff who attended communication training had provided good outcomes for children and staff were more confident in their interactions with children. Staff told us that they maintained their professional registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and that they kept a log of their post registration learning. We suggested that they add this as a

standing item in team meetings to further encourage the 'Step into Leadership' programme. Staff knew the importance of continuing their learning.

Staff told us they met as an ECC team which allowed them to discuss matters of practice and ECC development. Some self-assessment had been carried out; however this should be further embedded in day to day practice.

While we found that staff had made some use of the Care Inspectorate online resource, The HUB, staff should add this to their planning meetings to ensure they hold all current good practice guidance.

The long-term senior practitioner vacancy has impacted negatively on the progress of the ECC. We spoke with the most recently employed staff member about induction arrangements. She confirmed that the process was thorough and provided her with the correct range of information for her role in the service.

The staffing team within the ECC meant children had a consistent team to respond to their needs. We found the staff to be hard-working, professional and keen to provide children with a good quality experience while in the ECC. Some staff had taken on roles to promote communication and outdoor play, showing the team were committed to improve outcomes for children.

A key worker system was in operation which meant that staff were able to liaise with parents/carers on arrival and departure. Parents told us they valued this arrangement and found staff to be approachable and supportive to them.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

4. Quality of management and leadership

The limited monitoring by the management team had led to the ECC underperforming. Although staff had continued to carry out some evaluation of practice, they had not had the benefit of a consistent management support process. The long-term vacancy for a senior practitioner within the ECC had hampered progress.

There was limited auditing or quality assurance procedures in place, resulting in the issues identified at inspection not being fully recognised by the management team. We found the lack of a robust quality assurance system was impacting on the progress of the ECC. (See Requirement 2)

Staff told us they had good opportunities for appraisal and support for any training needs.

Management carried out annual appraisals for the ECC team where some training needs were identified. The monitoring of the ECC had been delegated to a principal teacher who had started to determine the strengths and areas for improvement for the service.

Parents were involved in some evaluating and were supported to comment on the service they received meaning they were encouraged to participate in their child's learning. Parents we spoke with told us they felt that the stay and play sessions were helpful and a welcome opportunity to support their child's learning at home.

Care Inspectorate grade: weak

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the ECC had no requirements and one recommendation. From this, the recommendation had been met. As a result of this inspection, there are two requirements and two recommendations.

Requirements

- In order to ensure the health and welfare of children attending the service, the provider must develop and maintain effective risk management procedures. Risk assessments must be completed for all areas of the service. This must be completed by 5 November 2018. This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that 'My environment is safe and secure' (HSCS 5.17). It is also necessary to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland Regulations 2011.
- In order to improve outcomes for children, the provider must develop and implement a robust quality assurance system and improvement plan by 19 November 2018. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes. (HSCS 4.19) and in order to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland Regulations 2011.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the service develops a consistent system to record children's identified needs and show how these will be met by the service. This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15)
- It is recommended that the service develops a training plan to monitor staff training and development needs. This should be audited to measure its effectiveness in developing practice and improving outcomes for children. This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14)

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.