

Summarised inspection findings

Whitdale Early Years Centre

West Lothian Council

18 February 2020

Key contextual information

Whitdale Early Years Centre (EYC) is based within Whitdale Primary School and provides early learning and childcare for children aged from two years. Children attend from Whitburn and the surrounding areas. The EYC is registered for 70 children at any one time. Seventy-seven children are on the current roll. They have varied placements to meet differing needs of families, including morning and afternoon sessions, compressed hours and extended day placements. There are nine children aged two, 30 children in their ante pre-school year and 38 in their pre-school year. Across the school and EYC, 4% of children have English as an additional language. The majority of children attending the EYC live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1-3. A few practitioners are new to the EYC.

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

- As a team, under the leadership of the acting headteacher and in particular the principal teacher, practitioners have been very well involved in establishing an agreed vision. Senior leaders, together with practitioners, take very good account of the local community, the socio economic context of the area and background of children and their families when making changes and improvement. Their values and aims reflect the EYC's context, and are embedded effectively into daily practice.
- The practitioner team work very well together under the clear leadership of senior leaders. Those who are new, are settling well into EYC routines. Practitioners are highly motivated. Almost all implement learning gained through local authority continuous professional learning (CPL). Others are developing effectively their knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and develop. They apply effectively knowledge gained through coursework on Froebelian pedagogy. Their professional learning is having a significant impact on improving the range and quality of children's experiences.
- Senior leaders ensure that practitioners are empowered to take on added responsibility and increased leadership for aspects of the EYC's improvement plan. Practitioners make a valuable contribution to the EYC's improvement and children's learning and progress. Their individual leadership roles have resulted in positive improvements for children's learning and development, particularly outdoors but not exclusively. Most practitioners are highly reflective. Newer practitioners are developing their confidence to inform change and improvement. Practitioners use various strategies well to engage parents and children in supporting improvements. Practitioners are responsive and act where possible on feedback and any required changes or improvements are because of information from stakeholders. Senior leaders, with practitioners, need to continue to explore ways to engage parents further in supporting change and improvement.

- The new area manager is settling in well to this new role to support practitioners during the national expansion programme for early learning and childcare. Moving forward, senior leaders need to agree with the area manager, clear actions which clarify the remit as it relates to this EYC.

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

- Most children are developing confidence and follow their interests. Most are starting to lead aspects of their learning. Children engage well in interesting and varied learning experiences. They concentrate well for lengthy periods, including through digital technologies. Most children, including those who are well supported by practitioners, are becoming resilient. Almost all enjoy using the quality range of materials and equipment which practitioners provide. Most children enjoy playing and exploring with friends. They use their imaginations well to help them make sense of their world. Most are making choices, decisions and learning important life skills through their involvement in real-life experiences, including at snack and when sewing. A few need more challenge. Children enjoy investigating, particularly when outdoors. Their learning outdoors is of a high standard. Here, they access an impressive range of experiences where they are developing perseverance and learning to take risks. Their experiences in the dining hall and at the end of the morning session need to be reviewed and improved.
- Practitioners nurture children and interact sensitively with them. Most use discussions and questioning effectively to check children's understanding, promote their curiosity and improve their learning. A few practitioners miss opportunities to further children's learning and development or help extend their vocabulary. Practitioners take good account of children's interests and views. Overall, they ensure that children learn well and respond enthusiastically through digital technologies. However, at these times, children's learning needs to be enhanced further through increased adult interaction.
- Over the last year, practitioners have improved their approaches to children's learning through relevant professional learning. Their systems for tracking and monitoring children's learning help identify what they know and inform future planning. Key workers know children well. They use this knowledge well to help make informed judgements about children's progress. They make useful comments on children's progress and achievements in personal learning folders. Practitioners need to continue to involve children more in assessing their strengths and areas to develop. Practitioners have appropriate arrangements in place to help children when they move to Primary 1 (P1). They also use relevant information from home visits when children start the EYC, to help make the move as streamlined as possible for the younger children.
- Practitioners use various approaches well to plan for and record children's needs and interests. They use floorbooks to engage children in reflecting on and discussing their learning. Children's progress is monitored regularly through ongoing discussions. They use information gathered to make changes to planning and to identify appropriately those children who have barriers to their learning. Practitioners need to continue to review, evaluate and refine their systems to ensure children's outcomes are improved in a consistent way through for example greater pace and challenge for those who need this. They also need to review and reflect on how they plan for children's different patterns of attendance and in particular those who attend

on a full day basis. These children need a different routine and at times a quiet place where they can relax and have more 'chilled-out' experiences.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners deliver a broad range of curricular experiences that help children develop various skills and attributes. Practitioners use national guidance, including the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence to deliver a broad range of relevant experiences that reflect children's entitlements. They take good account of the design principles and in particular personalisation, choice, challenge, enjoyment and relevance. Children are developing important skills for life and work. Practitioners involve partners where possible in this. Children practise and consolidate their skills and learning in various ways and in different curricular areas, including when outdoors.
- Practitioners play a significant role in developing children's skills in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and digital literacy in meaningful play contexts. They ensure children's curricular experiences promote equity and help them progress. Practitioners need to continue to take forward their shared understanding of progression to meet children's needs, particularly when there are staff changes.
- Senior leaders need to continue to work with all relevant staff to ensure continuity for children's learning and development across the whole of early level, including when developing progression pathways. Children who attend the EYC progress very well. Across the school year, all staff across early level need to have professional learning time together to help take forward and improve progressive approaches to play pedagogy to support transition. Children need to experience continuity and apply their skills progressively across the early level when they move from the EYC to P1 across the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents feel their children settle well, enjoy the EYC and are treated fairly. They receive helpful information on their children's learning and progress. Parents are pleased with the range of experiences which their children participate in, particularly when outdoors. They are positive about the recent initiative to support their children's learning at home through the 'bedtime book bag'. They have helpful opportunities to learn together with their children through 'stay and play'. They access PEEP sessions in the school to support them with their children if needed.
- Practitioners value parents' contribution to their children's experiences in the EYC. They seek parents' views and act on these where possible. Practitioners provide helpful information to parents about their children's experiences at the EYC. Practitioners need to continue to find ways to engage parents more, including for example making better use of the parents' room.

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

- Children are happy and confident when playing indoors and outdoors. They are developing healthy lifestyles in the EYC, including through daily, energetic activity outdoors. Children climb with confidence in attractive outdoor spaces. They enjoy regular sessions at the local forest where they investigate and explore enthusiastically the natural environment. Their physical skills are progressing very well, as well as their independence. Children often help prepare food for snack and enjoy working alongside practitioners when doing so. Children are developing good habits for their personal hygiene. Their lunchtime experiences could be a better and more sociable experience. Children's emotional resilience and self-esteem is developing well and contributing effectively to their achievements. Practitioners should ensure that this important focus on skills for life enables children to be ready and have confidence to learn further, including when they move to P1.
- Practitioners know their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and keeping children safe. All have completed compulsory training and use appropriate risk assessments and policies to assure themselves of children's safety. Senior leaders and practitioners discuss children's needs at routine meetings. They use relevant interventions across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to support individuals, including those with additional support needs and those who have English as an additional language. A few children, capable of further challenge, need to be supported further to progress in a few aspects of their literacy and numeracy.
- Children are progressing very well because practitioners promote and ensure inclusion and equality. Children and families are treated with respect. Those children who are in danger of missing out are identified and practitioners take appropriate action to ensure that they achieve. Significant numbers of children who have challenges with communication progress well because of partnerships with external agencies, including speech and language services. Practitioners benefit from advice and guidance to improve their universal support to all children. Under the leadership of the principal teacher, practitioners are developing monitoring and tracking systems further, to track those children facing particular challenge, including those who are care experienced. Children are developing an awareness of their local environment and the similarities and differences of those who live within it. In taking forward equality and diversity, children need to continue to develop further their knowledge and understanding of different cultures and diversity.

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

- Almost all children make good progress in early language and communication, including those who have additional support needs and English as an additional language. They listen well to stories and information from practitioners and other children. They enjoy discussing their play with friends. Children ask relevant questions when they want to find out specific information and recall key facts about their learning. Others need to continue to develop listening and talking skills as they progress and develop. Children enjoy 'reading' stories and exploring illustrations. A few know simple sounds. Others recognise their name in print. A few children need to continue to develop their early reading skills through play. Most of the older children recognise a few letters, including the initial letter of their names. Others can write it. Across the EYC, children enjoy mark-making where they represent their thoughts during play. Others, because of their age and stage of development need to continue to practise and consolidate their early reading skills.
- Almost all children make very good progress in numeracy and mathematics in line with their stage of development. They count and recognise basic numbers. A few order numbers correctly and can write these. Others know different colours and simple shapes. A few know different time routines. Others use mathematical language in a few aspects of their play and in a few real-life experiences, including when preparing snack. More children need to continue to develop their skills in numeracy and mathematics in line with their stage of development.
- Almost all children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing an awareness of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Most know key facts about the importance of healthy eating and why exercise is important. Others share their feelings openly with friends and trusted adults. Children's gross and fine motor skills are very well developed through physical activity, including when outdoors. A few of the younger children and those who have additional support needs should continue to be supported to further their progress in health and wellbeing.
- Children make very good progress from their prior learning and attain well over time, including those who are younger, have additional support needs and those who have English as an additional language. As part of the practitioners' arrangements for tracking and monitoring, children's overall progress should be collated at key times over the session to identify high-level messages on their overall performance across their learning as noted in Curriculum for Excellence.

- Most children are developing a range of attributes, including responsibility, citizenship, teamwork and leadership. They are developing very well their creative skills through art, sewing and model making. Children share and celebrate their achievements. Those who have additional support needs or have barriers to their learning achieve very well because of various interventions that have a positive impact on their progress. Children's achievements need to be tracked and monitored further to identify any child who may miss out and so that action can be taken to help them achieve.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- Children's experiences outdoors are of a high quality. This includes their access to a range of impressive resources where children are developing various skills in different curricular areas. They visit the local forest and explore their natural environment. They engage with friends in attractive outdoor spaces, including an outdoor classroom, which is covered, and where they play all year, including during adverse weather.

1. Quality of care and support

The staff team were warm caring and respectful in their interactions with children helping them to feel safe. Staff often used praise and encouragement to help children make positive choices about their behaviour. We saw that this helped the children to build positive relationships with their peers and the staff team, and encouraged them to care for the nursery resources.

Staff were building positive relationships with families, helping them to be involved in the service through 'stay and play' sessions and supporting children's learning through daily discussions and initiatives like "the big bedtime read".

Children benefit from staff working closely with other professionals to provide consistency of care and support.

Children enjoyed a rich variety of experiences throughout the nursery, supporting them to develop new skills and build confidence. Children were busy enjoying experiences which supported them to negotiate with their peers, problem solve and be creative.

We saw children having fun and building positive relationships with the staff team and their peers. The children had care plans that identified the support they needed to feel safe and have a positive experience at nursery. We discussed some plans that would benefit from review and development to ensure that children were getting the most out of their nursery experience.

Children were enjoying learning about where food came from, how to prepare and cook it. We saw that snack time was a positive experience helping children to develop a positive relationship with healthy foods. We spoke about reviewing lunch experiences to ensure that these provided the same positive experiences and messages about healthy lifestyles. Consideration could also be given to the amount of time in the day where children are being led by adult routines rather than leading their own learning.

Children were able to access resources throughout the nursery with staff putting in appropriate support to ensure that activities were inclusive. We spoke about developing strategies; for example the use of hand signs, symbols and pictures in the service to promote effective communication and choice for all children.

Medication was stored well, had appropriate permissions in place and staff knew how to manage this to ensure children's safety. We discussed monitoring systems that could support the accuracy of recordings.

Staff were confident about how to ensure children's safety in the service. We spoke about how they would benefit from more access to the pastoral notes, which were held electronically, to help ensure children's safety. We were satisfied with the measures in place to allow the staff team to access children's pastoral notes through the deployment of the management team until more access can be provided.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

2. Quality of environment

The environment was safe, secure and well organised allowing children to play and move freely between areas. We reviewed both the collection procedures and the way staff kept registers and saw that this would help to ensure children's safety in the service. When children had accidents in the service staff cared for children well and kept appropriate records to share with families. Staff discussed changes in practice in regular meetings which would reduce the number of accidents. Formal monitoring could be developed to ensure that any patterns are identified to help ensure children's safety.

Children knew when to wash their hands and younger children were supported appropriately by staff who modelled good infection control practice to support children's understanding and ensure safety. Consideration could be given to routines for checking toilets to ensure that these are pleasant spaces for children to access throughout the day.

Children could freely move between the indoor and outdoor areas and they had opportunities to be active, explore, be creative, problem solve, negotiate and develop literacy and numeracy skills throughout. This helped children to achieve whether they preferred to play in or outdoors. We saw that outdoor areas were used throughout the day, helping some children feel settled in nursery. We spoke about ensuring that areas are monitored to ensure that they are inviting to children to help them explore all experiences staff have planned for them in the nursery.

Children had opportunities to assess risk for themselves especially in the outdoors and on forest walks. Staff told us they planned to further develop their forest walks to help children build new skills and confidence in leading their own learning. The service could also continue to build on their use of resources in the community to help children develop their sense of identity and knowledge of their community.

Children enjoyed spending time relaxing in cosy areas like the book corner. We spoke about ways the service could further develop these to give children the opportunity to have time alone if they wanted and sleep if they needed a rest.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

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

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.