

Summarised inspection findings

Letham Primary School Early Years and Childcare Setting

West Lothian Council

12 November 2019

Key contextual information

Letham Primary School Early Years and Childcare setting (ELC) is registered for 40 children at any one time. At the time of the inspection there were a total of 66 children 16 of whom attend over two full days with 30 attending in the morning and 20 attending afternoon sessions.

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 teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Practitioners ensure all children and their parents are warmly greeted as they arrive at the setting. They engage in regular informal conversations to keep parents aware of their children's experiences in the setting. Parents become more involved in learning when they join planned stay and play sessions and curriculum evenings. There is scope to extend this involvement by offering more frequent, informal opportunities to stay and play. The evident positive relationships help children to feel a sense of belonging. As a result, they are happy, calm and secure in the setting. This helps children to quickly and confidently settle to their learning. Overall, children are learning to share and to help each other as they play. Almost all children independently choose where they would like to play and actively lead their own learning. Practitioners ensure a variety of open-ended, natural materials are available to encourage curiosity and creativity. For example, a few children created a magnificent structure with the hollow blocks whilst others carefully used real tools to make models at the woodwork bench. Most children display ownership of the environment as they play alone or in small groups.
- Children engage well in their play and most are able to sustain good levels of interest and motivation throughout the session. Practitioners encourage children to follow their interests and they happily continue in their learning through play through seamless transition between the indoor and outdoor environments. Both environments have recently been significantly improved and offer a good range of opportunities for children to be inquisitive, creative and to solve problems. The outdoor area offers numerous exciting experiences for children, including exploring in the muddy puddle, transporting water and digging in the soil and sand. Walks to the library, shops and charity shop help children to gain an understanding of their local community. Practitioners should continue to develop their plans to extend the scope for children to explore the world beyond the setting. For example, they plan to identify a local forest to extend learning contexts. Practitioners should continue to create further opportunities for children to apply their early literacy and numeracy skills through play and real-life contexts across the setting.
- Interactions are consistently caring and supportive. One to one and small group experiences are particularly effective in helping children learn well in the setting. Practitioners interact sensitively to encourage children's thinking and to extend learning. Practitioners should continue to develop their use of question and comment to encourage children to develop the language of learning. We discussed with practitioners how some adult initiated experiences

should be planned to provide more scope for children to contribute their ideas and develop their skills more fully.

- Practitioners use floorbooks, observations and conversations to gather information about children's interests. They record children's thinking in floorbooks and use learning walls to find out what children know and understand. In this way, they identify possible lines of development to explore with children. They should build on this good start they have made and continue to develop ways to involve children in talking about and evaluating their learning. Developing language to talk about learning will help support children to be more involved in planning what they need to learn next. Practitioners should also involve parents further in planning learning and recognising children's achievements.
- Practitioners know their children well as individuals. Throughout the setting a new approach to assessment and recording has been implemented using online learning journals. Episodes of learning with photographic evidence are used to capture and record children's progress and achievements. As a team, they record observations of children's learning. The quality and consistency of observations is improving. Practitioners identify next steps in learning and regularly discuss individual children's learning. They need to continue to develop systems to ensure next steps are fully understood and consistently addressed by all practitioners with children and parents involved in the process. Children would benefit from more focused conversations about their individual learning to help them review their achievements and plan what they might learn next. Children access their journals using electronic devices in the setting and parents are encouraged to access these at home. We discussed how to encourage children further, for example, by creating simple folders of the work they are most proud of to easily revisit and recall learning.
- There are systems in place to track and monitor children's individual learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners assess children's progress using observation and a number of assessment tools which they use to track children's progress. These identify the key skills children are developing. The setting should continue to build on current good practice to increase the pace of learning as appropriate and monitor on-going progress.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

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
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- The importance of children's health and wellbeing underpins the work of the setting. Most children are confident and enthusiastic as they interact with adults and other children. They are learning to self-regulate to resolve any minor conflicts. Overall, they play together very well and are making friendships. Children are becoming aware of how to keep themselves healthy. They enjoy well-balanced snacks, brush their teeth daily and are learning about personal hygiene. They are gaining independence as they dress themselves to go out to play in the garden. Children are encouraged to take responsibility as they risk assess the outdoor and indoor environments. They have responsibility for looking after their environment. Practitioners encourage children to choose menus for snack which they buy at the local shop or order online. The majority of children are gaining good control of their fingers as they cut, draw and use needles and threads at the sewing station. They are learning to use fingers to work with malleable materials as they make clay models. Outside, they calculate safe risks as they confidently climb up the tree, balance on logs and ride on the seesaw. During a visit to the gym hall children use space well and engage in strenuous exercise. There is scope to continue to promote physical exercise further to ensure all children benefit from regular fresh air and exercise.
- The development of children's communication skills is a major focus in the setting. Most children are making good progress in developing communication and early language skills. They confidently communicate with adults and other children. The majority express themselves well and happily chatter as they share their thinking during play. The majority of children listen well during the session and when in small groups. The majority of children explore fiction and non-fiction books. They recall familiar stories and are learning about rhythm and rhyme as they have fun reciting nursery rhymes. A few children create their own stories around pictures they have drawn. They are developing an awareness of the spoken and written word as practitioners scribe their stories. Most children are making marks as they experiment with early writing. A few are beginning to write letters that are important to them. The majority of children are drawing with increasing attention to detail. Practitioners should build on this good start and continue to develop children's skills through everyday experiences.
- Children are developing their early mathematical skills through adult supported experiences and play. The majority of older children can count in sequence to ten and some can count beyond this. Younger children are beginning to explore numbers and counting. A few children recognise numbers to five and are beginning to use counting skills in their play. They make good use of the interactive white board to count the spots on the ladybirds. Children are

developing mathematical language as they build model castles with blocks and when playing with sand and water. A range of experiences is helping children to develop skills in matching, sorting and exploring shape. Practitioners should consider how they can support children to apply early numeracy and mathematical skills more to enrich play further, solve problems and make judgements.

- During their time in the setting children are making good progress across their learning and development. They are gaining confidence and are developing as independent learners. Children are appropriately supported to make choices about their learning and access resources independently. Practitioners encourage their interests and build on their strengths. Children are excited and motivated by their interest in lifecycles and are fascinated when finding a caterpillar outside. Practitioners support them to investigate and research the process of developing into a butterfly. Most children demonstrate their developing imaginations as they role-play in the home corner, explore materials as they create colourful collages and immerse themselves in play outdoors. Practitioners understand families' individual circumstances and support them well. As planned, practitioners should continue to offer guidance to families on how they can support children's progress in literacy and numeracy which will enhance their progress further.
- Practitioners encourage families to share their children's achievements from home. Special moments, for example, feeding the birds and finding a ladybird are shared on the 'magic moments' board. Children receive certificates when they demonstrate their understanding of the national indicators of wellbeing, for example, being safe, healthy or achieving success. There is scope to enhance achievement further by more explicit celebration to help children experience the positive emotions associated with success.
- Across the setting, there is a strong, inclusive ethos. Practitioners ensure they are aware of any potential barriers to learning and take good account of the differing cultural and socio economic backgrounds of children and their families. The setting takes advice and works closely with agencies to provide appropriate support for children who experience barriers to their learning. Practitioners should continue, as planned, to increase their own and families' aspirations for all children to ensure the best possible progress.

1. Quality of care and support

Children were experiencing warm and compassionate care from staff who were respectful and kind in their interactions.

Children were building positive relationships with the staff and their peers in a nurturing environment. We saw that they were learning to respectfully challenge other children through discussion about their feelings this was supporting them to be confident. Staff were skilled at supporting children to develop their communication skills and emotional resilience.

Children were encouraged to be independent, developing new skills and making choices about their day.

Snack and mealtimes were calm, unhurried social experiences helping children to develop a positive attitude to healthy foods. The children learnt new skills while planning, preparing and serving snacks helping them to be independent and responsible.

Staff responded positively to children's interests helping them to develop their curiosity and problem solving skills. Staff could continue to review their questioning to ensure that this consistently supports children's learning.

Staff had a very good understanding of children's family and community context and used this to plan effectively for children to give them positive experiences in the service.

Staff were very knowledgeable about how to ensure children's safety and wellbeing in the service. We spoke about how the service could further develop children's plans within the context of the National Practice Model in Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) to ensure that information is consistently analysed to identify individual needs.

Where children had additional needs, we saw that the staff team were supporting children well and working effectively with partner agencies to meet their needs in partnership with their families.

We saw that children were progressing well in the service and spoke about how the records in the service could be further developed to share this with the children and their families.

Medication systems could be better monitored to ensure that these are being followed in line with current national best practice.

Care Inspectorate grade: 5 - Very Good

2. Quality of environment

The service had developed their in and outdoor spaces to give children a wide variety of experiences which they enjoyed exploring throughout their day. The children had opportunities to be creative, problem solve, develop their curiosity, learn new skills and take age appropriate risks in and outdoors. We spoke about continuing to develop the resources to ensure that younger children had rich schematic and sensory play opportunities.

The children were able to choose where they wanted to play, and we noted that staff had ensured that both indoor and outdoor activities would support children to learn in a variety of ways. We saw that this helped the children to lead their own learning. We noted that the children moved freely between these areas and were learning to be independent in dressing themselves appropriately for the outdoors. We discussed how the children had a good understanding of when to wash their hands to stay safe and healthy. The service could further support children's understanding of good hygiene practice by providing hand washing facilities near the cloakroom and snack area.

Staff had developed the use of real-world items, natural materials and resources with no fixed outcome to expand the opportunities children had learning through their play. Staff told us they planned to develop this further in line with their Froebelian ethos.

Children were able to take age appropriate risks, and this was helping them to confidently explore their boundaries through play, building their self-esteem.

The nursery was a comfortable space where children were encouraged to have comfort items if that helped them to feel safe. The children could rest and relax in a variety of cosy spaces helping them to feel at home. We spoke about how the service could further develop the use of dens and sleep space as they move to more children being in nursery for longer times.

Most children were independently accessing the toilet, where staff supported children this was done sensitively promoting children's emotional wellbeing. The service told us they had identified that they needed a dedicated changing space for children who needed personal care. This will help to maintain children's privacy and dignity.

The service had refurbished the nursery since the last inspection, and this had included new furniture which was child height and freshly decorated walls. The service told us they planned to fix the ceilings and replace the carpet in the playroom which would further enhance the environment.

Children had opportunities to explore their local community through visits to the library, shops and local parks. Staff told us it had been difficult to continue with their nature kindergarten as a local wood has been cut down. Staff planned to find a new venue for this and give children further outdoor experiences in nature.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and one recommendation. The recommendation has been met. 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.