

Summarised inspection findings

Gartocharn Primary School Early Learning and Childcare Centre

West Dunbartonshire Council

26 November 2019

Key contextual information

Gartocharn Early Learning and Childcare Centre (ELCC) shares a joint campus with Gartocharn Primary School, West Dunbartonshire. The setting is registered for 30 children, five children aged 0-2 years, nine children aged 2-3 years and 16 children aged three years to those not yet attending school. The setting provides a range of flexible places and hours for children and their families over a 50-week period.

1.3 Leadership of change

very good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher values the ELCC as part of the whole school campus. He includes the nursery in the school's long term aims to improve outcomes for all learners. He works effectively with the principal early learning and childcare officer to support the ELCC team to embed the school's vision and values of 'Learning, Playing and Discovering Together' into daily practice. These senior leaders undertake regular shared monitoring visits to support practitioners. This is having a positive impact on continuous improvements to the quality of their work.
- All practitioners have clearly defined leadership roles and responsibilities within a culture of distributed leadership. This is supporting practitioners to take forward initiatives and focus areas identified in the improvement plan. Practitioners are well involved in continuous professional learning. For example, they are developing pathways to support children's early literacy and numeracy skills, and improving their approaches for emotional and social wellbeing. The impact of these on children's learning is being carefully monitored using attainment data, which is analysed on a termly basis by the visiting central support teacher. As a result, attainment across the early level is improving. Practitioners should continue to collect and use data to monitor the impact of changes to children's progress over time.
- Practitioners work very well together and have effective team working. They are very reflective and respond positively in a solution-focused way when required. They value each other's strengths and the contributions they make to the team.
- Practitioners engage in a range of collegiate activity and professional learning. This is increasing their knowledge and skills and supports them to initiate and improve their practice. Recent problem based learning and Forest School training have resulted in positive changes to the way they plan for children's learning. They also visit other early learning and childcare centres in the locality to share good practice and engage in moderation activities. Practitioners should ensure they make more use of national guidance to support their moderation of children's work.
- The improvement plan contains relevant priorities for the ELCC. The team meets regularly to engage in self-evaluation and to monitor the progress and impact of the improvement plan.

This ensures a suitable pace of change and positive outcomes for children. Moving forward, parents and children need to be involved more fully in evaluating the quality of the ELCC.

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 develop positive relationships with those children aged under three within a welcoming, nurturing environment. Children and families' individual needs inform the settling-in process. Practitioners' observations support and inform planning and take account of children's age and stage of development. Children engage in a range of learning experiences both indoors and outdoors.
- Relationships in the 3-5 years playroom are nurturing and positive. As a result, children are safe and secure. Overall, children are enthusiastic and motivated to learn, with most engaged fully in their learning. They are happy and confident within the ELCC and are learning to be responsible, for example, when navigating the stairs going outdoors. Children have quality daily access to outdoor learning through free flow play and planned outings to the forest.
- Children engage in a range of learning experiences through planned problem based learning, spontaneous and free play opportunities. Practitioners ensure that the environment provides provocations for children's learning which are linked to the current focus, alongside a range of resources, which promote independent learning. Children enjoy spending time at the mixing station making playdough and learning about the consistency of the dough. They play confidently with their peers outdoors, for example, making pancakes in the mud kitchen. Practitioners should continue to develop further children's creativity and resilience by providing richer experiences indoors and outdoors. These experiences should be sufficiently challenging and allow children to think through solutions for themselves.
- Practitioners have responsive relationships with all children and use praise and encouragement to promote a sense of achievement. They engage and listen effectively to children, supporting and encouraging them to talk about their ideas. Practitioners use open-ended questions very well to support children's learning and encourage them to think through solutions for themselves. Children engage well in digital learning through the interactive whiteboard and tablet computer. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop further approaches to involving children in digital learning.
- Practitioners know individual children very well and capture observations of their learning to inform responsive planning and next steps. Children's observations were previously shared in their learning journal folders, however the setting has recently introduced online learning journals. This process was trialled by a few parents before being rolled out further and initial feedback has been very positive. Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress and contribute to their next steps. The setting's arrangements for children's transition into, across and from the setting ensures continuity and progression in their learning. Children's prior learning and learning from home is taken into full account.

- When planning children's learning, practitioners take good account of experiences and outcomes, using a problem based methodology. Children can engage with their peers and work as a team. Practitioners should continue to develop ways to involve all children fully in planning and leading their own learning. The recent introduction of plan, do, review is a positive start in engaging children in leading learning. Practitioners have tracking and monitoring procedures, with a specific focus on literacy and numeracy. They track literacy and numeracy effectively using local authority guidance. The data collected informs individual children's next steps and is also used to evaluate interventions.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners plan well for children's learning using the national guidance Pre-Birth to Three and Curriculum for Excellence. There is a curriculum rationale across the ELCC and school, which supports effectively continuity and progression in learning. The Gartocharn skills based approach to learning is shared across the campus. Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing are seen as everyone's responsibility and are promoted well throughout the setting.
- Practitioners continue to reflect on their environment as they embrace fully free flow between indoors and outdoors. They have identified correctly the need to review the balance of resources across the whole environment. Children are offered a range of outdoor opportunities in the forest, which should continue to be child led. Practitioners should continue to take full advantage of their "Cabin in the Woods" as identified in the school improvement plan.
- Practitioners use the local environment effectively to enrich children's learning and extend their awareness of the world around them. Children have good opportunities to engage in learning for sustainability. The ELCC has achieved its third Eco-Schools Scotland Green Flag and children engage in a range of planting and growing experiences. Practitioners and children use the poly tunnel and garden planters appropriately to grow fruit and vegetables. Partnership working enhances children's awareness of the world of work, with parents sharing their knowledge and skills.
- The children's transitions into school are very well planned and start from the beginning of the academic year. Staff relationships across the early level and beyond are founded on mutual respect. Practitioners and teachers engage in ongoing moderation and professional dialogue to support learners. Individual children's progress in literacy and numeracy is collated and passed to the school. This supports continuity and progression in children's learning.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- See choice QI

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- The setting has a very caring and welcoming ethos. Practitioners know children and families very well and all relationships within the setting are based on nurture and respect. This creates a positive environment for children's learning and promotes effectively their emotional wellbeing.
- Children are happy, safe and secure in the setting. They are developing friendships and are very considerate of each other in their play. Children are developing a strong sense of teamwork as they learn to share, negotiate and help each other. Practitioners promote positive behaviour through role modelling and through community builder activities. They use praise effectively to recognise children's positive behaviour and promote their self-esteem.
- Helpfully, key workers meet individually with parents before children join the setting. This allows them to form relationships and understand the child and their individual family circumstances. Practitioners support individual children very well throughout the setting. All children have a care plan, which is developed in close consultation with families to ensure individual children's needs are met. Practitioners review these plans regularly with parents. Children who require additional support with their learning are very well supported in the inclusive setting. They also benefit from input from other professional agencies.
- Children are highly independent in their care routines. For example, putting on their all-weather clothing before going outdoors and clearing away their dishes after snack and lunch. They now need to develop further their independence and sense of responsibility through taking on leadership roles.
- Practitioners are aware of statutory requirements and their professional responsibility in fulfilling them. Practitioners engage in regular professional learning, which supports them and keeps their knowledge up to date.
- Practitioners have an understanding of children's rights and the wellbeing indicators. Children are developing their understanding of how to keep safe and are involved in undertaking risk assessment, for example, on visits to the forest. Practitioners provide healthy snacks and lunches. Snack and meal times are positive, nurturing, social experiences where children are encouraged to try new foods. Children take part in the emotional check-in each day, which is supporting them to be aware of their own feelings. There is daily free flow access to a well-resourced outdoor area. Here, children can engage in energetic play and develop their physical skills. Children also take part in a weekly sports session where they benefit from a programme of planned activities to develop sports skills. The setting should continue to consider how to develop the language and understanding of the wellbeing indicators with children and parents in meaningful ways.

- All children and families are treated with respect in a fair and just manner. As identified by the setting, practitioners should develop further opportunities to increase children's awareness of diversity and discrimination through developmentally appropriate experiences.

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

Children aged 0-3

- Children are settled and feel safe and secure in their environment. They enjoy exploring a range of natural materials indoors and outdoors. Children are developing their language and communication skills well and are beginning to express their needs and wants. The youngest children are developing further their physical skills through daily outdoor walks and play.

Children aged 3-5

- Overall, most children are making good progress in language and communication, with a few making very good progress. Children understand and use words such as predict, explore and investigate in their conversations and can clap or tap out the syllables in words. Most children engage well in conversations with practitioners and peers during free play. During the inspection activity, most children approached inspectors with confidence and engaged in dialogue about their learning. Children are developing their fine motor skills as they engage in early mark-making. Their drawings and mark-making are valued and this is having a positive impact on their engagement in early writing experiences. A few children enjoy writing their name, letters and numbers. The majority of children choose to read books for their own enjoyment and can retell familiar stories using picture clues. Children would benefit from a wider range of books across the ELCC, for example, recipe books.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children are developing their skills in counting and number recognition through daily routines and experiences. Most children can confidently count to ten and beyond, increasingly using loose parts to support them. Children use the language of measure confidently, for example, as they estimated the volume of water needed to fill watering cans outdoors. They display an awareness of shape and colour in their environment and use the language well. Children are developing problem solving skills, for example designing boats and bridges to take the three little pigs back to the island. Children need to continue to develop and apply their awareness and skills in numeracy and mathematics across the setting and also apply these to real life contexts.
- Almost all children are happy, settled, and are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They share their feelings through daily emotion check-ins. Children understand what makes them happy or sad. They take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, displaying good hygiene skills, including tooth brushing. Children engage in a positive snack and lunchtime routine, taking responsibility for serving themselves and clearing away dishes. Children are

developing their physical skills well, including climbing the rope ladder on the climbing frame, using the balance beams and negotiating slopes and spaces to run. Children now need to develop further their progress in social and emotional wellbeing.

- Children are enthusiastic learners who are making good progress in their learning. Tracking and monitoring information shows progress over time for all children. Children are supported to celebrate success through sharing their work with their peers and parents. Children's individual achievements are celebrated and shared in a number of ways. This includes, on the achievement wall and through online profiling. Children's progress is shared regularly with parents.
- Children who require additional support to access the curriculum fully are effectively supported through an inclusive ethos. Potential barriers to effective learning are quickly identified, this is allowing all children to make the best possible progress in their learning. Children clearly make progress and integrate very well. This was evident in practice. The effective use and sharing of information and data is leading to successful outcomes for all children.

Choice of QI: 2.7 Partnerships

- Engagement of parents and carers in the life of the setting
- The promotion of partnerships
- Impact on children and families

- The setting has highly effective partnerships with parents. Parents feel very welcome and play an active role in the life of the setting. For example, through social events, Parent Council, community events and fundraising. Recent trials of a new online journal for children in the 3-5 room were supported by meaningful engagement with a small number of parents. They shared that the online journal successfully increased their awareness of their child's learning. This has now been rolled out to all parents with an information session planned to share the key features of the system. Overall, parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires are very happy with their experience at Gartocharn Early Learning and Childcare Centre.
- Partnership working is an area of strength across the setting, as a result promoting positive outcomes for children. Visits from the library bus, health professionals, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and links with the local community, support effective partnership work. Links with local establishments support practitioners to engage in moderation and reflect on practice. Parents as partners are supporting children to develop an awareness of the wider world of work.
- The setting has very positive communication systems with parents, including the use of a notice board, newsletters and daily dialogue. Parents engage increasingly with their children's newly introduced online learning journal, which keeps them abreast of their child's learning and progress. Home learning experiences are supporting children and parents to learn together at home.

1. Quality of care and support

Staff knew children very well and had built positive, trusting relationships with them. There was a clear ethos of partnership with parents in planning and reviewing care and support as well as learning and development. Personal plans were in place for every child. These clearly identified children's preferences and interests, individual needs and strategies for meeting these needs. Plans also demonstrated how joint working with other agencies and professionals was embraced to ensure children benefited from their specialist knowledge and skills where this was necessary. This ensured that children's needs, as agreed in their personal plans, were fully met, and their wishes and choices respected. It also demonstrated how care and support was well coordinated when it was provided by more than one organisation.

The service had strong links with the local community and used these links to enhance play and learning experiences for children. This included using the knowledge and skills of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Environment Trust and local businesses amongst others. Alongside curriculum planning, this provided opportunities for children in the three to five room to have fun as they developed their skills and knowledge. This could be further enhanced by reviewing the balance of child and adult led experiences, the promotion of problem solving opportunities which occur naturally through play, and consideration of more 'in the moment' planning.

Younger children benefited from the sensitive interactions of staff, which encouraged them to explore, and supported achievement in all areas of their development. Staff were attuned to the needs of the youngest children and provided lots of physical reassurance. Cuddles were readily available ensuring children felt nurtured and secure.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

Three playrooms provided good spaces for play and were well laid out to meet the needs of the children in each age group; under two years, two to three years and three to five years. Stage appropriate resources were available. In the rooms for younger children, care had been taken to present resources at different levels to ensure they were accessible to children at different stages of physical development; crawling, cruising around furniture and walking independently. In the two to three years room, drapes had been used to create defined play areas for children to explore. There were areas where children could 'hide' if they wanted to spend time alone. We discussed the benefits of cosy, hiding areas with baby room staff. They agreed this would enhance experiences for the youngest children by encouraging their natural curiosity.

Appropriate consideration had been given to room layouts and resources to ensure the inclusion of children with additional needs. This included simple changes such as additional sensory experiences. This meant that the indoor environment was adapted, equipped and furnished to meet the needs of all children and that they had access to a range of good quality resources.

The oldest group had free flow access to an outdoor area, which provided a good extension to the playroom. Suitable resources were available which included raised planters where vegetables and flowers had been grown. Children confidently changed into outdoor, waterproof suits and wellies;

however, space to do this was limited and impacted on the indoor play space. Changing out of wet, muddy footwear in the playroom also had the potential to impact on the cleanliness and hygiene of the playroom during inclement weather. Staff told us these challenges had been recognised and solutions were being considered.

The baby room also had direct access to a small outdoor area. Staff told us about plans to develop this area to include a sensory garden and sand play. This would enhance their play environment. In addition, the nursery had access to the school grounds, which provided excellent potential for exploring the natural world outdoors.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

3. Quality of staffing

Staff worked very well together and modelled positive relationships for children. Nursery staff were integrated into the wider school team and made good use of the skills and knowledge of others for the benefit of the children. This was particularly evident in the extended transition arrangements for children moving from nursery to primary.

A system of professional support and supervision was in place, which ensured individual professional goals were considered alongside the needs of the service. A variety of learning opportunities had been accessed. Staff confidently told us how these had positively impacted on their practice and outcomes for children. In addition, staff were motivated to seek out development opportunities independently and had attended training in their own time. This demonstrated a commitment to developing and improving professional competence and skills to ensure children experienced quality care and support.

Staff were aware of a range of best practice guidance. They used time at staff meetings to discuss such guidance and how it should be used to inform practice in the nursery. This time was also used to share learning from training. This promoted consistency throughout the service as people worked well together and were open to learning from others.

All staff were registered with the relevant professional body and demonstrated an awareness of professional codes of practice.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4. Quality of management and leadership

A very strong ethos of inclusion was evident; nursery staff identified as part of the wider school team and campus. The management team promoted the sharing of skills and mutual professional respect.

A very good system of self-evaluation was in place, which ensured an understanding of strengths as well as areas for improvement. Staff told us how they participated in self-evaluation and had regular opportunities to reflect on the progress of the improvement plan. Staff in the three to five playroom told us how they worked closely with the nursery and primary one teachers to ensure consistency across the early level of the curriculum. Parents told us that the headteacher regularly provided information updating them on the progress of the school improvement plan and

his overarching five-year plan. This meant that children benefited from a culture of continuous improvement, with robust and transparent quality assurance processes.

There was a very good understanding of child protection procedures and measures for safeguarding children. Robust systems were in place to monitor management related tasks. This included very good auditing processes for incidents and accidents, risk assessments, the management of medication and the review of professional body registration. These processes and procedures promoted the safety and wellbeing of children.

Partnership with parents was at the heart of the service. Parents were very engaged in the work of the nursery. A nursery parent council had been developed and parents were involved in leading projects such as the eco-schools initiative. A recent development had been the trialling of the 'SEE-SAW' app. This was an application, which supported parental engagement in their child's learning and development as well as including them in their child's nursery experiences. A few parents piloted this and were engaged in considering the benefits and suitability of this for the nursery. This demonstrated how parents were actively encouraged to be involved in improving the service, in a spirit of genuine partnership.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had one requirement and one recommendation. These have now 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.