

Summarised inspection findings

Bellsbank Primary School Early Childhood Centre

East Ayrshire Council

19 November 2019

Key contextual information

Bellsbank Early Childhood Centre (ECC) provides a service from a community wing attached to the main school building. The school building is the only community facility in this rural location. The team now includes two deputies, seniors, practitioners and community practitioners who work across the local area. The headteacher is responsible for the overall management of the work of the ECC. Children aged between six months and five years attend the setting on a variety of attendance patterns. From August 2018 the setting offered extended hours to families between 8am and 6pm. At the time of inspection, there were 65 children on the roll. Since August 2018, the team have managed the introduction of flexible attendance patterns, increased hours and changes to roles and responsibilities. During this time, there has also been a particularly challenging time with staff numbers. A new purpose-built school and ECC centre is under construction within the school grounds. This restricts access to outdoor spaces. A temporary area for this purpose has been secured within the school grounds and is shared with the primary school.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

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 long established vision, values and aims are shared with the whole school. They are displayed at the entrance to the ECC. The shared approach to supporting families within the community is evident in the work of the whole team. Senior leaders recognise that expansion, and a move to new premises, provide an opportunity to refresh their values and aims. This will ensure current children, families and partners understand and can relate to these. This will support everyone to work together in a focused way that ensures the very best possible outcomes for each child.
- Senior leaders have developed new systems to monitor and self-evaluate aspects of the quality of their work. This included visits to other settings and seeking advice from the local authority. New systems are not yet fully implemented, or leading to improvements in the overall quality of work of the team. Strategic planning and self-evaluation for improvement needs to involve actively all practitioners, children and partners. The management team have been working together to clarify roles and responsibilities. There is an improvement plan within the setting that includes specific actions around expansion of hours and improvements in literacy work. The team should ensure all targets and monitoring evaluates the impact of changes on children's learning and outcomes for families.
- Practitioners reflect on their practice. They have made a positive start to using the national self-evaluation framework, How good is our early learning and childcare? (HGIOELC?). Recently, practitioners have had a specific focus on learning and teaching. Practitioners are honest and reflective as they accurately identify necessary changes. This has led to positive improvements to the routine, structure and experiences offered to children under three. Changes have improved behaviour, engagement in learning and overall quality of children's experience. Recently, the team have identified and piloted changes related to the start of the

day. This work should continue with a clear emphasis on the impact on children's learning of changes to routines and use of outdoor spaces. All members of the team should be responsible for identifying, planning and evaluating the impact of improvements. At present, a few practitioners take responsibility for important areas of work, such as developing children's communication and early literacy skills. We saw that this work was supporting children, families and other professionals to note and celebrate improvements in children's skills. Now that the team is settled, this work should be extended to other previously agreed areas of distributed leadership.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

Children aged under three years

- Children under three are very settled and content in the setting. They have formed secure attachments with adults. The team tune into, and respond quickly, to children's individual preferences and needs. Practitioners adapt their vocabulary and interactions well to individual children's stage of development. Practitioners rightly prioritise experiences to support communication skills. Singing, rhymes and stories are a frequent feature of their work. Practitioners recognise the importance of increasing recent work with natural and open-ended resources to promote children's imagination and curiosity. A few children would benefit from more time to follow their own interests and deepen their learning. The team recognise they need to provide more scope for children to enjoy daily high quality outdoor learning.

Children aged over three years

- Practitioners are warm, welcoming and nurturing in their interactions with all children. The team have created a culture of respect for families and their individual circumstances. Relationships with parents and children are very positive and reflect the setting's core values of respect, compassion, fairness and inclusion. As a result, children feel secure, settled and safe within the setting.
- Children access a range of resources and learning experiences within the playroom, and when timetabled to go outdoors. Despite the current limitations to the playground, consideration should be given to allowing children increased access to the outdoors on a daily basis. Practitioners encourage children to make choices during spontaneous play. Consideration should be given to extending the balance of planned, purposeful activities to better address children's identified next steps across a wider range of areas.
- Children could be more actively involved in the daily routine of the centre. Children are becoming independent through a range of everyday experiences, such as helping at snack. Children frequently select from, and move, resources between different areas of the playroom. There is scope to increase opportunities for children to set up equipment and to take increased leadership roles. Most children play well together and are developing confidence as they learn to regulate their behaviour and play alongside their friends. Children demonstrate a level of concentration appropriate to their stage of development. Positive intervention from most practitioners supports them to sustain interest for extended periods of time. A few children concentrate well as they explore characteristics of insects using microscopes. Children take turns and work together while weighing and selling fruit and vegetables in their shop. As planned, children would benefit from more 'real life' experiences and opportunities to participate in the wider community. We discussed with the team how their plans should link to opportunities for children to apply or develop further their skills.

- The majority of practitioners use open questions well to promote and sustain children's curiosity. In the best examples, a few practitioners make good use of high order questioning techniques to deepen children's understanding. The team should work together to improve their skills in using appropriate questioning techniques. This will support them to build upon children's natural motivation and support depth in learning more consistently in their work.
- Children can access computers within the playroom, however, there is considerable scope to increase opportunities for children to use digital technologies to support and extend their learning.
- The team have made improvements to the ways they plan learning that responds to children's interests. Practitioners are currently exploring ways of capturing children's ideas and interests using floor books. Children make decisions about things they would like to learn about using voting sticks. This is most meaningful when it links to investigating children's questions about, for example, recent work about the construction of the new school. Small group floor books provide some evidence of children's literacy and numeracy skills developing over time. In the best examples, children's achievements are captured in personal profiles that include photographs of significant learning. Parents can access these when in the setting. Practitioners are at the early stages of involving the children in using their profiles to share and reflect on their learning. The team should continue to take forward their recent improvements to responsive planning. There is also considerable scope to increase children's role in leading and discussing their own learning.
- Practitioners track children's progress in a number of ways, for example using the skills development record, literacy assessment tool, communication champion assessment records and developmental milestones. This information supports practitioners to make sound judgements about children's progress and allows them to respond appropriately to ensure learning opportunities meet the needs of individual children. As planned, the whole team should develop their skills and confidence in using these systems to identify and meet gaps in children's progress.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners utilise national guidance to plan for children's learning across the curriculum. Processes for planning take account of children's interests and needs and are flexible and responsive to children. Practitioners now need to set higher expectations and aspirations for children and reflect this in their planning. Practitioners should also plan an improved balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated learning opportunities. This will ensure they build on children's prior learning and skills.
- All practitioners take responsibility for ensuring children's wellbeing and developing early literacy and numeracy skills. Guidance from those in practitioner leadership roles, such as the communication champion and numeracy champion, help the team to further support children to develop and apply skills in different situations.
- Practitioners make good use of the local community and visitors to enrich and extend children's learning about the world around them. This includes the use of the school building, community wing, local shops, park and woodland. Visitors include a range of health and local community personnel who work in partnership to share children's progress with parents.
- Current development work with an external provider is supporting changes to pedagogy in primary one. A member of the ECC team works in partnership with colleagues to support children to work together. In previous years, this work has also included shared learning projects throughout the year. Currently, children from nursery and school spend time together in the ECC setting and within primary one. As this new work develops, it will be important that all practitioners understand the aim and pedagogy of their transition project. The team should work together to evaluate the impact on 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

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

- There is a supportive and welcoming atmosphere in the setting. Children and extended families feel valued as individuals and are included in all aspects of the setting. This includes family cookery workshops, classes for parents, individual meetings and frequent informal 1-1 discussions. As a result, there is a high level of trust and respectful relationships between children and families. This means the team draw on a detailed knowledge about children's wellbeing and home circumstances to inform and implement agreed support plans. Children are safe, healthy and becoming more active through a range of activities. Careful monitoring of attendance, and prompt actions to offer support or adapt routines, ensure children and families have a positive, manageable experience. As a result, interruptions to children's participation are removed and the potential impact on children's progress is minimised. We discussed with the team the important contribution continuing access to outdoor learning can make during the transition to new premises.
- Most children enjoy the company of friends and cooperate with adults. All practitioners model positive behaviour. A few children who find it difficult to share space and resources are supported to follow nursery rules that have been developed with children. Where children find it difficult to cope with change or transitions most practitioners follow agreed strategies. This means that children are supported to begin to regulate their emotions and understand the impact of their actions on others. Parents are very comfortable sharing information about their children with practitioners. Families and stakeholders shared with us the positive impact of support from the setting had made to their child's development and to the wellbeing of the whole family.
- The team have been working to encourage children of all ages to participate more in decisions about learning. The team should now consider a rights based approach to supporting children to express their opinions and influence more aspects of their centre.
- The team have rightly identified the need to increase the profile of the wellbeing principles and indicators that clearly underpin their work. Recent work to develop a display linking the indicators to children's experience is at a very early stage. As this work develops, the team should work with children, families and partners to develop their shared use and understanding of the indicators. We discussed with the team how this could be done through a wider range of meaningful and real life contexts.
- Seniors and practitioners understand and comply with a range of statutory requirements and codes of practice. The team should continue to deepen and maintain their knowledge about good practice and guidelines to support them to meet their statutory duties.
- Practitioners work with parents, professional such as home visitors and speech and language therapists and educational psychologists, to agree and provide additional support. Effective

partnership working between the communication champion and home visitor actively involves parents in supporting and celebrating children's developing skills. There is an inclusive ethos in the setting and children with specific medical or learning needs are supported to make progress in line with their stage of development. Senior leaders should continue to carefully monitor and track the progress of children who have additional barriers to learning. As discussed, recent work to monitor the experiences of children who attend for an extended day should be continued. It is important to ensure equity of provision for all children regardless of their attendance pattern.

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

- Across the centre, children are making good progress in communication and early language. Most children are developing their listening and talking skills appropriate to their stage of development. A few children are extending their range of vocabulary as they begin to put word together to form simple sentences. A small group of children are eager to talk to adults and to share experiences at welcome time. Children enjoy, and benefit from, the range of opportunities to mark make. They write and share their shopping lists as they play in their 'shop'. Most children enjoy regularly looking at books in the cosy reading area or for research as they discuss and find out more about insects.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress with early mathematics. Children enjoy playing number games and the majority are becoming confident in recognising numerals and counting to ten. A few children are developing their understanding of volume and use the language of measure as they care for plants. The majority of children would benefit from increased challenge and opportunities to consolidate their understanding and skills.
- Children are making good progress in important aspects of their health and wellbeing. They remind one another of the importance of washing their hands and wearing sun cream. They can give examples of healthy food choices at snack time. Through outdoor play children are developing their gross motor skills as they push prams up the steep slope, play with older children with balls and hoops. They enjoy the freedom and challenge of the larger spaces. They develop their fine motor skills using threading activities and when helping to make and use playdough. Practitioners support children well as they develop their resilience and perseverance. Children are beginning to understand and express their feelings. As discussed, it will be useful to maximise opportunities for children to develop their independence.
- Children's progress over time is captured through their individual profiles. Through reviews of profiles, floor books, displays and professional dialogue children are making good progress across several areas of their learning. Practitioners recognise that there is scope to develop the use of profiles and floor books further with children and families. This will help ensure children understand and are meaningfully involved in what they need to do next to improve their skills. Practitioners have rightly identified the need to improve the ways they capture and track children's achievements from beyond the setting. This would further enhance their discussions about progress.

- The communication champion works in close partnership with community health professionals. As a result, children have made good progress with listening and attention, speech, social communication and understanding of language. Targets are reviewed with practitioners and parents and tracking information indicates the very positive impact of these interventions. Almost all children identified with communication difficulties at initial assessment make significant progress. It will be important that this good practice is integrated into the work of the wider team. This will ensure it informs opportunities for children to apply their skills in motivating contexts across all areas of the curriculum.
- The team are very aware of a range of factors, including socio-economic influences that may be a barrier to access and participation. They take good account of these and take action to minimise or remove issues in a sensitive and respectful way.

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 very caring and respectful relationships, which practitioners have developed with families, mean that parental engagement on a daily basis is very positive. Parents know they are welcome and valued in the setting. This means they feel able to share their views and important information about children's wellbeing and progress. Given the emphasis on engagement of parents and carers in the work and life of the setting, it is important that the team evaluate and celebrate the impact of parent's involvement on children's progress.
- The setting works closely with a wide range of partners to support children and families. For example, health visitors, speech and language therapists, active school's staff and community learning and development staff work alongside practitioners to provide a range of professional learning opportunities for practitioners and targeted and universal support for children. As a result, outcomes for children are positively enhanced.
- In partnership with the speech and language therapy service, the setting's communication champion has developed a range of opportunities to involve, support and encourage more parents to work in close partnership to support children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Parents are provided with helpful information on child development and strategies to support progress at home are modelled. Almost all parents report an increase in confidence in supporting their child's development through involvement in these opportunities such as, 'talking toddlers', 'chatter matters', 'talky tots parties' and storytelling. The parent communication board located within the community wing enables staff to signpost families to appropriate help and advice from a range of agencies, including NHS information. Increasingly, this is supporting families from the wider community, in addition to families involved with the setting. Information on children's learning is shared, such as signing to support communication and nursery rhyme of the week, to enable parents to learn alongside their children. Moving forward, there is a need for all aspects of this work to agree how they will evaluate, measure and celebrate the impact of this partnership working.
- Parents' workshops, planned meetings and summary reports at the end of each year, give parents an overview of their child's experiences and learning in areas such as literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Parents are aware that they can access children's individual profiles. The setting needs to continue to encourage parents to share experiences from outside the setting in order to get a more holistic picture of the child.

1. Quality of care and support

During this inspection, we considered whether children and their families had access to the right support at the right time. In addition, we looked at individual children's personal plans, as well as evidencing that children and families were listened to, were safe and protected from harm. We found that outcomes in these areas were good (Health and Social Care Standards 1.2, 1.13, 1.15, 1.23, 2.17, 3.1 and 3.20).

We observed staff interacting positively with children providing reassurance, support and comfort. Children were relaxed, confident and active in accessing all opportunities available to them. We found the nursery involved parents and partner agencies to ensure children benefited from the right support at the right time. Children and families had access to a nurturing approach, from staff who understood nurturing principles.

We sampled personal plans that were in place. We found most reflected individual personal outcome focused evaluations of children's learning. Management and staff should continue to monitor and develop personal plans to ensure they focus on children and their parent's aspirations with regards to health, welfare and safety and then link these to the planning, evaluation and observation cycles.

During our inspection, we found that children's play in the 3-5 room was often interrupted and adult directed. We discussed reviewing the pace and balance of the day within this room. Staff should support children to be leaders in their own learning through expanding child led play to support and develop children's curiosity, creativity and inquiry skills. At the previous inspection carried out on 28 March 2018, we recommended management and staff review implementation of play experiences through supporting children to plan and lead their own learning and provide meaningful experiences which motivate them. Through our observations, and evidence presented, we did not find sufficient evidence to support this recommendation. Therefore, this recommendation has not been met and remains. (See recommendation 1)

We sampled medication and found some procedures were not in line with best practice guidance. In order to ensure all children's medication is recorded and administered safely the management should continue to implement improvements made to the recording and auditing systems. These should be in line with Care Inspectorate's best practice guidance: 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services'.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

During this inspection we considered how the environment supported children to direct their own play and learning. We looked closely at whether children had access to a wide range of experiences and resources within a safe indoor and outdoor environment. We found that the environment was offering adequate outcomes and experiences for children in this area (HSCS 1.32, 2.27, 5.17).

The premises provided a welcoming environment. Children's work was displayed throughout. The layout of the service allowed children to play independently and also to meet in both small and large groups.

We found the entry system to be secure and staff to be vigilant in ensuring only those authorised to enter the building did so. We found that each room kept a register of children attending and were updated as children were dropped off and picked up. Visitors to the service also signed in and out this meant staff could monitor who was in the service at any given time and who they needed to account for in an emergency.

We discussed with management the process of the fire evacuation plan specifically around a locked gate. We have asked that this be reviewed in line with the fire safety officer and the local authority health and safety team.

We recognise that the service is in the process of being allocated a new build centre within the next year and we found this reflected within the current environment. Throughout the service, we found the range of resources for developing children's interest, creativity and imagination to be limited. We found some elements of 'Loose parts play' had been introduced to extend play experiences for children. To expand further children's experiences, the service would benefit from referring to 'Building the ambition' and 'loose part play' to develop all environments. This will support and encourage children with problem solving, creativity and collaborative play. We acknowledge that management and staff are continually working on developing areas.

We observed that some of the children throughout the centre had daily opportunities to access the environment outdoors. The outdoor area at present is shared with the primary school which, at times, limited the children's access. The designated area enabled the children to run around and engage with peers in the fresh air. We found staff were beginning to offer experiences for children to be creative, explore and investigate. We spoke with staff and management in regards to reviewing a more regular access to the outdoors which would support richer transitions for children from the indoor to outdoor environment, allowing them to freely lead and direct their own play.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

3. Quality of staffing

During this inspection, we considered whether staff were trained, competent, skilled and able to reflect on their practice to provide the right care and support for children at the right time. We considered how skilled staff were in supporting children to resolve conflict and build positive relationships with others. We found that the outcomes for children in this area were good (HSCS 1.19, 2.15, 3.14, 3.17).

Staff were welcoming, open and honest during the inspection process. We recognise the service has had a period of challenge in relation to staffing consistency. The team spoke openly in regards to the recent changes within the service and were reflective in regards to the journey they are on. They felt supported by management and as a team. Relationships were developing to support positive outcomes for children and families.

Systems were in place to carry out annual appraisal meetings with staff. These helped to set targets for staff to meet, and to identify, their training needs to assist further them in their role within the service. Management should continue to encourage staff to be reflective during these discussion, recognising meaningful next steps in their development journey which in turn will improve outcomes for children.

Staff knew children and their families well and understood the importance of building trusting relationships. We found relationships with parents to be positive. Parents had opportunities to be involved with their child through attending, 'wee Wednesdays', stay and play sessions and offered

support from the community practitioners. Staff valued the connections they had with families and endeavoured to involve them more in the future life of the centre. Parents commented positively on the staff team and the care and support their child received. Parents told us they could approach staff with ease and that staff and management were kind and friendly in their approach.

Staff recognised when children required additional support and we saw evidence that showed us the impact of early approaches to supporting children's speech, language and communication needs. Progression had been tracked and shared with parents. Through the use of a communication board, tips and strategies were shared with parents.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4. Quality of management and leadership

During this inspection we considered how well children and their families benefitted from a culture of continuous improvement. We found that the service was good in this area (Health and Social Care Standards 1.2, 2.3, 4.11, 4.19 and 4.23).

We recognise there have been changes within the management team since the last inspection. We found that the long-standing practitioners had welcomed and embraced the newly appointed staff. Relationships are developing within the team and we found the team to be establishing good communication and working links. Management and staff within the nursery were keen to provide positive outcomes for children. They were committed to the development of the service working well together to ensure a joint approach between the nursery and primary school.

Weekly meetings gave management and staff informal opportunities to discuss what was going well and identify areas for improvement. We found that staff were involved in some leadership opportunities; they took on different areas of responsibility based on their skills and were keen to take these forward. The service should continue to develop leadership opportunities to promote a strong collegiate learning culture that secures improved outcomes for children.

We also identified that some areas for development. Recommendations outlined in the previous inspection report had not been fully met. We discussed how the management team could develop some processes and systems throughout the day to help assess the quality of the service and experiences for children.

Management and senior staff should continue to support changes and monitor the impact on outcomes for children to ensure continued improvements. At the previous inspection carried out on 28 March 2018, we asked management to progress with monitoring the work of staff and the service as a whole. We did not find sufficient evidence to support this recommendation. Therefore, this recommendation has not been met and remains. (See recommendation 2)

We found some policies and procedures were in place; however, these should be reviewed, updated and developed in line with legislation, local and national best practice guidelines. Staff should continue to be included in this process and the policies reviewed regularly.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had one requirement and four recommendations. From these, one requirements and two recommendations have been met. Outstanding issues relating to CI to provide details are carried forward in this inspection. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and two recommendations.

Recommendations

- Staff should enable and support children to plan and lead their own learning and provide meaningful experiences which motivate them and have fun playing and learning.
Health and Social Care Standards – 2.27: As a child, I can direct my own play and act in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.
- Management should progress with monitoring the work of staff and the service as a whole.
Health and Social Care Standards 4.23: I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

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.