

Summarised inspection findings

Muirhead Primary School and Early Years Centre

South Ayrshire Council

23 January 2024

Key contextual information

Muirhead Early Years Centre (the centre) is situated within Muirhead Primary School and serves the area of Muirhead in Troon, South Ayrshire. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the centre. Staffing in the nursery consists of a 1.0 FTE senior practitioner post, a part-time teacher and a team of practitioners. The centre has two playrooms and two outdoor spaces. Children attend the centre from 9am to 3pm, term-time. The centre is registered for 71 children aged from birth until they start primary school. The current roll is 28. Children attending are aged two and above. Almost all children access 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC).

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

Children under three

- Practitioners provide a calm and relaxing environment for children which is helping them to settle well. They make good use of natural and open-ended materials to support children to discover and investigate using their senses. Children explore the range of interesting experiences confidently and make choices about where they want to play. Practitioners' interactions are sensitive, nurturing and encouraging, which supports children's independence and confidence. Practitioners have a good understanding of child development. They use this to create an environment and provide experiences which support children's stage of development effectively.

Children over three

- Practitioners help children to understand their rights. For example, a few children can talk about their right to a name and to be safe. Practitioners have positive and respectful relationships with children and parents. Their nurturing approaches enable children to settle well, feel safe and secure within the centre.
- Almost all children engage well with a range of stimulating learning experiences both indoors and outdoors. Practitioners make good use of real-life objects, tools and natural materials to support children's curiosity and creativity. Children use open-ended materials and blocks well to build structures and to extend their imaginative play. They have time and space to develop their ideas and interests purposefully. Children develop independence as they get themselves dressed for outdoor play and help to prepare snack.
- Most practitioners use questions well to support and extend children's learning. Staff's professional learning has improved the quality of their interactions with children and learning spaces. Increasingly, practitioners' knowledge of early years pedagogy is supporting children to be independent and lead their play. They use interactive whiteboards effectively to enhance children's learning, for example, to research maps to follow their interest in pirates.

- Practitioners observe children at play and record key learning in children's individual learning journals. Overall, practitioners' individual observations identify the key skills children are developing. Practitioners should continue to ensure consistency in recording observations to demonstrate the significant learning of individual children. Practitioners meet weekly to discuss children's progress and identify next steps in learning. This supports responsive and intentional planning. Children have the opportunity to access their individual learning journals by using matrix bar codes. Practitioners should encourage and support children to reflect regularly on their achievements. This will help children to celebrate their successes and begin to recognise their next steps in learning.
- Each practitioner tracks the learning of their key group across the curriculum. Senior leaders collate this information to determine the progress of the oldest children. They should now build on this practice to ensure they gather this data on all children. This will allow them to demonstrate the progress all children make over time.
- In recent months, practitioners have reviewed and adapted approaches to planning for children's learning. They plan over different timescales using the experiences and outcomes from a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Moving forward, practitioners should continue to review, refine and streamline planning processes. Currently, planning for children's learning does not reflect fully the responsive approach staff use to enable children to follow their interests.
- Practitioners create individual plans for children who require additional support with their learning. They review these plans regularly with parents and as required with support agencies. This makes sure strategies they put in place continue to be effective in helping children to develop and learn.

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

Children under three

- Children make appropriate progress relevant to their stage of development. Increasingly, they are becoming independent. For example, they select resources and brush their teeth. Children confidently chop fruit when preparing snack and can identify that the fruit is becoming smaller. They enjoy singing familiar songs and rhymes. Children are learning to communicate in their own way to make their needs known, for example, using signs and gestures. They are beginning to match familiar objects when using the interactive whiteboard.

Children aged over three

- Most children make good progress in health and wellbeing. They enjoy friendships within the centre and are learning to share and take turns. Children demonstrate independence as they make choices and get ready for outdoor play. Children are skilled in peddling and steering their tricycles while they navigate obstacles. The majority of children are confident to express their feelings and emotions during the daily check-in. Practitioners should continue to support children to express how they feel in different contexts.
- In early communication, language and literacy, children make good progress. Most children engage in conversation with known adults and their friends. They have access to a range of books across the playroom to support their interests. Children listen attentively to stories and predict what might happen next. They are beginning to recognise rhyming words during songs and stories. A minority of children tap out the syllables of their name. As identified, practitioners should continue to support children to develop their pre-reading skills. Most children mark-make using a variety of tools and materials. They create black line drawings with increasing detail. The majority of children make attempts to 'write' their name.
- Most children make good progress in early numeracy and mathematics, with a few making very good progress. Most children count to 10 with a few counting beyond 10. They recognise numerals and a few identify amounts without counting objects one for one. Most children use relevant mathematical language during play. A few children use positional and directional language appropriately as they use programmable toys. Children would benefit from developing their skills further in gathering and displaying information and using money in real-life contexts.

- Children make good progress relevant to their stage of development. They are becoming confident and independent learners, gaining a range of skills for life and learning. Senior leaders use information gathered on children's learning to effectively report on the progress of the oldest children within the setting. Senior leaders should now ensure they report on the progress of all children.
- Practitioners recognise children's achievements from home and within the centre. Children demonstrate achievements such as being kind, working with others and specific skills such as writing their name. Practitioners use praise and encouragement to help children build on these skills and develop independence.
- All practitioners know their families very well and take account of individual children's circumstances. Practitioners recently identified a gap in children's learning in relation to rhyme. Practitioners have adapted learning spaces, experiences and their interactions to provide children with increased opportunities to explore rhyme in different contexts. As a result, children's skills in rhyme are improving. Practitioners plan support well for children with additional learning needs in partnership with support agencies. With this support, children make good progress in their development and learning.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

A nurturing, inclusive and rights respecting ethos had been established within the service. Staff knew children and their families very well. Children were confident as they experienced positive and supportive interactions from all staff. The nurturing approach meant staff were affectionate and children sought out cuddles which supported their emotional wellbeing. Staff were down at children's eye level and actively joined in with their play. As a result, children were comfortable, settled, and happy.

Personal plans considered the wellbeing indicators and information gathered was used to develop strategies to support individual children. We asked the manager to consider how this information could be collated and better stored to ensure easier access to all information. Children with additional support needs had support plans in place to ensure all staff were clear on sensitivities and how these were being supported. This meant that children were supported to progress and achieve.

Chronologies captured significant events in children's lives, which meant that staff had the right information to meet children's wellbeing needs. Feedback we received from parents/carers agreed they were fully involved in their child's care including developing and reviewing their personal plan.

Children benefitted from unhurried and well organised meals and snack times. Children's independence was well supported with opportunities to prepare food, set up, self-serve their food and tidy away their plates when finished. Staff used mealtimes as an opportunity to role model good social skills. Children had access to fresh drinks throughout the day. This supported them to be healthy, hydrated and nourished.

Staff were clear about their responsibilities in safeguarding children; however, staff would benefit from a refresher session on their role in reporting of concerns. Although not identified in the policy, safeguarding coordinators were identified and displayed at the entrance to the nursery. Regular medication audits meant that children's health needs were current. This ensured the service was meeting children's health needs.

Rooms were calm, with ample opportunity for children to rest or regulate their own emotions. Sleep beds were available for children who required them. As a result, children were happy and content with the pace of the day in the nursery. We noted that the temperature in the older children's room dropped during the day, this was caused by the open door/ free flow access to the outdoor space. We encouraged the service to consider ways that children who chose to remain indoors could do this in a warm environment, whilst not placing a barrier to the well-established free flow access to the outdoor space for children who enjoyed outdoor activities.

When children required personal care such as nappy changing, staff addressed this sensitively. This ensured that children's privacy was respected. Children's dignity was further fostered by staff supporting children with personal care, for example when wiping their noses. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was used effectively, and robust handwashing practices were seen across the nursery. This helped to ensure that children were safe and protected from infection.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun across a variety of experiences and were engaged in the indoor and outdoor environments for long periods of time. For example, a group of children were seen to be re-enacting 'Goldilocks and the three bears' in the home corner. Other children were creating pirate treasure maps of the outdoor area. Responsive planning was supporting children's interests. Staff were seen to use timely and well considered interactions to support and scaffold children's imagination and learning. Staff knew when to intervene to support play and learning. As a result, children were allowed to be leaders in their play and learning.

Language, literacy, and numeracy experiences were rich and woven throughout the provision. Staff had a very good understanding and creative approach to promoting these. For example, a variety of interesting objects promoted children's curiosity and sparked their imagination. There were extensive opportunities for children to mark make indoors and children were seen to be using these well. Staff were skilled at encouraging thinking and problem-solving using effective questioning, supporting children to deepen their learning.

A variety of tools and approaches were used to support children's communication and language development. Staff knew children well which ensured they knew the most appropriate form of communication and when to use them. This supported children's understanding and helped them to make choices and follow their interests.

Play was a good balance of planned and child-initiated experiences led by staff knowledge of children. The online platform 'Learning Journals' was used to capture children's experiences. Observations were in place, some highlighted individual children's achievements and identified next steps. There were some very good examples of this in the online journals. Children's trackers were kept up to date. As a result, children were supported to learn and develop at a pace that was right for them.

Staff used technology available within the setting to allow children access to their learning journals through QR codes. Parents have opportunities to upload home learning to the learning journals to afford children the opportunities to share these with staff. This ensured children's journey in nursery was well documented and allowed them to revisit and celebrate learning and experiences.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service was in a period of transition with a new management team. Although still in the very early stages, we found evidence that the new structure should have a very positive impact on service delivery and continue to deliver high quality outcomes for children and families. The head teacher was the registered manager of the service.

The headteacher had an aspirational vision for the future of Muirhead Early Years Centre. The service had aims, vision, and values which were shared with the primary school. The headteacher had already identified these as an area to develop within a short timescale. Children's and family's views and input had already been sought to support this.

Although there had been changes to management, there was a consistent staff team who had focused on providing a safe, nurturing, rights respecting environment where children have fun, were happy, included and were being supported to reach their full potential. As a result, we saw children who were developing and learning at a pace that was right for them in a happy and stimulating environment.

Parent views and suggestions supported the services ongoing improvements, meaning they were valued partners in the nursery. One parent we spoke to agreed that families were involved in a

meaningful way to help develop the setting, they felt listened to and comfortable in speaking out when required. The service valued the importance of working in partnership with families through clear communication and building positive relationships. Families were welcomed into the setting and staff took time to talk with them.

Informal monitoring of staff practice and the environment was undertaken. The service would benefit from formal monitoring and supervision to support more consistent approaches to observation, planning and tracking. Some staff supervision had taken place, which had supported staff skills, knowledge and understanding. Informal leadership roles had been identified and staff were motivated to do these well.

Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans were in place. Challenge questions effectively supported the staff team to identify areas for improvement and plan changes to support the development of practice. Self-evaluation would benefit from critical reflection to identify the next steps and the impact of these. We saw evidence of staff using key good practice documents. These documents should continue to be used to help shape the leadership, management and delivery of provision within the Centre.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

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.