

Summarised inspection findings

Tarbert Academy ELC

Argyll and Bute Council

6 May 2025

Key contextual information

Tarbert Academy Early Learning Centre (ELC) has its own designated space within the 2-18 school located in the village of Tarbert. The ELC serves the village and surrounding areas of Tarbert.

The ELC has one large playroom, a designated reception and a separate lobby area and free flow access to a large, enclosed garden. The setting is registered for 32 children aged from two years to those not yet attending school. Currently, 11 children aged three and 14 children aged four attend from between 8.50am – 3.15pm five days a week, term time.

The acting headteacher has overall responsibility for the quality of provision in the nursery. He delegates the leadership of the nursery to the depute headteacher primary who leads the nursery and primary department on a day-to-day basis. Staffing consists of four full time early years workers and one classroom assistant who works four hours each day.

The ELC became part of the school in 2000, further developments were made in 2019 to allow entitlement to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for be met, and again in August 2021 to accommodate two year olds.

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

- Most children and practitioners demonstrate well the values of respect, unity, achievement, nurture and kindness in their interactions with each other. For example, children ask how other children are feeling and hug each other to make them feel better. They explain that this is being kind and caring. Practitioners should support children to become more familiar with the language of the values within a meaningful context. This will ensure they become more fully embedded. Senior leaders and practitioners have correctly agreed the need to review the vision, values and aims of the setting, including a focus on children's rights, with families throughout the ELC and school as a priority.
- Practitioners work effectively as a team. This is based on positive relationships, and practitioners valuing each other's skills and knowledge. They work together to enhance the nursery through a commitment to reflect on and improve their practice. Their individual skills and designated leadership areas are beginning to influence change and build strength in the team. Examples include increasing community links, further developing children's language and social skills and improving learning environments. Senior leaders need to review roles and responsibilities and continue to build leadership capacity across the team. Staff should maximise the use of available time to monitor and evaluate existing practice and ensure that the spaces, interactions and experiences impact positively on children's progress.

- Senior leaders support practitioners well. They have identified the need to improve the quality of learning and identify and share effective practice as a priority. Senior leaders offer opportunities for a few early years workers to develop leadership capacity within the team. Senior leaders and practitioners should now keep abreast of current thinking in early years practice and pedagogy. There is a need to implement developmentally appropriate and progressive opportunities for children across the early level in the nursery class and school.
- Staff engage in termly self-evaluation. They have successfully developed a clear action plan outlining key points and measurable targets for improvements. Senior leaders and practitioners take part in regular professional dialogue around improvements. Moving forward, staff need to ensure that the pace of improvement impacts more effectively on outcomes for children. As a result of the improvements, most children are making better progress, however a minority of children do not benefit from high-quality learning experiences that meet their needs.

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

- Practitioners have established a positive and nurturing environment which supports children to feel valued, safe and secure. Practitioners take time to listen to children and get to know them as individuals. As a result, children are happy and confident. Practitioners gather important and helpful information from parents as children start at the nursery. They use this information to help children settle well. Children take part in regular walks around the local community. They are developing their understanding of healthy lifestyles, road safety awareness and an appreciation of nature. Practitioners have improved and widened the resources and spaces which make learning more accessible. They now need to develop quality play spaces indoors and outdoors further within the ELC. There is a need to improve the spaces and ensure they consistently challenge all children and improve engagement in learning through play.
- Almost all practitioners use a consistent approach effectively to encourage children to play well together and establish friendships between children. This is helping almost all children regulate their behaviour and engage positively as they play and learn.
- Practitioners interact sensitively with children in a supportive way. Most practitioners use commentary and questioning to encourage children to process their thinking and arrive at solutions for themselves. They support children to develop skills of independence and encourage perseverance in relation to self-help skills. A few children would benefit from increased interactions with adults to deepen their engagement in chosen tasks and as they move between learning spaces. Practitioners should continue to ensure there is an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning. Practitioners could develop further the impact of 'together time' during the sessions and make more use of staffing. This would help further their review of learning and inform intentional and responsive planning.
- All children have a profile that contains written observations, photographs and next steps in learning. Currently, children's profiles are work sheet heavy which limits children's engagement. As planned, practitioners should seek ways to make the folios more engaging for children. Children are not yet able to describe the learning process underpinning the evidence that's captured in their profiles. Children now need to reflect on their learning meaningfully to inform what they might want to learn next.
- Practitioners take appropriate account of children's interests when planning for learning. They use experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) appropriately and focus on learning across most areas of the curriculum. Planning for learning is at the early stages of exploring children's interests outwith literacy and numeracy.
- The team meet weekly to discuss children's experiences and learning. They use this information effectively to support planning for children's learning. Practitioners use local

authority tools well to track children's learning over time. This supports practitioners to identify the progress children are making since starting the ELC. Practitioners have identified the need to develop next steps in children's progress to ensure these are specific and measurable and can be easily shared with children. Practitioners should develop further the use of evaluative language to support them to evaluate children's learning effectively.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a range of play-based experiences across most areas of the curriculum. Influenced by children's interests, they focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, supported by progressive frameworks. Practitioner's use of the progression frameworks enables children to build on their prior learning. Practitioners should make greater use of digital technology to enhance learning and provide more challenge for children.
- All children benefit from daily access to the outdoor area if they wish, where they are curious and creative as they play and learn. They enjoy regular visits to the harbour and castle. Practitioners should continue to develop the indoor environment further to include an increased range of open-ended resources and natural materials.
- Children's transition into the ELC is supported by a well-considered induction programme. Children moving into school visit P1 classes and personal learning journals are shared with teaching staff. Primary seven 'Buddies' are identified for each child for the year. Practitioners and school staff should continue to work collaboratively to ensure progression in children's learning across early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents welcome the opportunities to play and learn with their child in the setting. These approaches provide opportunities to engage in conversations with staff about their child's progress. Practitioners keep parents fully informed about the life and work of the nursery. They do so through daily informal discussion at pick up and drop off times, children's profiles and regular reports. Practitioners use a range of strategies to seek the views of parents to help them identify areas for improvement in the setting. All practitioners value and respect parents as partners. Staff's close, trusting relationships with parents are a strength of the setting. Practitioners are exploring further ways to involve parents more in their children's learning.

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

satisfactory

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

- Practitioners have strong and nurturing relationships with children and families. They are positive role models and support children to become confident individuals. Practitioners encourage children to express themselves throughout the session. They take time to understand and use a range of strategies and resources to support children's emotional regulation. As a result, children know that they are valued and listened to and their views are acted upon.
- Most children are developing their independence skills well as they take turns or set the tables for lunch. All children benefit from a calm unhurried lunchtime experience. They engage fully in conversation with practitioners who sit with them and share the experience. They listen and talk well with their friends as they serve themselves and tidy up their dishes. Children could take on additional responsibilities such as, caring for resources and assessing potential risks in the ELC. Practitioners could support children to understand and develop an age-appropriate practical understanding of their health and wellbeing.
- Practitioners are confident in their knowledge of the statutory requirements in relation to child protection and safeguarding. They understand what is expected of them and they have undertaken relevant training. Practitioners understand children's care needs and children who may require support with learning. They work closely with parents to meet these needs. Senior leaders promptly seek advice from partner agencies where necessary. They provide effective support, plan targets and implement strategies to help children develop and to meet children's individual needs well.
- Practitioners promote inclusion and equality throughout the setting. They treat all children and families with respect. Practitioners could use resources to help children understand and celebrate more fully the diverse world they live in.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Almost all children make satisfactory progress in communication and early language. Children take turns to listen to each other and talk, sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings confidently with friends and adults. They increase their vocabulary as they take part in stories and songs in large groups. Children develop early writing skills as they access a range of mark making opportunities. The majority of children are keen to explore the formation of letters and words and write their names on drawings. Children are now ready to access a wider range of texts, explore environmental print and take part in a wider range of purposeful mark making.
- Most children make satisfactory progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Overall, children need more support to develop further their skills in all aspects of early numeracy and mathematics. The majority of children count confidently during play and routines. Most children can rote count to 10 and a few can count beyond this. A few are motivated adding single digits. Children explore volume and capacity while they play with outdoor water play filling, and emptying containers. They use relevant mathematical language with practitioners to describe shape, size and length. Children require more opportunities to develop further their skills in using money and handling information.
- Most children make satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They learn to manage risk when outdoors. Almost all children develop gross motor skills well, such as running, balancing and climbing during play outdoors. Most children are confident in hygiene routines and understand the importance of washing their hands indoors. Practitioners should provide more opportunities for roles and responsibilities for more children across their day and as part of their everyday practice.
- Practitioners are tracking children's learning to demonstrate how well children are progressing over time. Wider use of the tracking system should support staff to make more robust judgements about children's learning. In a few learning journals, children's progress over time in relation to early writing is demonstrated.
- Children's achievements are celebrated in the ELC on displays and through staff's use of praise and sharing successes within key groups and by key workers. Children are developing early skills for learning and life. There is scope for practitioners to share more children's achievements from outwith the nursery and use this information to plan learning.

- Practitioners promote equity through their supportive and inclusive ethos. They provide all children with appropriate clothing for outdoor play. They know and understand the varying needs of children and families. Senior leaders and practitioners should monitor the effectiveness of strategies they use. They need to use their knowledge and evidence more effectively to demonstrate impact and inform decisions about future interventions.

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.