

Summarised inspection findings

St Mary's Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC)

West Dunbartonshire Council

4 March 2025

Key contextual information

St Mary's ELCC is located within the main school building of St Mary's Primary School. Children attend the setting from the age of three until they start primary school. There is one large playroom, a separate eating area and access to a variety of outdoor spaces. Regular use is made of the school, playground spaces and nearby parks and community areas. The setting provides early learning and childcare for a maximum of 48 children between the hours of 8.45 am and 2.45 pm during term time. The current roll is 36 children. Almost all children attend the setting for their full entitlement of 1140 hours.

The headteacher and depute headteacher of St Mary's Primary School have overall leadership responsibility for the ELCC. They work in close partnership with the Lead Early Learning Childhood Officer and practitioners. A local authority Early Stages Teacher (EST) provides weekly support with data analysis, tracking and professional learning.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Senior leaders and practitioners have created a positive, welcoming and respectful ethos. As a result, children feel valued, secure and confident in their environment. They are happy and settled, follow their interests and make choices of where they want to play. Most children engage well with the broad range of experiences available, both indoors and outdoors. Children share resources and spaces confidently, appropriate to their stage of development. Most children display sustained levels of engagement and perseverance in their play.
- All practitioners are nurturing, positive and patient in their interactions with children. They understand, anticipate and respond to children's individual needs very well. Practitioners skilfully support children as required, to regulate their behaviour. They listen carefully to children and respond very well to their ideas and interests. Practitioners use a range of questioning to develop children's thinking whilst they play. This includes a variety of open-ended questions that extend and challenge learning. They provide an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-led activities and ensure the values of 'achieve, believe and create' are enacted every day. Practitioners support children very well to be independent and make choices about their play. Highly effective use of 'group times' helps practitioners to deliver well-planned learning activities that meet a variety of individual needs.
- An effective range of digital resources are used to support aspects of play and learning well. This includes researching areas of interest and use of the interactive whiteboard for games to consolidate early language, communication and numeracy. Staff understand the importance of technology and should widen its use and consistency across all curricular areas to enhance children's learning further.

- Practitioners and senior leaders make very good use of local authority systems to monitor children's individual progress in literacy and numeracy. They meet termly for 'All about the child' meetings which focus on children's health and wellbeing. Senior leaders, the EST and practitioners have termly meetings to track and monitor children's progress. They discuss planning of targeted and universal work in literacy and numeracy. This includes developing vocabulary, confidence and pronunciation of individual words, sounds and rhymes. Practitioners should continue to develop their use of data. This will improve consistency in tracking and planning. As planned, senior leaders and practitioners should continue to extend tracking and monitoring across all curricular areas.
- Practitioners know and understand children's needs very well. They record regular observations of children's experiences to assess their progress and plan next steps in learning. Children enjoy looking at the recently introduced paper learning journals. The learning journals contain examples of children's work and pictures of their learning, with links to skills, wellbeing indicators and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. This approach to assessing progress supports children to talk about their learning and achievements. Parents increasingly contribute to their child's learning journal and have opportunities to take them home. They appreciate and value the information which supports them to understand what their child has learned.
- Practitioners plan across the curriculum using CfE experiences and outcomes. They have a strong focus on early language and communication, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use short term intentional and area plans, responsive planning to meet children's interests and termly baseline planning. Practitioners use floorbooks well to record learning experiences and include children in the planning process. These planning approaches support children to have ownership of their learning. Practitioners plan clear, specific targets for children who experience barriers to their learning and clearly identify strategies for children who require additional support.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.2 Securing children's progress

very 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's progress over time

- Most children are making very good progress in line with their stages of development. Children requiring additional support with their learning are very well supported through planned experiences, carefully aligned with relevant developmental milestones.

Progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing

- Almost all children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. Most children develop gross motor skills as they run, jump, balance and climb in a variety of outdoor areas. Children develop their independence and fine motor skills as they dress themselves for the outdoors. Most children share and take turns well as they play in pairs or small groups. They make healthy food choices at mealtimes, self-serve with confidence and understand the importance of hygiene routines. Practitioners should continue to develop children's understanding and use of appropriate language to describe their emotions and wellbeing.
- Most children make very good progress in early language and communication. They listen well and follow simple instructions. Most children communicate their thoughts and feelings with confidence and use verbal and non-verbal language supported by skilled practitioners. Children enjoy listening to stories and nursery rhymes. Most children recognise their own name and identify the initial sound of their name. Most older children draw recognisable figures with detail and have an awareness of environmental print.
- Most children make very good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. Most count to 10 and beyond and match number symbols to sets of objects. Most children are aware of the passage of time and talk about events in their lives. Children would benefit from using the term 'o'clock' in analogue and digital times. All children are learning about the concept of capacity as they pour sand and water into different sized containers. Children are gaining an understanding of data handling as they register their lunch choices and collect information about favourite colours.

Overall quality of children's achievement

- Practitioners value children's experiences from beyond the setting. Children receive certificates to celebrate achievements from home and in the setting. These certificates are displayed on the achievement wall and shared with families. Families are encouraged to share children's achievements from home. All children participate in opportunities to develop an understanding of their community. This is helping to increase their resilience and learning about the wider

world. A few children develop their attributes as responsible citizens and acquiring skills by working in teams. A few children have leadership roles, for example as members of the eco-committee and snack helpers. Practitioners should continue to increase the number of leadership opportunities on offer to all children.

- Children's achievements link to different curriculum areas. All practitioners should now ensure links are also made between achievements and skills. This will enable children to understand how they are developing independence, confidence, creativity and the language of wellbeing. Senior leaders should track achievements to identify any child who is at risk of missing out and more clearly link achievements to skills for learning, life and work.

Ensuring equity for all children

- Senior leaders and practitioners have a strong understanding of their local community and children's individual socio-economic needs. They analyse attendance data and work in partnership with parents to maximise children's attendance. Senior leaders are sensitive and resourceful in identifying additional support that would benefit children and families. Children learn about cultures and languages through the exploration of books in dual languages. All children and parents have access to a lending library which contains a range of texts and supports to increase parental engagement.

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.