

Summarised inspection findings

Holy Family Primary School and Early Years Centre

East Dunbartonshire Council

20 December 2022

Key contextual information

Holy Family Early Years Centre (EYC) is situated within Holy Family Primary School. There are 47 children aged three to five years in the EYC. Children attend the EYC for 50 weeks on a mix of morning, afternoon and full day patterns. All children access their entitlement of 1140 hours. The morning session is 8:00 - 12:45, afternoon 13:00 – 18:00 and full day 8:00 – 18:00. The EYC is led by the headteacher. After a series of short term appointments for the acting depute head of centre, the EYC has had the same acting depute head of centre for 22 months. This has provided much needed stability to the EYC. There is also a teacher, one senior practitioner and ten early year's practitioners who support the EYC.

1.3 Leadership of change

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 early years centre (EYC) team have recently developed a draft vision, values and aims. They are carrying out consultation with the whole school community on this draft to gather views. The focus should continue to be on ensuring the vision, values and aims is child friendly so that children can demonstrate the values in the day to day life of the EYC.
- The acting depute head of centre plays an active role in leading the EYC and supporting practitioners. She leads the planning and implementation of changes in the EYC at an appropriate pace which allows the changes to be embedded. This motivates practitioners to improve the learning experiences for children in the EYC. As a result, children have positive early learning and childcare experiences in a stimulating and attractive learning environment. The nursery teacher supports these improvements well.
- The headteacher, acting depute head and teacher meet informally to discuss areas of improvements relating to the EYC. In order to track the progress of these improvements there should be a written record of these meetings and agreed actions. The headteacher should also strengthen the working relationship between the EYC and early stages of the school to improve continuity of learning for children.
- After local authority consultation with parents, the EYC has implemented successfully the 1140 hours. The team have aligned aspects of their practice on the principles of Realising the Ambition (2020) (RtA) particularly the improvements in the environment. This ensures that improvements are in line to current guidance. Practitioners should continue to embed further the principles of RtA as planned. In doing so, the team should build on what is working well in terms of interactions and spaces. They should also increase their focus on the experiences they provide, using the guidance as support.
- The staff team gathers robust evidence on how well it is doing. As a result, the team have a clear understanding of next steps for improvement. The improvement plan for the EYC has three key priorities which are leading to improvements such as parenting support which has

encouraged parents to support their children's learning. Most parents are now more comfortable in supporting their children's learning at home. The acting depute head of centre has put in place robust quality assurance procedures for practitioners which have led to improvements in their practice particularly their interactions with children. Practitioners carry out peer reviews of each other's practice sensitively and undertake learning walks to assess the environment. This has led to a culture of learning and continuing improvements in the EYC. The practice of seeking written appreciative comments from each other creates a positive ethos in the EYC. For example, practitioners have commented on the positive support they have received from other practitioners.

- The acting depute head of centre places a high value on creating a cohesive and highly reflective team. As a result, practitioners embrace improvement and opportunities for professional learning. Practitioners enthusiastically demonstrate how this professional learning is impacting positively on practice in the EYC. For example, carrying out 'tests of change' that have resulted in improvements in the learning experiences within the EYC linked to embedding nurture principles.
- All practitioners have leadership roles based on their professional interest such as literacy, numeracy, outdoor learning, and health and wellbeing. Practitioners work hard to build their knowledge through professional learning which positively influences practice in relation to their leadership area. Children contribute their views on resources when there are environmental changes in the EYC. As planned, practitioners should build on this to increase children's voice in the EYC.

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

- Relationships between practitioners and children are warm and nurturing. Practitioners are ready and available to children from the very beginning of the day until the end of the day. They enjoy the company of children and readily involve themselves enthusiastically in play experiences. Practitioners support each other to enable them to spend time with new children to ensure that they are settled and confident in their environment. As a result, all children enjoy coming to the EYC and feel safe and highly valued.
- Through working effectively together as a team, practitioners have created stimulating indoor and outdoor play spaces for children. The addition of a broad range of natural, open-ended resources and interesting real-life objects support children to sustain a high level of engagement in their play. Resources and play materials are readily accessible for children to make choices confidently enabling them to follow their own play ideas and interests. Practitioners are making increasing use of the local environment and community to provide different meaningful experiences for children's learning. Practitioners have given careful consideration to providing opportunities for literacy and numeracy in the design of the learning environment. For example, adding tape measures and clipboards at the construction area.
- Children are involved actively in learning through a mix of spontaneous play opportunities and activities planned by practitioners. Children play together well and most lead their learning during free play. Most practitioners make good use of open-ended questions and comments to extend children's thinking. These are most impactful when they centre on children's interests. As part of a responsive approach practitioners listen attentively to what children have to say and place a high value on their thoughts, ideas and interests.
- Recent improvements in planning for learning are supporting a team approach and building confidence amongst the team. Using observations and floorbooks, practitioners engage in regular, focused professional dialogue to plan learning experiences for children. There is scope to review the range of planning formats used with the aim of streamlining paperwork and to ensure that there is linkage and clarity of purpose. In an effort to support transition, practitioners have considered the best way to adopt aspects of learning programmes implemented as a school.
- Practitioners gather observations of children during play experiences and record these in children's individual learning journals. Through professional learning as a team, practitioners are improving their practice in writing observations to show depth and progression in learning. The team should together ensure observations of children capture the totality of their experience, include children's voice and captures significant learning. This will also support practitioners to gather and analyse data over time to ensure children are making the best progress possible.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- As discussed, senior leaders and practitioners should work together to develop a curriculum rationale which highlights the uniqueness of the setting. Practitioners promote strong nurturing relationships and support children to explore and develop their skills. They use experiences and outcomes in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing from Curriculum for Excellence to plan well for children's learning. This is providing continuity and progression of children's learning. A variety of digital technologies support their learning to improve their fine motor skills, literacy and numeracy.
- The staff team use the outdoor environment, including the woodlands well. They should continue with their plans to develop the use of the outdoor environment further. Practitioners should also continue with plans to use the local community to enrich learning experiences for children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- One of the key priorities for the EYC is to improve parental engagement and involve parents more in their children's learning. Parents complete surveys which gather their views on the running of the EYC. After the pandemic, practitioners are now re-starting a range of in person parent sessions to support home learning. Parents and grandparents enjoy the 'stay and play' sessions which offer them opportunities to spend time in the setting, allowing them to observe how children learn in the EYC.
- The book lending system, in which the child and parent review the book they borrow, is supporting a culture of reading for enjoyment. Practitioners should continue with their plans for parents and children to borrow maths games and materials.
- Parents are kept informed of their children's experiences and progress in learning in a variety of ways. These include useful informal and formal chats, newsletters, social media, children's individual learning journals in online formats. Practitioners should continue to encourage the parents to view their children's online learning journals more consistently.

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

- Practitioners create a nurturing and caring environment in the EYC. Children are engaged, safe, happy and settled. All staff know children well and ensuring their wellbeing is a strong focus. A positive ethos exists where children and families are treated with respect. Practitioners model positive interactions and behaviour well. This supports children to understand the importance of treating each other with kindness and care. Practitioners are beginning to use effective approaches when monitoring interactions which are helping children to develop wider friendships within the setting.
- Children are gaining an understanding of their own wellbeing through their engagement in a variety of interesting experiences. Forest experiences develop their knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The plentiful offer of healthy snacks provided across the day is supporting children to understand the importance of the benefits of healthy food. Family learning at home supports this further. For example, ingredients and recipe cards are sent home for children and their families to make healthy food together. This encourages children to relate the wellbeing indicators to their own lives. Practitioners have a deeper understanding of the wellbeing indicators due to their recent professional learning of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). This will help practitioners to continue to support the language of wellbeing in the EYC.
- Practitioners are clear about their responsibilities to keep the children safe and well. They engage in professional learning regularly to ensure they are able to carry out their roles and remits effectively. Practitioners have recently reviewed the format of children's care plans to comply with national guidance. They monitor and review children's individual plans regularly. Children with additional support needs are identified quickly, which allows them to receive support from appropriate external professionals. The acting head of centre with the depute headteacher monitor robustly the staged intervention process to ensure children with additional support have their needs are well met and are making progress. The positive partnership working with other professionals, particularly the speech and language therapist and educational psychologist, further ensure the needs of children are met well.
- Inclusion and equality are promoted throughout the EYC. Practitioners have built positive and trusting relationships with families, allowing them respond well to children and their individual needs. Children are beginning to develop an awareness of diversity by celebrating event such as Diwali. There is scope to develop further children's awareness and understanding of diversity through a wider range of resources and developmentally appropriate experiences. Practitioners should continue to promote gender equality effectively with children to ensure potential stereotypes are consistently recognised and challenged.

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Most children are making good progress in communication and early language. They readily engage in conversations with adults and their friends and express their ideas and feelings confidently. Most children use a broad vocabulary during play activities. Through engagement in a wide variety of mark making activities children are developing an understanding that writing has a purpose. Older children draw and paint recognisable pictures and a few are beginning to write letters, for example, in their own name. Children enjoy listening to and joining in with the selected story of the month. There is scope to introduce more frequent stories to support their knowledge and understanding further. Children are encouraged to self-register which is helping them recognise their names and those of their friends. A range of non-fiction books, labels and signs across the setting are supporting children's early reading. Children enjoy participating in familiar songs and rhymes. Increased opportunities through play to sing songs and play rhyming games will support children's continued development of key literacy concepts.
- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. During play experiences and routines, children count confidently to 10. For example, they count the number of children in the group before going outside and at mealtimes. Most children sort, match and group objects with confidence. Practitioners should consider ways to develop these concepts further for those children who are ready for it. Children are developing an awareness of shape and size. Most children are consistently and accurately using simple comparative language. Practitioners should find ways to support more complex comparative language during play, as appropriate. Children are developing an awareness of the values of money during their visits to the local shop to buy snacks. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop children's awareness of numeracy and mathematics through meaningful and real life experiences.
- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing, with all children presenting as happy and settled in their environment. Children play and learn very well in pairs and small groups. They share resources and include their friends in play activities. Children make healthy choices at snack and are encouraged to develop their independence as they confidently collect their own snack and when clearing away dishes afterwards. Children are developing their physical skills as they participate regularly in energetic activity in the gardens and at the forest. They show physical stamina by walking to and from the forest at least once a week. Children develop fine motor skills well while using real tools and snack utensils.

- The supportive and positive ethos creates a climate of mutual respect and trust. Practitioners praise and encourage children to build their confidence and to celebrate their successes. Children's artwork, models and photographs are given high prominence throughout the play spaces. As a result, children experience a strong sense of self-worth and connection to the setting. Practitioners recognise the importance of effective parental involvement to improve outcomes for children. They should continue to develop approaches to capture children's achievements and current interests from home.
- Children's progress over time needs to be monitored by senior leaders. This will support decision making and inform future improvement planning. As part of this, the use of data to further to promote approaches to equity should be a feature. This will support the identification of need and effective targeting of support amongst children and families. The team have a good understanding and knowledge of the needs of children and families within their local community. They continue to develop approaches to partnership working, in order to support children who may experience barriers to their learning.

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.