

Summarised inspection findings

Gateside Primary School Early Years Class

North Ayrshire Council

28 May 2024

Key contextual information

Gateside Early Years Class is situated within Gateside Primary School in the rural village of Gateside, North Ayrshire. The early years class has one playroom with free-flow access to a self-contained outdoor space, alongside access to the school indoor and outdoor environment. The early years class is registered for 16 children aged from three years to those not yet attending school. There are 16 children on the roll with almost all attending five days per week from 8:55 am to 2:55 pm. The deputy headteacher of the school is the registered manager of the early years class. There is one senior early years practitioner, one early years practitioner and one early years support assistant.

1.3 Leadership of change

very 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 well-established vision, values and aims are embedded across the school and early years class. The values of respect, nurture, creative and active are featured firmly within the early years class. All stakeholders contributed to the creation of the vision, values and aims, which are reviewed regularly. This ensures they remain current and reflect the needs of children, parents and the community. Children in the early years class contribute very well to the early years class charter, signing it to acknowledge their contribution.
- Practitioners work very well together as a team to get it right for all children. They demonstrate highly effective teamwork and a consistent approach to their practice. Practitioners have designated leadership roles, including communication champion and outdoor learning. Children are supported to be leaders, for example, they risk assess the outdoor environment well. Practitioners should continue to develop further children's leadership roles, building on this existing good practice.
- Practitioners carry out their role with professionalism and commitment. Practitioners have fortnightly planning meetings, which enable them to plan effectively for all children, taking full account of their individual needs. Practitioners participate in professional learning opportunities during in-service days and out with their core hours. They effectively demonstrate the impact of this in practice, for example, by creating an engaging learning environment for children. Practitioners have developed their knowledge and skills well over time to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families.
- An overarching improvement plan has been developed by the school and early years class. The team have developed a focused improvement plan with specific priorities for the early years class. They have identified key priorities for improvement, which are evident in practice. For example, audits of resources are captured effectively in an environment book and changes clearly documented. Senior leaders and practitioners should continue to ensure that areas of improvement are well matched to identified priorities in the early years class.

- A quality assurance calendar is in place, which includes monitoring visits to the early years class by the depute headteacher. Strategic leaders should continue to implement more formal opportunities to meet with staff. Practitioners are reflective and have a system in place to support self-evaluation. They document and capture this very well through mind maps and environmental logbooks. Practitioners audit their environment and consider and implement change at an appropriate pace. Practitioners capture the views of children and parents effectively through daily dialogue and parental surveys. All stakeholders should continue to be part of self-evaluation processes.

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

- Practitioners have created a welcoming, nurturing environment where children and parents are valued and respected. Relationships between practitioners and children are nurturing and caring. Almost all children settle very quickly and are supported to feel safe and secure. Practitioners model positive behaviour and support children to demonstrate this with their peers, using effective strategies. All children are very kind and considerate to each other, demonstrating kindness and respect in their play.
- Children move freely between their inviting indoor and outdoor environment independently and with confidence. Children enjoy, and are actively engaged in learning, through spontaneous, well-planned purposeful play opportunities. Most children are highly motivated and engage in a range of fun and challenging experiences indoors and outdoors. A majority of children spend extended periods of time in the block area, with many creating complex structures during play. Most children develop their curiosity, creativity and inquiry well as they explore the interesting range of loose parts. All children engage in learning experiences, which meet their individual needs well and extend their personal interests.
- Practitioners have a very strong understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy, and this is evident in practice. Relationships are sensitive and responsive, and this creates a positive environment for children to learn and develop. Practitioners listen effectively to all children and ensure children feel their voice is heard. Practitioners use commentary well to support children in their learning, giving them appropriate time and space to follow their interests. Opportunities for digital learning are available, with most children confidently using a tablet computer to take photographs to share with their peers. Practitioners should continue to develop approaches to digital learning, as planned, to enhance children's learning.
- Practitioners observe and capture children's learning well by documenting in floorbooks, interest books and sharing via an online platform. Observations inform children's learning and are used well to inform interventions and well-planned experiences. Practitioners should continue to develop further their observations, with a focus on capturing significant learning for all children. Practitioners plan well for children who may require additional support with their learning. Strategies are shared and implemented consistently across the early years class. Children's progress in learning is shared effectively with parents through informal daily dialogue, children's personal learning plans and via an online platform.
- Practitioners plan very well for children's learning through the use of mind maps, medium term plans, area plans and children's individual personal learning plans. Planning is captured on a planning wall in the playroom and children's engagement in learning experiences are captured in a floorbook. Practitioner's plans link to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes well. Children contribute to the planning process, and a few can confidently talk about their

learning using well developed vocabulary. Practitioners should continue to support all children to reflect on their learning.

- Practitioners track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They capture this data well, alongside milestone targets. Practitioners would benefit from further opportunities to look outwards and share their, and others, practice.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum is based firmly on play and the environment is exciting and inviting for children. Practitioners know all children well and are responsive and nurturing, providing appropriate challenge and support. All children engage in experiences which enhance their learning, with resources to support literacy and numeracy evident across the indoor and outdoor environments. The early years class is an integral part of the school and local community. All children engage well in school and community events.
- All practitioners take responsibility for developing literacy and numeracy, ensuring planning for learning is responsive and takes account of children's interests and individual targets. Practitioners create short- and medium-term plans, which ensure breadth and depth across the curricular areas. All children are developing their confidence in leading their own learning and engage very well with experiences initiated by practitioners.
- Practitioners support children very well at times of transition, into, across, and from the early years class. There are well established links with the P1 teacher in the school which support children prior to and as they move into P1. Practitioners and teachers should continue to engage throughout the year to support continuity and progression in learning for all children.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnership with parents is a strength within the early years class. Practitioners establish effective relationships with parents through positive engagement from their initial contact. Practitioners learn more about each child as an individual through sharing home to nursery transition forms and informative parent's leaflets.
- Practitioners communicate well with parents at drop off and pick up time, with informal, informative conversations taking place. Practitioners also communicate effectively with parents through regular newsletters, via an online platform and end of year progress updates. Parents are encouraged to share children's achievements from home on an attractive wall display. This work continues to be developed to ensure all children's achievements are captured and celebrated.
- Opportunities to engage in the early years class are offered through regular stay and play sessions. Parents are encouraged to select an appropriate day and time to engage with their child in the early years class environment. Parents are consulted about their views on nursery practice and contribute very well. Engagement with the online platform is very high, with almost all parents commenting on a regular basis.

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

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

very 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 have developed positive relationships and have a strong focus on getting it right for every child in the early years class. They have created a very positive and welcoming ethos. All practitioners are nurturing, caring and interact sensitively with all children. Children are confident in line with their age and stage of development and all children are kind and respectful to each other and adults. Children are developing friendship groups successfully within the early years class and take care of each other. Practitioners model positive behaviour very well which has a positive impact on children's relationships and behaviour. Effective strategies are in place to support children who may need support to regulate their emotions.
- Practitioners have created helpful resources to support children's understanding of the wellbeing indicators and children's rights. This continues to be developed in daily practice. The language of the wellbeing indicators is increasingly being used within the early years class and children continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of this. For example, all children know how to stay safe, be healthy and active. Children can talk about the ways in which they are active, for example, jumping and running. Practitioners continue to develop the language of wellbeing indicators and introduce rights at an appropriate pace to ensure children understand these in a developmentally and meaningful way.
- Children confidently risk assess their outdoor space and are supported effectively to make safe choices whilst using loose parts and climbing equipment. Children are developing their independence skills well and almost all get themselves dressed for outdoors. Children confidently move in and out of the nursery, engaging well in risky play outdoors. Children use loose parts well to develop their balancing skills, for example, as they build and navigate bridges. Children develop their gross motor skills well, for example, rolling and racing tyres. An increased focus on children's emotions is supporting all children to recognise and identify how they are feeling.
- All practitioners understand their responsibilities and statutory duties in relation to keeping children safe. Practitioners keep their knowledge and practice up to date through engagement in regular training. Practitioners know their children very well and have detailed plans for children who may require additional support with learning. Practitioners have developed effective partnerships with outside agencies to ensure children receive support if required.
- Practitioners actively promote inclusion and equality, treating children and families fairly and with respect. Practitioners support children who may face barriers to learning very well, using a range of suitable and engaging resources and strategies. The practitioner team have created welcoming spaces to support all children in their learning. Children have ownership of their environment, and this has a positive impact on their learning. For example, children confidently choose resources to support their learning. Practitioners recognise and celebrate a range of

cultural festivals throughout the year. Practitioners should continue to offer opportunities for children to explore diversity and different cultures.

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

- Overall, almost all children are making very good progress in their learning in line with their age and stage of development.
- Most children are making very good progress in communication and early language. Children communicate very effectively with each other, sharing their knowledge and ideas. Children have opportunities through daily routines to recognise and identify their name. Most recognise their own name and others independently. A few children are using initial sounds to identify letters and text within their environment. Children enjoy stories with an adult and can predict what happens next and recall a familiar text. All children enjoy mark making indoors and outdoors, with the majority of children writing their own name and numbers confidently. Practitioners very effectively support children who require additional help with their communication.
- Most children are making very good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children use numbers confidently in their play and daily routines. Most children can count to 10 and beyond and use numbers accurately as they count objects. Children use the language of measure well, for example, describing tallest and smallest. Most children recognise and name a range of colours and explore pattern and shape through daily experiences. Children problem solve well in the block area as they plan and create increasingly complex structures. Opportunities to develop numeracy and literacy further in real life contexts should continue to be offered.
- Children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. Practitioners support children well to recognise and discuss their feelings. Children enjoy a daily check in to see how they are feeling and are supported to revisit this during the day. All children develop their fine and gross motor skills well indoors and outdoors. Children enjoy the freedom to explore outdoors and are developing their resilience well. Children enjoy a healthy snack and lunch and are developing their independence skills well. Opportunities for children to develop these further should be explored, for example, children should be involved in preparing snack.
- Practitioners capture children's progress over time well through professional dialogue, using floorbooks and tracking literacy, numeracy and mathematics and health and wellbeing. Observations of learning are captured via an online platform and shared regularly with parents. Practitioners should reflect on approaches to the planning cycle to ensure they continue to capture significant learning over time, in a measured and achievable way.

- Practitioners recognise and celebrate children's achievements daily through praise and encouragement. Parents share achievements from home via an online platform to display on an attractive achievement wall in the cloakroom. Practitioners should continue to develop approaches to capturing all children's individual achievements.
- There is a supportive and inclusive ethos within the early years class. Practitioners know children and families as individuals very well. They respond sensitively and respectfully to support all children to make very good progress in their learning. A consistent approach supports children who may require additional support with their learning to make continual progress. Practitioners engage well with outside agencies to ensure children receive appropriate support when required.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Personal planning for children was regularly reviewed and updated in collaboration with their parents/carers, who played a crucial role in the process. Staff demonstrated confidence and knowledge in supporting children's care and development needs, and the working documents contained relevant information and strategies that staff used to support children's individual needs.

Staff worked in partnership with external professionals to improve outcomes for children when they needed additional support. Appropriate strategies were identified to help children develop social skills such as regulating emotions, communication, and language. As a result, children were supported in reaching their potential.

Personal care for children was carried out sensitively and in response to children's needs. Careful consideration was given to protecting children's dignity and privacy.

Positive, nurturing, and trusting relationships with staff supported children's emotional wellbeing and resilience. Children were encouraged to share how they felt at the start of the session using the 'colour monster' resource, which helped them to express emotions, such as sad or happy. This helped ensure children's needs were met, as their wellbeing was supported.

A key strength was the transition programme for new children. That was tailored to each child's needs, offering comfort and reassurance during their settling-in period. It played a significant role in helping children feel safe, secure, and confident in their new environment.

Children enjoyed a hot, nutritious meal at lunchtime that accounted for their dietary needs. Children chose where they would like to sit with their friends. We discussed where staff could be less task-driven, provide more opportunities for children to self-serve, how staff should continue to sit and eat with children to ensure their safety, provide a role model, and encourage positive eating habits.

Medication was stored safely in line with guidance. However, staff should ensure records state that parents/carers have given the first dose. An emergency plan was in place for identified children, and we were satisfied this was being managed well to meet children's needs.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Staff had high aspirations to enable children to be successful. Children's voices were valued and empowered to lead their play and learning. As a result, children were confident, happy, and motivated to learn. Effective questioning provided opportunities to widen children's thinking skills and consolidate their learning through play experiences. This supported children to achieve their potential.

The learning environment, carefully nurtured by the staff, significantly benefited the children's learning and actively promoted their emotional wellbeing. The staff used age-appropriate words, conversations, and interactions to support children's language development. We observed staff extending children's vocabulary in conversations, which enhanced their understanding of new words.

Learning areas were rich in literacy and numeracy provocations and invitations, which supported children's play and learning. Staff read stories to children, and children used electronic devices to capture the learning environment and share their findings. As a result, children made progress in their early literacy and numeracy skills.

The staff demonstrated a profound understanding of child development and how children learn. They skilfully adapted play areas and provided experiences and resources that ignited children's interests. This approach not only kept children engaged but also fostered a deep interest in learning, enriching their learning experiences.

Planning approaches were child-centred, following children's interests, staff observations and children's voices. Floor books were used to record children's experiences and allowed them to revisit their learning. Observations detailed children's learning and next steps which were relevant to individual children. Children were engaged and suitably challenged in play and were progressing well in their overall development. They played for prolonged periods, showing high levels of engagement and excitement. For example, when playing in the sand and building objects of interest using the large blocks. As a result, children had fun and were effectively supported to learn and progress.

To ensure children were progressing well, staff used trackers to measure children's progress in health and wellbeing, literacy, and numeracy. This resulted in positive outcomes for children.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children and families benefitted from a well-furnished, stimulating and inviting setting. The entrance displayed photographs, information about staff, and parental advice, creating a welcoming environment. Each child had access to their own space to store their personal items, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging.

The service prioritised safety with playroom registers, boundary fencing and gates, and a secure entry system to keep children safe. A strong focus on risk management was evident, with children confidently assessing and managing their own risks outdoors. This approach allowed children to engage in various experiences and take appropriate risks under adult supervision.

The childcare setting committed to children's needs by recently reviewing its play spaces. The indoor and outdoor play areas' layout was carefully designed to offer a variety of spaces for children to explore, support their interests, and develop their ideas. The service provided opportunities for children to nurture their curiosity, imagination, and problem-solving skills. For instance, loose parts (resources that can be moved, taken apart and put together) were readily available, encouraging children to use creative thinking and problem-solving strategies as they played.

The staff's deep understanding of the importance of outdoor play to children's health, wellbeing and development was evident. They ensured that children used the outdoor environment in all weather conditions, enhancing their learning experiences. Visual aids were effectively used to facilitate children's free flow play indoors/outdoors and the staff's management of this.

Infection prevention and control measures, such as regular handwashing, helped reduce the potential spread of infections. We discussed where improvements could be made around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) storing porous material in the nappy changing/toilet facilities and food preparation areas to reflect best practice guidance.

Accidents and incidents were managed well to support children's health and wellbeing. Accident/incident forms were completed and shared with parents/carers, and appropriate first aid was administered when needed. Regular audits of accidents/incidents would help senior leaders identify common or reoccurring concerns and the appropriate action required to maintain children's safety.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The senior leadership team actively participated in the inspection process, demonstrating their commitment and passion to delivering a high-quality service for children, staff, and families. Their receptiveness to feedback and suggestions was a testament to their drive for continuous improvement.

Children and families were an integral part of the service. They experienced a welcoming, warm, and inclusive environment where their voices were heard and their feedback was valued. Effective methods of communication, such as newsletters, surveys, and parent/carer feedback, ensured their inclusion in evaluating aspects of the service and driving improvement.

The senior leadership and staff's commitment to delivering high-quality play, learning, care and support for children and families were evident in practice. Their ongoing self-evaluation, guided by key best practice documents, was instrumental in identifying relevant areas for development. This commitment to self-improvement should instil confidence in families about the service's continuous improvement.

The vision for creating a nurturing, respectful, creative, and active environment as part of the school community was reflected in practice. Senior leaders had taken an inclusive approach to developing the setting's vision, values and aims by consulting with staff, children, and families about what was important to them. This supported staff to provide the care and support children need to flourish.

The senior leaders monitored the quality of children's play and learning experiences. A robust quality assurance calendar to support them with the various tasks that were to be undertaken throughout the year, such as staff professional reviews and audits of paperwork, including personal plans, medication, policies, and accidents/incidents, should strengthen the continuing development and improvements of the service and help measure the impact of the changes taking place.

Senior leaders supported staff accessing in-house training in speech and language and external self-directed learning such as Froebel to support and develop their skills. These training and development leadership opportunities helped build staff confidence. Staff understood the impact of training and development on improving outcomes for children and adding breadth and balance to children's learning experiences. Staff should continue to record how training impacts professional development and positive outcomes for children.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

4.3 Staff deployment

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children benefitted from a nurturing, caring and dedicated staff team. The staff were warm, welcoming, and engaged positively in the inspection process. It was evident through discussions they were committed and enthusiastic professionals.

Staff displayed warmth and kindness, enabling children to feel valued, loved, and secure. They recognised the importance of nurturing, warm, responsive attachments.

Children benefited from a service that was appropriately staffed. Effective staff deployment across the service meant that the right number of staff met children's individual needs consistently throughout the day. Staff worked very well together and ensured children could access the full provision.

Staff demonstrated an awareness of when and how to intervene effectively, picking up on children's cues to support their wellbeing and extend their play experiences. This resulted in children who felt respected within the service.

The staff team had a wide range of skills and different levels of experience working in a childcare setting. They worked collaboratively, supported each other well, and demonstrated a commitment to providing a high-quality service. Positive working relationships ensured they were all meaningfully contributing to the inclusive and positive ethos of trust and respect. Staff meetings were also established to support communication and reflection.

Continuity of care for children was consistent throughout the day, with minimal changes to staffing. At lunchtime, staff breaks were well planned to minimise the impact on the children, ensuring the children's comfort and familiarity and enabling staff time to rest and be refreshed.

Staff knew the importance of building positive relationships and connections with families. As part of family engagement, the stay and play sessions led by the staff team contributed to strengthening partnership working with families. These sessions allowed staff, children, and families to build strong bonds through play and learning in a fun way that enhanced family experiences. Staff communicated with parents/carers at drop off and collection times to provide verbal feedback on their child's day. They should continue to develop approaches to support parent/carers with a high level of involvement in their childcare setting when developing relationships and strong connections.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very 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.