Early learning and childcare (ELC) shared inspection report

Colquhoun Park Early Years Centre

East Dunbartonshire Council
23 June 2026

In April 2026, a team of inspectors from HMIE and the Care Inspectorate visited Colquhoun Park Early Years Centre. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the manager and staff.

Key inspection findings

- Highly skilled leaders and staff worked together effectively, supporting strong practice and positive outcomes for children and families.
- Staff supported nurturing relationships between children and families through skilled, caring interactions, high-quality mealtimes and strong personal planning.
- Children engage effectively in motivating learning experiences indoors and outdoors. They are developing their independence and confidence very well. Children enjoy exploring and being creative as they play and learn. They are happy, settled and secure in the early years centre.
- Staff have a strong understanding of the needs of all children. They plan activities which are well-matched to each individual's needs and interests. As a result, children are making very good progress in their learning and development.

HM Inspectors and the Care Inspectorate gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the setting's work using four quality indicators from the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors.

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	very good
Learning, teaching and assessment	very good
Nurturing, care and support	very good

Children's progress	very good

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Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Colquhoun Park Early Years Centre is part of Colquhoun Park Primary School and is situated within the main school building. There are two linked playrooms, a small breakout room, a reception hallway and a spacious outdoor play area. Children access a garden area within the school grounds. The setting is registered for a maximum of 50 children at any one time. It caters for children aged two to those not yet attending school. There are currently 39 children on the roll. Children attend a range of attendance patterns to receive their entitlement to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. Parents can purchase additional hours within the setting opening hours. The setting is open from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm, 50 weeks a year. The headteacher of the school is the registered manager of the setting. She is supported by a depute head of centre who has day-to-day responsibility for the setting and a senior early years worker. Ten full-time equivalent early years workers and one full-time equivalent teacher support children across the week.

Leadership:
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Children benefited from a long-standing staff team with a wide range of skills and experience. Staff were mindful of children's rights and used nurturing approaches. For example, the pace and balance of the day was relaxed, allowing children to have fun and play. This supported children's wellbeing, safety, care, learning, and rights.

Staff accessed a wide range of training that strengthened their understanding of child development, wellbeing, and play and learning. Management supported professional development through regular reviews, self-evaluation, and improvement planning linked to the service improvement plan. This led to staff working together through focused working parties to improve agreed areas of practice. As a result, children were supported by a confident staff team who understood child development, respected children's rights, and provided stimulating environments and experiences.

Staff and management reflected on practice during in-service days and team meetings to improve outcomes for children. This whole-team approach to self-evaluation ensured staff had a voice, shared goals, and a clear focus on consistency and improvement. We suggested reviewing drop-off arrangements for families as part of their self-evaluation process. At some points families dropped children at the nursery gate, instead of coming into the setting play spaces. Management were receptive and were signposted to the Care Inspectorate best practice note, 'Me, my family and my childcare setting'. Supporting families to come into the setting could further strengthen relationships and positive attachments.

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Leaders, and staff recognised the importance of deploying staff appropriately to meet children's needs. This was particularly evident at busy times, such as mealtimes. Staff deployment was well planned to ensure children's individual needs were met while allowing staff time to rest and refresh. This supported continuity of care and positive experiences for children.

The service was led by a highly skilled and motivated senior leadership team. They had a clear focus on achieving positive outcomes for children and promoting an ethos of wellbeing. The management team had clear remits and worked together very effectively and respectfully. We observed strong collaboration and clear leadership throughout the service, which provided stability, shared direction, and consistent support for staff. As a result, children benefited from well-led, high-quality care and learning experiences.

Children benefited from a highly motivated and committed staff team. Communication and teamwork were clear strengths, with staff feeling well supported. Information was shared promptly to ensure children received individualised support as they moved around the setting. As a result, children experienced safe, nurturing care and had fun while participating in high-quality play and learning opportunities.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

Children aged two to three years

All staff have very positive relationships with all children. They support very young children sensitively to develop secure attachments with all staff. Very young children are happy and engage well in a wide range of developmentally appropriate, carefully considered experiences on offer. Staff interact warmly with children and encourage them to develop skills of curiosity and creativity very well. They ask questions which help children to develop a sense of wonder about the world around them. For example, children enjoy enveloping themselves in spaces and transporting resources from one space to another. Staff use local authority developmental milestones very well to plan children's next steps in learning and track children's progress successfully.

Children aged over three

All staff have warm, nurturing relationships with children. There are very positive, friendly relationships between children. Staff are beginning to use the language of children's rights well to support children to manage their emotions and include others in their play. As a result, children are happy and secure in the setting and settle quicky at the start of each session. Almost all children are confident and demonstrate independence very well as they play and learn. All staff support children very effectively as they progress from home into the setting with short visits and stay and

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play sessions for parents. If required, staff provide useful extended, individualised settling-in programmes for a few children.

Staff have developed attractive indoor and outdoor learning environments successfully. They provide a wide range of open-ended and natural resources which children use well to be curious and creative in their play. Almost all children are highly motivated and sustain engagement effectively in the wide range of learning experiences on offer. All staff have a strong understanding of child development. They consider the flow of the daily routines carefully to ensure they meet the wellbeing needs of all children effectively.

All staff use carefully-considered commentary and open-ended questioning very well to support and extend children's learning. They support children effectively to access a range of digital resources to enhance their learning. For example, children use digital tablets to carry out research about topics of interest or mark-make and play numeracy and literacy games on an interactive board. Staff are beginning to help children to document their own learning with digital photography in floorbooks and learning journals.

All staff carefully observe children's learning and record children's significant learning well in online learning journals. The staff team have a strong focus on the quality of observations. They identify clearly the skills children are developing as they play and learn. Staff make effective use of information gathered through observations to identify and plan next steps for all children in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and an area of special interest to each child. Senior leaders should support staff to ensure they develop small-step, achievable next steps consistently across all curriculum areas which are measurable within a given timescale. In doing so, they should involve all children fully in developing their own next steps. This should help all children to have greater ownership of their individual learning. All staff make very good use of observation evidence to intentionally plan children's learning across all curriculum areas. They consult all children to successfully identify contexts for their learning. They ask children what they already know and what they want to learn next to support them to intentionally plan for learning. Staff plan an appropriate balance of child-initiated, adult-initiated and adult-led experiences. This helps all staff to ensure that children's learning is well-matched to individual needs and interests.

Senior leaders support staff very well to regularly to track and monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use progression frameworks in literacy, numeracy very well to support their tracking. They are beginning to track children's progress across other curricular areas in online learning journals. All staff engage very well in small groups during tracking sessions to moderate their professional judgements of children's progress. This is helping all staff to have a shared and accurate understanding of children's progress through early level literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

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Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children received warm, caring, and nurturing support from staff, who understood their individual needs. They knew children very well and offered them support including comfort and reassurance when needed. Staff were enthusiastic in their interactions and shared fun experiences with children. For example, they joined in reading stories, building towers and having pretend tea parties with children. This meant staff valued and supported children's rights and wellbeing.

Children's personal care was supported sensitively. A new changing area had been created to support children to be changed in a space that supported their privacy and dignity.

Children experienced high-quality mealtimes. They were able to come to a natural pause in their play to attend free-flow snack and lunch with their peers, supporting their right to play. Lunches and snacks were nutritious, and staff managed dietary and allergy needs well. Staff sat with children during meals, effectively supervising and engaging them in rich conversations about their day. Children confidently self-selected their food and drinks and independently cleared their dishes, which encouraged independence and social skills.

Staff supported children's health and wellbeing. They safely stored and administered medication when required. Children had access to drinking water throughout the session to support hydration and health. Additionally, staff followed safe sleep practices. We highlighted that some medication forms were not fully completed, with missing information about emergency procedures and parental signatures. We acknowledged, the missing information was recorded accurately in children's health care plans. We recommended updating all medication records to ensure consistency and avoid confusion. The service agreed and acted promptly to address this. Overall, these practices promoted children's safety, health, wellbeing, and comfort.

All children had a personal plan based on the wellbeing indicators, developed in partnership with parents, and children. Plans were reviewed regularly. They captured children's routines, preferences, and support needs, with clear strategies to promote consistent care. Staff used this information well because they knew children as individuals. When needed, they worked effectively with other professionals to remove barriers and implement timely interventions. This supported children to reach their potential. We concluded that personal plans contained detailed information that helped staff respond quickly and compassionately to changes in children's lives.

Transitions for children were managed well and helped them feel safe and secure. An individualised settling-in process allowed children to adjust at their own pace. This ensured continuity of care and strong understanding of children's needs. Transitions to school were also well supported through planned programmes and effective

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information-sharing with teachers and other professionals, helping children reach their full potential.

Staff built strong, trusting relationships with families, which created an inclusive and welcoming ethos. Families shared positive feedback about staff and the care provided. One person said, “My child has come on leaps and bounds, the staff are great.” Engagement with families was strengthened through play and stay sessions, celebration events, and lending libraries. Effective communication methods, including newsletters, social media, learning journals, and informal wall displays, further supported this. As a result, children’s wellbeing was supported, positive attachments were promoted, and a strong sense of community was fostered between home, school and the setting.

Children are supported to achieve: Children’s progress

Children aged two to three years

Very young children are developing well their confidence and independence indoors and outdoors. Staff have a strong understanding of child development and plan learning well which supports children to make very good progress.

Children aged over three

Almost all children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing, early language and communication and early numeracy and mathematics. Almost all children who require additional support are making very good progress against their individual learning targets.

All staff place children’s health and wellbeing at the centre of the life and work of the setting. Almost all children are confident in the setting and share resources and turn-take well in pairs and small groups. Almost all children are developing their knowledge of their own wellbeing as they learn about road safety on walks in the local community. They identify their emotions confidently and manage their feelings well. All children are developing their independence successfully as they select resources and get ready for outdoor play. Almost all children enjoy and are developing their gross motor skills well as they run, jump and climb outdoors. Staff understand the importance of development of gross motor skills to prepare children to mark make and write. They provide appropriate resources which children use well to develop such important gross motor skills.

Almost all children are developing their numeracy and mathematics skills well in a wide range of real-life and play experiences. For example, they are developing their understanding of number and money effectively as they role play in shops. Children enjoy counting objects and matching numerals to 10. Children explore capacity

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successfully as they play in water and learn about length as they compare objects in the learning environments.

In early communication and language children express well their needs and interests appropriate to their age and stage. They retell familiar stories in role play or use puppets enthusiastically. Older children sequence stories and draw interesting story maps about their own stories. Most children are developing successfully their mark making skills in a wide range of activities, such as making birthday cards or writing shopping lists.

Staff support children very well to build on prior learning and explore their interests across all curriculum areas. All staff use information gathered in observations and targeted assessment in numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English successfully to identify gaps in children's progress and provide targeted support. They do so effectively through the universal provision or through small group sessions. This is helping children to develop their communication and language and numeracy and mathematics skills well. Staff can clearly demonstrate that almost all children are making very good progress over time.

Staff celebrate children's achievements within and out with the setting on the 'proud of me tree' display. A few parents are beginning to share children's achievements from home, such as learning to ride a two-wheeled bicycle. Staff should now track children's individual achievements carefully. They should use information gathered to provide targeted experiences to ensure no child misses on having achievements to celebrate.

Staff have a very good understanding of the socio-economic context in which children live. They ensure all children have equal opportunity to extend their learning. For example, staff identified that some families were unable to access the local library. In response, they set up a lending library within the setting. This is helping all children and families to engage with a wide range of story books to share together. Staff engage parents and families well in helpful stay and play sessions and provide useful online hints and tips to support children's learning. This is helping parents to have a shared understanding of how they can support their children's learning at home.

Safeguarding (HMIE)

- Inspectors discussed safeguarding and child protection information provided by the ELC setting with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the ELC setting and the education authority.

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Outcome of inspection

We are confident that the ELC setting has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection.

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