

**Gartocharn Early Education
and Childcare Centre
West Dunbartonshire
Council
23 March 2011**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects centres in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their centre provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with centre staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the head of centre and staff about the strengths of the centre, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into playrooms and join other activities which children are involved in. We also gather the views of parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the centre. We describe how well children are doing, how good the centre is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the centre. We also comment on how well the centre works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the centre is led and how all staff help the centre achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the centre, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers and carers who are relatives or friends

Contents

1. The centre
2. Particular strengths of the centre
3. How well do children learn and achieve?
4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their centre community?
6. Does the centre have high expectations of all children?
7. Does the centre have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The centre

Gartocharn Early Education and Childcare Centre was inspected in January 2011 by HMIE on behalf of both HMIE and the Care Commission as part of the integrated inspection programme. The centre caters for pre-school children aged from birth to five years. It is registered for 30 children attending at any one session. The total roll was 43 at the time of the inspection.

2. Particular strengths of the centre

- Friendly, supportive ethos created by the manager and staff.
- Polite, well behaved children who are enjoying learning.
- The caring staff team who have developed positive relationships with children and families.
- The teamwork of the head of centre and staff, resulting in improved services for children and families.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Across the centre, all children feel relaxed, safe and secure within the environment. Babies are happy and relate very well to staff. They respond enthusiastically to music and are gaining confidence in movement. Children aged two to three years are learning good social skills, interacting with other children in play and learning to take turns. Children age three to five are forming friendships and like to play together. They engage very positively with a wide range of learning experiences. Children are beginning to be involved in planning their learning through discussions with staff. They enjoy making their own suggestions and sharing their knowledge and ideas.

Children have many opportunities to experience success. Through their eco school work, children and staff designed and successfully developed a nursery garden. They use this well to grow flowers, vegetables and herbs. As part of their work they achieved a third place award at the Drymen Show. Fundraising for local and national charities increases their awareness of what it means to be a responsible citizen.

Children aged three to five are making very good progress in their learning. They listen very attentively to adults and one another and take part in conversations and discussions well. Most children have a wide vocabulary and are very articulate. They listen and respond enthusiastically to stories. The majority of children are beginning to explore early writing through mark making in their play. Children are able to count confidently and are developing their understanding of numbers well. They are learning words to describe capacity and measurement while playing.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff follow local and national guidance to provide a very broad range of sensory, physical and investigative experiences for children under two. They organise a range of activities that are at the right level of difficulty for children aged two to three years. Staff working with children aged three to five years are developing their confidence and skills in using *Curriculum for Excellence*. Literacy, Numeracy and Health and wellbeing are beginning to be developed further across the curriculum. Staff are increasingly involving children in thinking and talking about topics for learning. Children enjoy expressing themselves through music and dance activities. They enjoy using the computer and whiteboard to help them learn. The curriculum is supported by visits to places of interest and by a variety of partners who come to the centre.

Across the centre, staff provide praise, encouragement and support for all children. Through consultation with parents and careful observation, staff make sure the care routines and development needs of younger children are well met. Staff working with children aged three to five work hard to match activities to the learning needs of most children. They record useful observations of children's progress in their learning profiles to help children celebrate their achievements. They are aware of the need to identify next steps in children's learning to ensure they make continuous progress. Staff recognise when

children need extra help with their learning. Individualised plans are prepared and reviewed in consultation with parents and outside professionals.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Staff actively support and promote good relationships in the community. Parents are very happy with the work of the centre and see it as central to their community. They offer high levels of support to the centre through their attendance at parents' meetings and fund-raising events. Parents find the daily contact, newsletters and parents' meetings with staff helpful. There is scope to improve children's learning profiles to ensure parents are better informed about their child's progress. The centre has established very effective links with outside professionals who provide support to children and their families. Staff have flexible and responsive approaches which help children settle into the centre and move through stages comfortably. They are continuing to develop existing transition arrangements with schools to help children build on what they have already learned.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their centre community?

Staff have created a very welcoming and caring ethos. They are keen to improve further children's learning experiences. In doing so, they take account of parents' and children's views. Children are gaining confidence in talking about how they contribute to improving the centre. The Eco group have improved the outdoor learning environment to support opportunities for observations and investigations. Staff have a good understanding of the strengths of the centre. They have introduced monthly meetings to help them reflect more regularly on the quality of learning. As a result, they work very

effectively together to identify areas for improvement. In planning for improvement, the centre should set clearer timescales to help them achieve their identified targets.

6. Does the centre have high expectations of all children?

The centre's caring ethos helps children develop confidence in themselves as successful learners. Children are treated fairly and with respect. They are learning to celebrate different cultures and festivals through play experiences. Staff have high expectations of children's care, welfare and development. They are well informed about procedures to protect children from harm. The centre places emphasis on developing children's understanding of health and wellbeing. As part of this, good manners and behaviour are actively promoted by staff. Children are encouraged to use good hygiene practices. They enjoy their healthy snacks and meals and are actively involved in selecting menus.

7. Does the centre have a clear sense of direction?

The head of centre has been successful in making the centre a motivating place for children to enjoy learning. She knows the centre, children and staff very well. She puts children and their families at the heart of the centre's work. Through this, she has gained the confidence and respect of all parents, children and staff. She has created a positive sense of teamwork and is very well supported by the team leader who fulfils her remit very effectively. All staff have a clear understanding of what they want the centre to be like and what children need from the centre. The centre shows a clear capacity to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the good quality of education provided by the centre, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The centre and education authority will inform parents about the centre's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the centre and education authority.

- Develop approaches to identify children's next steps in learning and share these with children and parents.
- Develop further the approaches to evaluating the work of the centre for improvement.

Quality indicators help centres, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a centre. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each centre, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish centres are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Gartocharn Early Education and Childcare Centre.

Improvements in performance	good
Children's experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the centre.

The curriculum	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

Managing Inspector: Sheona Moore
23 March 2011

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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You can find our complaints procedure on our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259.

You can also contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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