

7 December 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

**Auchnacraig Early Education and Childcare Centre
West Dunbartonshire Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleague and I visited and inspected your child's pre-school centre. Throughout our visit we talked to parents and children and we worked closely with the head of centre and staff. We wanted to find out how well children were learning and achieving and how well the pre-school centre supported children to do their best. The head of centre shared with us the pre-school centre's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the pre-school centre's recent work including the impact of learning outdoors and through the expressive arts on children's confidence and progress in learning, the way staff plan and lead learning, and how they support children and their families. As a result, we were able to find out how good the pre-school centre was at improving children's education. I would now like to tell you what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

We are confident that your children learn and achieve very well. Children are happy, confident and enthusiastic about learning. They are highly motivated by their varied learning experiences in the extensive outdoor play spaces and 'forest school'. They are able to make appropriate choices about what and where to learn. Many children concentrate well on their chosen activity for long periods of time. Older children successfully support new children as they learn the routines of the day. Children show high levels of independence as they dress themselves for being outside, serve their own snack and tidy away toys. Children understand the need for using tools safely when whittling wood. They are kind to each other during play and can remind each other when necessary of the golden rules.

Almost all children are making positive progress across their literacy skills. They listen well to staff and each other during story time. They enjoy putting on the 'story coat' and acting out the characters in their favourite stories. Children and parents often take time to share a story at the beginning of the day. This is helping children to develop an interest in books. Most children can recount with accuracy a story or personal account. They 'write' their name on the register each day and often try to write their name on their pictures. A few more able children would benefit from more challenging language activities. Almost all children show an interest in number through their play. They can count orally to ten and recognise the numerals during games and play activities. When building an aeroplane they used longer and shorter materials to make their plane. In an art activity they worked as a team to work out how to carry water from a large container to a smaller one.

How well does the pre-school centre support children to develop and learn?

The staff meet the learning and development needs of children very well. Staff provide sensitive and well judged support to children and families. They take time each day to talk to parents and to share information about how well children are progressing with their learning. Staff encourage parents to share in the planning of learning by adding comments to children's 'learning folders' and attending curriculum events. Staff have successfully developed their planning system to be more responsive and flexible to children's interests. They regularly involve children in using the 'big book' to plan what they would like to learn next. Overall, these arrangements are very effective. There is scope to improve further the way staff support and challenge more able learners. Staff identify early children who find learning difficult. They work closely with other agencies to provide the right kind of support for children and where required, their families. Staff make effective use of the guidance contained in Curriculum for Excellence to provide a curriculum which is broad, relevant and child-centered. Staff use for significant periods of time, the outdoors, including the recently developed, forest school to help children gain a wide range of skills. These include skills in teamworking, learning about the world around them and about the importance of recycling. Children benefit from the links with the local allotments group where they learn about planting and growing. The well planned programme of creative and sensory activities is helping children to feel good about themselves as individuals. Staff could extend further the range of partners they work with as they further develop the curriculum.

How well does the pre-school centre improve the quality of its work?

We are confident that the nursery can continue to improve the quality of its work. The head of centre and staff have developed a good system for evaluating the work of the nursery. Together they have identified the strengths of the centre and noted a few areas that need to improve. The head of centre needs to have a more strategic view and adopt a more robust approach to monitoring playroom practice. Parents are very satisfied with the quality of the care and education. They particularly value the warm welcome they receive each day and the many forms of support and information provided by the head of centre and her staff. They do not as yet receive an annual written report. The staff, with the support of the head of centre are actively involved in developing their skills as leaders of learning. They work very well together and willingly take on extra responsibilities and develop new initiatives. Many of them have been successful in and working on attaining additional professional qualifications. The centre is well placed to build on its strengths and has the clear capacity to improve the areas outlined below.

Our inspection of your pre-school centre found the following key strengths.

- Happy, motivated children who are growing in confidence as responsible learners.
- The quality of children's learning experiences outdoors and in the forest school.
- The inclusive nurturing environment for learning.
- Strong and supportive partnerships with parents.
- The focus on leadership for learning by the head of centre and staff team.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the pre-school centre. This is what we agreed with them.

- Improve further communication with parents by providing an annual written report on children's progress in learning.
- Improve further self-evaluation activities, for example by adopting more rigorous procedures for observing and recording playroom practice.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE INSPECTION?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the pre-school centre's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The head of centre and local authority will inform parents about the pre-school centre's progress as part of the arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of the pre-school centre.

Marion Burns
HM Inspector
7 December 2011

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/ViewEstablishment.aspx?id=10104&type=1>.

Please contact us if you want to know how to get the report in a different format, for example, in a translation. You can contact us at enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at BMCT, Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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