



28 June 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Mayfield Nursery School
Midlothian Council**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited and inspected your child's early learning and childcare (ELC) setting. Throughout our visit we talked to parents and children and we worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well children were learning and achieving and how well the ELC setting supported children to do their best. The acting headteacher shared with us the ELC setting's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the ELC setting's recent work including visible learning with children. As a result, we were able to find out how good the ELC setting was at improving children's education. I would now like to tell you what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

Across the nursery and the ICAN Speech, Language and Communication unit all children are learning and achieving very well. We were impressed by the calm, purposeful learning environment which is supporting the needs of all children. Staff show a consistent and positive approach in their interactions which is helping children achieve. As a result, children show a great deal of confidence in their learning environment both within the playrooms and outside in their recently improved nursery garden. They are responding well to the freedom to lead their own learning and display a great deal of enjoyment as they play. Alongside their friends they are working closely with staff to plan experiences which capture their interests such as, recent work on the 'Big Bird Watch' and in planting and growing seeds and vegetables.

Children are making very good progress in early language and mathematics. Children's communication and listening skills are developing well. Children listen well to adults and each other. Staff use sign-along strategies with consistency and skill to support children's communication throughout the nursery. Children are learning in a literacy-enriched environment. Children are interested in finding out about the meaning of new words when talking about a story. They also thoroughly

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Transforming lives through learning

enjoy retelling a story using puppets and props and are developing an understanding of character. For example, being the giant when retelling the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. The development of 'Big Bedtime Read' where children borrow five books a week for reading at home is showing many benefits including fostering a love of stories and for some children a more settled approach to sleep. Children in the ICAN unit were showing increased confidence in making up and talking about sentences. They particularly showed great enjoyment in the humour of funny stories that they were creating. Almost all children are experimenting with mark-making through writing their names, initial letters and some labels. They are beginning to write in their own learning folders. Children's understanding of aspects of early mathematics and numeracy is developing well as they play. For example, they were interested in measuring the height of the beans they had planted using a metre stick and also the height of some nursery furniture. At snack time, children were able to use number recognition to know how many pieces of fruit for snack when serving themselves. Children are becoming adept at sorting and putting objects into categories such as matching the species of soft toy birds. A few children were counting on by two up to the number 20. Children are benefiting from the emphasis staff place on children's health and wellbeing. Skilful work by staff is clearly supporting children to manage their own feelings which is helping them to communicate their needs effectively.

How well does the early learning and childcare setting support children to develop and learn?

In the nursery and ICAN unit, the overall quality of support to all children is excellent. Staff know each child as an individual and as a result children's learning needs are met very effectively. They have created a calm and inclusive learning environment for all children. Staff show skill in providing learning experiences which are responsive to children's interests but set at the right level of difficulty. This, in turn helps children make sustained progress in their learning. When children need additional support with their learning, the involvement and willingness of parents, partners and outside agencies is commendable. For example, the Ready Steady Nursery initiative was created to support children who struggled at first with the busy nursery environment. This has proved highly successful for children who now are happily engaged in their learning.

The ICAN unit children are benefiting very well from the sensitive and caring approach by skilled staff and Speech and Language therapists. This results in highly effective support for each individual child. Children are making very good progress from when they first started the unit. Importantly children are settled, eager to engage in their learning and their level of participation is high. At other times the ICAN unit children are part of the wider nursery group. It is to the credit and skill of all staff that this transition is truly seamless and inclusive and sensitive support is provided if needed. This was not necessary during the time of the inspection as children showed confidence in the wider group.

Staff develop and refresh their shared understanding of the curriculum using their very good knowledge and best practice in early learning. The curriculum reflects national guidance and the specific context of the nursery school. Recent changes to their approaches to planning is helping develop child-led learning. This is having a

positive impact by taking better account of children's interests and has a consistent focus on literacy and numeracy. Staff are tracking and monitoring children's learning more consistently in their daily discussions, floorbooks, and learning walls for children and parents. Children's curiosity and inquiry is encouraged through a keen interest in the natural world and visits outwith the nursery to Dalhousie Castle helped children build on their learning. Creativity and music are a regular feature of the curriculum through work with the music specialist helping children develop their sense of rhythm and beat. We are very pleased about the arrangements for children transferring into the nursery, from the ICAN unit to the main nursery and the targeted work with local primary schools to ensure a child's start at whatever setting is smooth and well supported.

How well does the early learning and childcare setting improve the quality of its work?

Self-evaluation leading to improvement is integral to the life and work of the nursery. The acting headteacher plays a pivotal role in leading the whole staff team. The acting headteacher and staff place each child and family at the heart of everything they do. They work hard to involve parents and carers to help them provide a service which meets the needs of children. They regularly ask for your views to make changes and often parental support is evident, such as helping to establish the improved outside play area. Innovative work on understanding children's attendance, led by the acting headteacher with staff from the local authority children and families' team has allowed the nursery to link what they can provide to better meet the needs of the local community. All staff are involved in self-evaluation activities using information from research findings and national improvement frameworks. Visits to other high-performing settings are encouraged to improve and challenge staff knowledge and practice. Staff are reflective and adapt and change their practice to continually meet the needs of the children in their care. For example, the decision to create two playrooms rather than one large space has been successful in improving the environment for children's learning. We are confident that Mayfield Nursery School will continue to build on the many strengths outlined in this letter and will continue to further improve.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and no recommendations.

Our inspection of your ELC setting found the following key strengths.

- Confident, resilient children who thoroughly enjoy their nursery experience.
- The welcoming and inclusive ethos, created by staff, where children feel respected and encouraged to be the best they can be.
- Children's progress in communication, early language and literacy.
- Strong relationships and productive partnerships with external agencies.
- The highly effective leadership of the acting headteacher and commitment to self-evaluation.

We discussed with staff and Midlothian Council how they might continue to improve the ELC setting. This is what we agreed with them.

- Develop further the current arrangements for improvements to ensure appropriate and well-informed change.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the ELC setting's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of innovative practice which we would like to explore further in order to share the practice with others. As a result we will work with the ELC setting and local authority in order to record and share more widely the innovative practice.

Elizabeth Paterson
HM Inspector

Sarah Hermiston
Care Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations for your setting can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/eyc/MayfieldNurserySchoolDalkeithMidlothian.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0131 244 4330, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.