

28 June 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

**Larkhall Children's Centre  
South Lanarkshire Council**

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

**How well do children learn and achieve?**

Children learn and achieve very well in Larkhall Children's Centre. They enjoy their experiences, are enthusiastic, happy and well settled. Children concentrate very well in all of the rooms and spend good periods of time involved in interesting and stimulating activities. Babies and toddlers use their senses to explore smells and textures and are confident when trying new experiences. The toddlers particularly enjoy visiting the local construction site and spent a long time building their own homes with sand and toy bricks. All children make choices about where and what they want to learn. They are helped to do this with the use of symbols. In the three to five room, children contribute their opinions through group time discussions about what they want to learn. These are sought and acted upon. For example, after a group discussion the children spent time looking for insects, snails and worms in the garden so they could look at them in more detail under the microscope. They then discussed different parts of their bodies. Children very much enjoy their learning. Staff recognise that they could talk to children even more about their learning to help them understand what they are good at and what they need to learn next. Children of all ages are developing their imaginative play and investigating their environment in the well-developed, well-resourced and varied outdoor play areas. They access a wide range of attractive and appropriate resources. All

children have online learning journals which staff update regularly with observations of their learning. Parents can access the online learning journals anytime. Throughout the setting, children's achievements are celebrated in their online learning journals and on displays.

Almost all children are making very good progress in early literacy and language and numeracy and mathematics. Children are confident communicators, who use a range of vocabulary to express themselves well. They enjoy listening to stories each day and independently looking at books in their library area. Almost all children use their own drawings and written marks to express ideas and feelings. Children have a good grasp of early mathematics. They are developing skills in sorting, matching, measuring and counting. For example, they were estimating the heights of different constructions they had built. Children relate their numeracy skills to real-life experiences, for example, counting the number of pieces of snack they can have. As the setting has identified, the children's online learning journals are developing and evolving. The setting should now review the use of journals with children and parents. Children have an awareness of environmental and sustainability issues through their eco work, for example, recycling all their food waste. The setting has achieved a silver award from Eco-Schools Scotland.

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

Children are supported very well to develop and learn. Across the playrooms, staff are focused on helping children to become successful in their learning. Children who need additional help with their learning are identified and supported at an early stage. Staff work very well with parents and other professionals to support children's needs. They successfully incorporate advice provided by partners into their planning for individual children. Relationships between staff, children and their families are very strong which supports children's learning. Staff observe children closely. They share observations and use them to assess and track progress. This informs planning next steps in learning which are documented in their individual learning plans. In order for children to achieve even more, staff should now develop further observations of learning, to be carefully focused on each individual child's progress and next steps. This will support more effective assessment of children's progress in order to target support and challenge.

National guidance and a sound understanding of how children develop enable staff to plan stimulating experiences for the youngest children. Staff working with children aged three to five years use Curriculum for Excellence to help plan an appropriate balance of child-led and new experiences. Staff use the local area and local community well to enhance the curriculum. For example, children visit shops, construction sites and the local library. Staff naturally include children's interests in planning, for example, following their interest in space to provide stimulating resources and activities. This ensures a broad curriculum that interests and motivates young learners. Staff have developed a rich learning environment in the outdoor area. Staff are skilful when interacting with children. They make good use of questions and discussions to extend and challenge children's learning. Staff are making good progress embedding literacy and numeracy across other areas of learning. They should continue to provide increased opportunities for early literacy

and numeracy. Children are well supported when they first come to the setting and move between buildings. Transition on to primary school is very effective and provides children and families with very good support. The setting is continuing to work hard to establish even closer links with local primary schools to ensure children make continuous progress as they move on to P1.

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

The setting has gone through an unsettled period over the last two years with changes of buildings, a significant increase in the number of children and many staff changes. However, all these changes have been managed effectively by the management team. There is now a committed staff team, who work very well together, reflect on experiences offered to children each day and make changes to improve the quality of learning. We are confident that the setting is improving the quality of its work. The management team are very reflective and work well with staff in a very supportive way to build their leadership skills. All staff are continually developing approaches to self-evaluation. Staff are aware of the strengths of the setting and aspects which require further improvement. They undertake relevant staff development activities to support their own professional learning. The views of children, parents and authority staff are taken account of to help improve the work of the setting. In order to improve the setting further, staff need to continue to develop an effective system to track children's individual progress in learning to ensure they are making the very best progress. The setting is well supported by South Lanarkshire Council.

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

- Welcoming and caring ethos within the setting which nurtures positive relationships with families to support children's learning.
- Support for families of children with additional support needs.
- The effective leadership of the management team in handling change and building leadership qualities in the staff.

I discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the ELC setting. This is what I agreed with them.

- Continue to ensure high quality learning experiences at all times both inside and outdoors to enhance further children's learning and achievements.
- Continue to develop the use of the online learning journals to track the progression of children's learning.

## **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 visits in connection with this inspection. As part of the arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of the ELC, South Lanarkshire Council will inform parents about the setting's progress.

Dr Noreen Philips  
HM 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/Larkhall/ChildrensCentreLarkhallSouthLanarkshire.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.

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