

*Castlehill Early Years Centre  
Standards and Quality Report  
2022-2023*



## Context of the Centre

Castlehill Early Years Centre (EYC) is an educational provision that offers extended day and yearlong provision for up to 96 children aged 2-5 years old. It provides a flexible service to families in the locality, with 83 children currently enrolled. We have spaces for up to 80, 3-5 year olds and 20, two year olds.

The EYC comprises of 3 substantial playrooms as well as a large outdoor area which has access from all our playrooms. Within our outdoor space we have a tarmacked area, a meadow and a beautiful forest area. The forest area within our centre grounds provides a shaded provision during very hot weather. A local forest area also adds to the outdoor provision for our children. The free flow access from each playroom means that children have daily access to the outdoors. An area with a canopy provides shelter from inclement weather. The children have opportunities to engage in a wide range of play experiences when outdoors such as wheeled toys, a tyre swing, mud kitchen, den building, music area, climbing areas, slides as well as a huge range of loose parts. This high quality and ranging environment is supporting our children to develop curiosity skills, health and wellbeing as well as literacy and numeracy skills.

Our staff team comprises of a Head Teacher, an Acting Depute Head of Centre, and equivalent of 2 Senior Early Years workers (1 full-time and 2 part-time). We currently have 19 Early Years Workers, a permanent Early Years Support Worker and a temporary Early Years Support Worker. We also have two Early Years Teacher who work part-time.

The embedded document below details the Vision, Values and Aims at Castlehill, which underpin all that we do:



Castlehill primary  
and ELR VV&A.docx

## Progress in Centre Improvement Plan (CIP) priorities

### Centre priority 1: Develop consistent high quality planning, tracking and assessment.

Care Inspectorate Quality Framework QIs

1.3 play and learning

4.3 staff development

NIF Priority

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in Literacy and Numeracy.
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

NIF Driver

Curriculum and assessment

Teacher and Practitioner professionalism

HGIOELC QIs

QI 1.3 Leadership of Change

QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching & Assessment

QI 2.2 Curriculum

Progress and impact:

Consultation with staff was undertaken to review the planning process. A phased introduction to more formal planning was introduced with confident staff, then cascading and supporting colleagues until all staff are now using a rigorous approach to planning and evaluating learning which ensures child's interests and developmental needs are central. Most staff are confident using this new model. A guidance pack has been created for new staff and regular feedback is shared by other colleagues, SLT and the Early Years Teacher. Effective support, through a coaching and mentoring approach, is in place for a few staff who continue to find the planning process challenging. High quality floorbooks, that document the journey of learning through play, are now implemented and almost all staff, indicated through staff questionnaires, are confident completing these with children. Next steps could include a focus on involving parents and families within the planning process, making more coherent links between learning at home, and at the centre.

Significant focus this session has been on making changes to the learning environments, both indoors and outdoors. This process included a review of existing environments, identifying good practice and areas for development. More defined zones were introduced, including a deconstructed role play area facilitating creativity and discovery. Quality assurance, such as focused observations and regular environmental audits, has shown this area to be well used by children, and when an adult is there to scaffold play through high quality questioning and interactions, the quality of learning is improved through an increase in use of imagination, collaboration and exploration. Numeracy audits show that this could be further enhanced across the playrooms, and that staff would benefit from training to raise confidence to support numeracy and maths progression.

Throughout the session, the views of both children and families has been gathered in a variety of ways. Almost all parents report that their children are making good progress and view the environments, both indoors and outdoors, as high quality.

Tracking of learning across Early Level, using the benchmarks continues to be embedded within Early Years Workers practice. In spite of recruitment challenges across early years we have maintained challenge and support for individual children. Despite this, support and challenge for individual children has continued to take place. Children's needs are identified quickly and most staff are confident to work on individual targets within play opportunities, or during group time. A new progressive tracking system will further support the 2-3 room staff is maintaining consistency. with next steps identified.

All staff have identified Champion Roles. This involves participation in training, cascading skills and expertise to colleagues and ensuring that opportunities for learning are evident across the playrooms. Our Schematic Play Champion shares information regularly with staff during meetings, and with parents through the learning journals.

Next Steps:

- To raise attainment in numeracy and maths, through a maths rich environment.
- Identify a maths champion
- To raise confidence to track skills effectively from 2-3.
- To increase parent contribution to the planning process.

**Centre priority 2: Increase parental involvement in the life and work of Castlehill EYC and in their child's learning.**

NIF Priority

- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing;
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

HGIOELC QIs

- QI 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality & inclusion
- QI 2.5 Family Learning
- QI 2.7 Partnerships

NIF Driver

Parent/carer involvement and engagement

Care Inspectorate Quality Framework QIs

1.4 Family engagement

1.1 nurturing care and support

Progress and impact:

There has been a significant increase in positive communication and relationships with both parents and the wider this session.

Over the session, a number of events have taken place to welcome parents and families into the Centre. This included: McMillan Coffee morning; a Fashion show fundraiser and a Christmas Singalong and stalls and end of session Graduation. Family engagement increased as the year went on. Our first event had 37.29% attendance and our last event, the Graduation having a 100%. As a result, positive relationships have been sustained and develop and most children are observed have a sense of pride and belonging to the centre.

There have been a number of initiatives planned and implemented to ensure that parents have a clear understanding of the learning that their child experiences when in Castlehill Early Years Centre, this has included: parent consultations; 3 stay and play sessions, and a curriculum evening. Feedback from events has indicated that we need to offer a wider range of times to ensure that working parents can attend. 'Cheeky Challenges' and 'Barney Bear' were introduced this session, supporting families to engage in investigative and imaginative activities at home, sharing findings with the centre. These have been very successful, with some families asking for more.

During our May parent's consultations, parents were offered a wider range of times, from 8am and 6pm and as a result more parents were able to attend. Sway newsletters are now being used to increase engagement in the life and work of the centre. This will be monitored next session. A refreshed approach, through the use of Blogs has been implemented and as a result, parents have regular feedback on learning taking place in the nursery. Next steps might include widening this to include Twitter to enable children's photos and videos to be shared, with consent. Families would also benefit from a more specific focus on how to develop learning at home.

Workshops for parents ran throughout the month of May and June with guest speakers from: Speech and Language Therapy; Occupational Therapy; Social Work; Educational Psychology and Active Schools. Parents shared the value of these session and of those that attended, most attended all sessions. As a result, parents of some children with Additional Support Needs are more confident in supporting their child's needs.

Our Family Champion has been involved in Council led Family Support Group meetings and is now more confident in planning and implementing targeted support to families and individuals. A notice board was created with tips and strategies to support parent across wide range of issues such as: toileting, sleep, challenging behaviours. Drop-in sessions were offered to the parent body, but this was not well supported. More creative ways of engaging families in supports should be a focus next session.

Partnership working was established between the centre and the local care home. Some children were able to visit the care home and interact with residents through activities such as animal handling, pancake making, yoga sessions. Almost all residents were keen and motivated to interact with the children and would look forward to our visit. A sports 'day' event was planned for the centre, which some residents attended. They also attended our graduation in June. As a result, most children who took part in this initiative now have a greater understanding of the wider Castlehill community.

Next Steps:

- Refresh of school and Early Years Centre's Vision, values and aims, linking in with the reaccreditation of Gold Rights Respecting Schools Status.
- Focus more on ways to support families lead learning at home.
- Family champion – establishing other ways to engage families in centre.
- Re-establish the use of Twitter to celebrate success and share learning with both parents and the wider community.
- Care Home – Continue to develop and improve these sessions – have the care home in EYC
- Monitor sway 'glances' and 'deep reads'.

**Centre priority 3:** To increase attainment in Health and Wellbeing through creating an enabling environment across the centre, both indoors and out.

**NIF Priority**

- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing;
- Improvement in attainment, particularly in Literacy and Numeracy.
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

**NIF Driver**

Curriculum and assessment  
School and ELC leadership  
Teacher and Practitioner professionalism

**HGIOELC QIs**

- QI 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality & inclusion
- QI 3.3 Developing creativity and skills for life and learning
- QI 2.2 Curriculum

**Care Inspectorate Quality Framework QIs**

1.3 play and learning

2.1 Quality of the setting for play and learning

**Progress and impact:**

The now established zoned areas, provide children with increased opportunity for discovery, enquiry and investigation. Regular environmental audits ensure that materials and equipment provided for the children reflect their interests and motivations and as a result most children are observed as highly engaged. As a result, most children were observed during focussed observations and learning walks, to be exploring a range of resources and experiences across our playrooms. Most children were also observed displaying high levels of engagement.

Through self-evaluation, staff identified key strengths within the outdoor area and areas for improvement. Our container has now been removed, providing a wide open, safer space for children. Increased access to the forest and meadow area has been facilitated leading to most children spending their nursery time outdoors. Free flow is now well established across our 3-5 playrooms, including outdoors. As a result, most children are observed as being self-motivated, leaders of their own learning and more independent. Next steps could include increased and more effective use of loose parts.

This session, all staff took on Champion Roles across a range of themes and curricular areas, including a Health and Wellbeing Champion. Staff surveys show most staff feel an integral and valued part of the centre. Through effective PDRs, most staff have a clear understanding of their role. Most staff have shown professional dedication through attendance at courses and effective use of their CPD time. Some staff were able to visit other establishments and observe good practice, reflecting on how this could be considered within Castlehill.

Together time was reintroduced this session, which children are 'invited' to take part in. As the session has progressed, more children are now choosing to opt in. As a result, staff are able to meet individual needs and/or next steps. Strong, trusting relationships between children and their key worker are established and as a result, staff know their children and families well, and can report on progress with confidence.

A focus was undertaken this session to reflect on the pace of the day, specifically for those children attending nursery until late afternoon. Staff audited resources and offered in the late afternoon session, adapting approaches to ensure those children in the centre are highly supported. As a result, the end of day is now more settled. This has been noted by parental feedback in surveys.

Work has been planned and completed this session to develop understanding of nurture and a nurturing environment. Nurture Champion roles were established, and staff took part in training across the session. As a result, nurturing environments/spaces are more evident in the centre, providing a safe space for children who are dysregulated, or needing a quiet space. Due to staffing challenges, planned wellbeing interventions were unable to take place. Next steps could include a more focussed approach to developing emotional literacy for children.

**Next Steps:**

- Establish a progressive approach to developing emotional literacy within the centre.
- Staff training within the area of loose parts.

## Progress in National Improvement Framework (NIF) priorities

Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Through continued rigorous quality assurance as well as effective tracking and monitoring processes, almost all children across the centre are making good progress in these areas. Our Early Years Teacher provides effective support and challenge for identified children and supports Early Years staff to implement approaches within everyday interactions and play experiences which evidence progress and identify next steps. Literacy and Numeracy Champion roles, established within the PRD process, provide additional opportunities and support for all children.

Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people; As a Gold Rights Respecting School and establishment since 2018, early intervention approaches are in place, ensuring that children who would benefit from additional support are identified timeously. Our Pupil Support Group (PSG) is active in discussing and establishing strategies and supports to enhance learning. Working closely with families allows staff to meet the holistic needs of each child and their individual needs, providing bespoke parenting support for families where needed.

Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing;

Enrolment procedures include a clear and concise child's care plan which is sent to parents to support home links from the earliest stage. This is updated every 6 months. Having a nurturing and welcoming staff team allows trust to build and support to be implemented as and when required.

## Self-evaluations of How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare

Quality indicator	Centre self-evaluation	Inspection/ Authority evaluation
1.3 Leadership of change	Good	Choose an item.
2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	Good	Choose an item.
3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equity and inclusion	Good	Choose an item.
3.2 Securing Children's Progress	Good	Choose an item.

## Summary of Centre Improvement priorities for Session 2023/2024

- Children will experience a progressive, relevant and appropriately challenging experience within all areas of maths making progress across almost all concepts.
- Parents and families will feel confident to support their child's individual learning both at home and at the centre.
- Refresh of school and centre's Vision, Values and Aims including reaccreditation of Gold Rights Respecting Status.

## What is our capacity for continuous improvement?

As a team at Castlehill, almost all staff are motivated to work both as a team and individually through high quality professional learning, to continue our journey of improvement. We provide a nurturing, challenging and supportive environment for our children and are committed to supporting all families. The staff team are dedicated to high standards and to improving outcomes for all our children. We are confident that our established procedures will continue to ensure appropriate support and challenge for children. Our revised tracking / monitoring and self-evaluation procedures puts us in a positive place to continuously improve.