Perth and Kinross Education and Children’s Services (ECS) is in partnership with the Wendy House Private Nursery to provide Early Learning and Childcare for children aged three to five years old.

The centre is subject to external scrutiny by Education Scotland (HMI) with evaluations awarded for national quality indicators based on the provision for three to five year olds. The Care Inspectorate regulates the service measuring against the National Care Standards. These inspections take account of the entire service and are carried out on a risk assessed basis but are normally no longer than two years apart.

The centre is subject to support and challenge from ECS through the Centre Improvement Framework with regular quality assurance and support visits. Each visit has a clear focus on aspects of the centre’s work which is based on improvement planning and self-evaluation. A Partner Provider Support Teacher regularly visits the centre to provide children with access to a teacher and to support staff in developing learning and teaching. An Early Years Development Teacher supports transition and moderation within a defined locality.

The purpose of this visit was to support the centre in the process of self-evaluation and was conducted by a team of two officers from across Education and Children’s Services. The themes subject to scrutiny were based on core Quality Indicators from The Child at the Centre and reflected the most recent Education Scotland Advice Note which outlines the raised expectations in relation to the centre’s implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence particularly focusing on transition and self-evaluation.

At the time of the Extended Learning and Achievement visit The Wendy House Private Nursery had 54 children registered. At the time of the visit 9 children were aged between 0 and 2 years and 26 were aged between 2 and 4 years. The nursery occupies the ground floor of the owner’s home. The accommodation consists of a separate baby room and a large room incorporating a conservatory for children aged two to five years. A spacious garden with a variety of surfaces is available for all children.

The nursery benefits from the strong leadership and the clear vision of the owner who ensures children, staff and parents are fully involved in the life of the centre. This has resulted in a strong sense of community where all involved work together towards continuous improvement. The ‘Friends of the
Wendy House’ is a very strong staff/parent group which allows regular opportunities for partnership working.

There is a warm, affectionate and respectful ethos throughout the nursery. All children are happy, settled and almost all are progressing very well in their development and learning. Transition arrangements for entry and progress through the nursery and on to school are strong and effective.

The focus of the visit to the 3 to 5 year olds was achievement, learning and leadership.

All the features of expected good practice were evident. In addition the centre demonstrated particularly positive practice which is detailed below.

**ACHIEVEMENT**

Evidence of children's achievement was gathered through discussion with staff, observing children, talking to children about their learning and looking at their individual folders which they enjoy sharing.

Literacy and numeracy is embedded in play contexts. Children are making very good progress and can demonstrate their knowledge and skills both inside and outside.

Children are becoming aware of the wider world through successfully fundraising significant sums of money to support charities such as the British Heart and Stroke Society and their partner nursery in Malawi.

**LEARNING**

This section reports on Children's Experiences, Meeting Learners' Needs and the Curriculum.

Evidence was gathered through observation of children’s learning, reviewing planning, and sharing children’s folders with them.

**2.1 Children’s experiences**

The homely, positive ethos and strong sense of community within the centre is enhanced by the parents’ support in working with children to share their knowledge and skills.

There is a strong focus on outdoor learning and children enjoy daily opportunities for outdoor play however this could be developed further to provide more contrasting experiences from those indoors making full use of the natural environment.

Staff are sensitively engaged with the children during their play and treat them with kindness and respect however taking part in the forthcoming Talk, Listen,
Communicate (TLC) training will support them to further enhance the quality of their interactions and to support children’s early communication skills.

5.1 The curriculum

Staff are confident in planning learning based on Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. The curriculum is personalised to take account of children’s needs and interests and there is evidence of enjoyment, coherence and relevance. However, quality of planning was not evident at the group time activity and children would benefit from shorter, more focused learning opportunities at these times.

There is a wide variety of rich and stimulating activities provided to support children’s learning. However, the structure of the session limits children’s opportunities to freely select the very good activities that would support learning across the curriculum. Whilst there are a wide variety of learning opportunities outdoors, the older children would benefit from more frequent access to the stories, music and role-play activities that are also available indoors.

Staff work with the Early Years Development Teacher and the Partner Provider Support Teacher to plan positive transition arrangements with schools which help children confidently move on from the nursery to various schools across Perth and Kinross. Last session the owner/manager paid visits to the children in all seven receiving schools. In discussion with school staff she learned that an earlier start to co-operative learning in nursery would support children to work in pairs in P1. This has resulted in more planned experiences for children to work in pairs in the Wendy House.

5.3 Meeting learners’ needs

Staff and children are aware of learning targets and closely monitor progress towards meeting these. As a number of children are making very good progress in their learning and development, staff will need to be sure to plan for appropriate pace and challenge as the year progresses to ensure all children’s learning needs continue to be met.

Curriculum for Excellence and Pre-Birth to Three guidance is carefully blended resulting in all children experiencing learning that reflects their age and stage of development.

Staff are skilled in identifying children with any additional needs. They work closely with parents and seek guidance from external agencies to appropriately support children in their learning and development.

LEADERSHIP

Evidence was gathered through discussion with the centre owner/manager, staff, parents, children and through feedback from previous ECS monitoring
visits, the Centre’s Standards and Quality Report, Centre self evaluation and the Centre Improvement Plan.

The owner/manager has a very clear vision for the centre and provides strong leadership for children, staff and parents.

Staff are empowered to take leadership roles and are involved in taking forward developments in the Centre Improvement Plan. This collegiate approach has resulted in the ongoing improvement of the service.

All staff are engaged in a planned programme of training and development. Weekly planning meetings and two weekend in-service days form part of their contractual agreement to ensure all staff are fully aware of local and national priorities and are provided with further training to enhance their work with children.

The parent group ‘Friends of the Wendy House’ is very supportive and engages in self evaluation along with staff and children using the well-being wheel. Ideas provided by parents are evaluated and acted upon to enhance the service.

Parents and children are involved in staff recruitment and have brought fresh ideas and rigour to the process.

**Children aged 0-3**

Babies and children under 3 are very well looked after, happy and content. Staff are warm and caring in their approach and they have created a friendly and homely environment to ensure children feel safe and secure.

Home routines, particularly for babies, are closely followed according to parents’ wishes. Staff ensure parents are well informed about their children’s nursery experience through a variety of methods including daily slips, Facebook, email and newsletters and ensure that there is time to talk with parents at drop off and pick up times.

Staff plan appropriately taking account of the needs and interests of the children using Pre Birth to Three guidance.

In planning for transition staff sensitively take account of each child’s stage of development rather than their chronological age to ensure children are well supported by familiar adults.

**AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Overall the children at The Wendy House Nursery have a wide and stimulating range of learning opportunities. The leadership of the owner/manager is instrumental in maintaining the high quality of the service and in securing ongoing improvement.
Following discussion with the centre the following specific areas for improvement have been identified:

By end of December 2013 staff should review the structure of the nursery day to ensure all children have sufficient opportunities, on a daily basis, to access the wide and varied experiences provided to support their learning across the curriculum.

Throughout session 2013-14 the centre should continue to build on the programme to develop children’s literacy skills by training staff in their delivery of appropriate approaches to early level Literacy and English including, as planned, taking part in TLC to further enhance staff interaction with children.

Throughout the year the centre will continue as planned, to work towards achieving the outcomes detailed in the Centre Improvement Plan to achieve continuous improvement of the service.

HMI Report

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