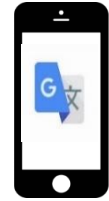




Cairns Early Childhood Centre

Family Newsletter

January 2026



A very warm welcome to our new children and families who have joined us at the start of January. It's been lovely getting to know you and your child over the last few weeks.

As well as welcoming our new children and families to the Centre, we welcomed new staff to the team. Emma, Gemma and Lauren all started with us this month. Emma is a permanent member of staff, who is keyworker to the Rhino group. Gemma is a temporary member of staff and is keyworker to the Monkey group on a Monday, Tuesday and alternate Wednesdays. Lauren is a permanent Support Assistant to the authority and will be at Cairns until June 2026. Lauren joins us following her maternity leave and is in the Centre on a Monday, Tuesday, Friday until mid-March, when she will be with us full-time. I'm sure you will join us in welcoming them to the ECC.

We also have Zamara (Ocean Room), Wajiha and Shannon (Jungle Room) on supply, one of the Early Years' Teachers, Mandi (Jungle Room) and our students: Erin, Zed and Chloe, all in the ECC across the week.

We welcome back Lizzy, our Senior Clerical. In our main office you will now find Lorraine on a Monday, Lizzy on a Tuesday through to Friday, and Pamela or Beccy across the full week.

It's been a long month, so let's see what's been happening and what's coming up in the ECC.

What happened in January?

January was a month of settling back into our routines and getting to know all our new children; some of our children moved through to new playrooms whilst some of our children have never been to nursery before. It's been lovely to see new relationships forming and children becoming more familiar with the routines and the environment, learning from peers and from staff.

We celebrated Scottish week with lots of Scottish-themed activities such as weaving tartan, highland games in the garden and Scottish dancing before lunch. Our preschool children who will be going to Hillhead Primary School in August also attended a Scottish-themed transition event. We got to have some haggis for lunch on Friday 23rd January as well as some yummy shortbread.

Some children have been making bird feeders in the garden, thanks to our local Tesco donating some lard and bird seed. We have been looking for different birds and using photo checklists to identify any birds who do visit our garden.

Observations of playroom practice took place, and it was wonderful to see so many children engaged in learning and talking about what they like about nursery. Some children were able to talk about how staff help them, who their friends are and what their favourite resources are. Our youngest children demonstrated how confident they are in their keyworkers through smiles, cuddles, laughing and being confident when praised to try new things – seeing a wee person take more steps unaided in our Farm room was a special moment indeed.

Observations of playroom practice take place regularly to help us identify what is going well and what we need to review or change. There is a questionnaire on your child's Learning Journal where we are asking you for your feedback on what the "Excellent Experience" should look like in Cairns ECC. This was posted on 15th January 2026; we would love to get some feedback to help us shape our journey to excellence.

Bookbug with Taylor was back! Thank you to those parents and carers who were able to come along. We will be holding 3-weekly Bookbug sessions, with our next one taking place on Wednesday 11th February at 9:15am and 2:15pm. Look out for the sign-up sheets.

What's happening in February?

This month we will be acknowledging Children's Mental Health Week, which takes place from February 9th through to February 15th. As the ECC will be closed on Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th, we will start this from Wednesday 11th. The theme is "this is my place" and focuses on the 5 C's: Connection, Compassion, Coping, Community and Care. We use the Colour Monster to explore our feelings and emotions, and we have linked the Colour Monster colours to the 5 C's, planning the following activities:

Wednesday 11th – "Community" - Group Litter picks (and we're sad because of all the litter!) – Children are welcome to wear something blue

Thursday 12th – "Care" – Exploring ways we can love and care for each other and ourselves – Children are welcome to wear something pink

Friday 13th – "Connection" – We will be doing something special today – Children are welcome to wear lots of different colours to represent feeling a bit "mixed up"

Monday 16th – "Coping" – Yoga sessions throughout the day so we can feel calm – Children are welcome to wear something green

Tuesday 17th – "Compassion" – this is also Random Acts of Kindness Day, and we will be sharing special messages for our friends to make them feel happy – Children are welcome to wear something yellow



Registration for Early Learning and Childcare hours for 3- and 4-year-olds usually opens at the end of the month. Please keep an eye on our Facebook page and the Safer School App for the link to register any new children who will turn 3 between 1st March 2026 and 28th February 2027. Please note, if your child attends our Ocean Room and turns 3 between these dates, you still need to complete an application form as they don't automatically move into our Jungle Room.

Applications are also open for entitled 2-year-olds for any child who is entitled to funded 2-year-old provision from April 2026. Our Ocean Room is very busy so please make sure to apply as soon as you can.

Please note, the ECC will be closed on Monday 9th February for a local holiday. We also have a staff in-service day on Tuesday 10th February, so children should not return to the ECC until Wednesday 11th February.

Additional year of ELC

If you are considering an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare for your child(ren), please let Laura know as soon as possible, and before the end of February. The Scottish Government have extended the option for an additional year of ELC to include any child who has their 5th birthday after the start of the school term in August and before 1st January. Previously it was only children who have their 5th birthday in January or February who were entitled to an additional year of ELC.

If you have any questions regarding an additional year of ELC, please see Laura to discuss further.

Contacting the Early Childhood Centre

If you have something you wish to discuss, we want to make sure we give you the time and space to be able to fully share this. If you are looking to speak with someone regarding your child or anything to do with the ECC, these are the best ways to get in touch:

- Face-to-face
- Telephone
- Email

To report any absences or appointments, please pass this on at the main office. This ensures office staff can record this accordingly and they will pass on to the playrooms. We also have the Safer Schools App, and this has a function for you to notify us of any absences. If you require the login details for this, please see the main office. Our email account is monitored daily by our office staff – eaCairns.ECC@eastayrshire.org.uk

Members of the Leadership Team are available throughout the day, including drop-off and pick-up times, however we do also cover in playrooms across the day, particularly over the lunch period (11:30am through to 1:15pm). We will get back to you as soon as we can if we aren't available to take a call.

Whilst Learning Journals and our Facebook page have the facility for you to post a message, these accounts are not regularly monitored by staff therefore are not the preferred methods of communication if you wish to share any absences, appointments, or if you have any queries or messages to pass on. These platforms are for sharing learning and news in the ECC as well as you having the opportunity to share anything you have been doing at home if you wish. For anything else, please contact the ECC as detailed above.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding on this matter.

Learning Journal updates / Facebook updates

There will likely be a reduction in the number of Learning Journal posts and Facebook updates due to staff absence. Our priority is ensuring we maintain the adult to child ratios in the playrooms, and this often means members of the Leadership Team are deployed into the rooms to cover as well as using supply staff, where we can, to ensure we can continue to deliver a full service. I'm sure you will understand our priority is our children and our staff before any updates on social media platforms. We hope to resume normal updates as soon as possible.

Jungle Room Summer Trip

This year, as a treat for our children in the Jungle Room, we have booked a trip to Heads of Ayr Farm Park. This was decided as part of our funds committee in the ECC as well as talking to some of our parents/carers who have attended our coffee mornings when we asked for suggestions on trips or events we could arrange for the children. We have also asked our children about different things they'd like to do for celebrations as well as having the knowledge of some of their interests: slides, trampolines, animals and swimming pools (although there will be no swimming involved!)

There will be no cost to parents/carers as this is being paid for through generous fund-raising over the last term.

We have booked 2 dates for the children to attend to ensure the children get the best experience as well as ensuring we can safely staff this trip as our adult to child ratios change from 1:8 to 1:4 when we are out with the ECC grounds. One date will be Wednesday 6th May, and the second date will be Wednesday 20th May. We will travel by bus, which is contracted through the local authority to ensure the relevant insurances are in place, and robust risk assessments for the ECC and from Heads of Ayr will be used to plan this trip. At least 2 First Aiders will be present on the trip too, one of whom will be either Laura or Leigh. We will shortly be looking at what groups will go on which date, and we will issue a consent form to be completed for your child. If you do not wish your child to attend, they will be able to stay in the ECC with their peers and staff who are staying in the ECC that day.

We are also looking at a special summer celebration for our Ocean Room and Farm Room.

Important information reminder

- Please contact our office on 01563 533177 if your child is going to be absent from the ECC – we will call you if your child is absent from the ECC without prior notice
- You can also notify us of absence via the Safer Schools App or email eaCairns.ECC@eastayrshire.org.uk
- If your child has an episode of sickness and/or diarrhoea, there is a 48-hour exclusion period from the last episode – please do not send your child in if they have been sick and/or had diarrhoea in the last 48 hours to ensure we avoid spreading any illness – if our staff become ill due to this, they too are required to be off and this can impact our service delivery – if you have queries regarding this, please speak with us in the first instance
- We have 5 fully trained First Aiders in our ECC – Laura, Leigh, Martin, Gillian O and John; we also have a number of Emergency First Aiders
- If your child requires medication during their session, we will require a prescription label before anything can be administered to your child, and we require to complete a consent form with you therefore it may be useful to call ahead to let us know or set time aside when dropping your child off with medication
- Please arrive on time for your child's session and please collect on time at the end of your child's session – we know sometimes things come up and you can be running late

so please contact our office if you are delayed however the doors open at 8:40am and close at 9am / open at 2:40pm and close at 3pm to allow staff to clean and prepare for the next day – we finish at 3:15pm on a Friday

- We restrict how often we open our playroom doors as, from our experience, this can disrupt the flow of learning and engagement levels. We have set opening times for our playrooms: 12:45pm for anyone who wishes to collect their child after lunch and 2:15pm for anyone who wishes to collect their child before going to another ECC, setting or school – for Hillhead Primary School, please come to the ECC at 2:40pm and then head over to the Primary School as their doors open later than ours
- We would appreciate if you avoided putting any food or drink items in your child's bag – some of our friends in the ECC have allergies which can make them very ill
- We ask for all children who can to bring in a water bottle for use in the playrooms, labelled with their name – we will add their photo and fill with water on arrival
- Please provide your child with a change of clothes (a few sets if they are learning to use the toilet or are recently using the toilet independently) and include a few pairs of socks and underwear
- Please label your child's belongings with their name – we're a big ECC and things can easily get mixed up so this will help items to be returned to their owner
- Please provide wipes, nappies or pull-ups, sun cream and a sunhat, and a puddle suit and wellies for your child if you can – we do have our own which the children can use
- We always appreciate donations of wipes, tissues and nappies – thank you 😊

We hope you have a fantastic February!

Team Cairns 😊

Key dates for 2026

We understand how useful it can be to have a note of any key dates for special events in the ECC to allow you to be able to attend.

January 2026

29th – Drop-in to chat with Laura – 2pm to 2:30pm

Mini classroom transition visits for any children going to Hillhead Primary School start in January

February 2026

Registration for Early Learning and Childcare provision usually opens this month

6th – NSPCC Number Day

9th – 15th – Children’s Mental Health Week

11th – Bookbug sessions with Taylor

14th – Valentines Day

17th – Pancake Day

17th – 3rd March – Chinese New Year

17th – 18th March - Ramadan

18th – Lent begins

18th – Enrolment visit for any of our April starts to the Jungle Room

March 2026

1st – St David’s Day

5th – World Book Day

6th – 15th – British Science Week

15th – Mother’s Day

WB 16th – Ocean Room children will start transition visits to Jungle Room

17th – St Patrick’s Day

17th – 23rd – British Sign Language week

18th – Global Recycling Day

19th – 20th – Eid

21st – World Down Syndrome Day

WB 23rd – Farm Room children will start transition visits to the Ocean Room

WB 23rd – Easter bonnets stay and play sessions

April 2026

1st – Easter bonnet parade

WB 20th – New children begin in the Jungle and Ocean Rooms

22nd – Earth Day

23rd – Drop-in to chat with Laura

29th – Parent/carers coffee morning

May 2026

4th – 10th – Deaf awareness week and screen-free week

6th – Group 1 trip to Heads of Ayr (Jungle Room)

13th – Preschool Graduation photo

WB 18th – Parent/Carer progress meetings

20th – Group 2 trip to Heads of Ayr (Jungle Room)

19th – 23rd – Walk to school week

27th – Family sports day

June 2026

WB 1st – Ocean Room will start transition visits to the Jungle Room

2nd – 8th – Child safety week

WB 8th – Farm Room will start transition visits to the Ocean Room

10th – 14th – Healthy eating week

10th – Preschool Graduation

11th – Enrolment visits for the Jungle Room August starts

19th – End of term celebrations for the Ocean and Jungle Room

21st – Father's Day

24th – End of term celebrations for the Farm Room

26th – Last day of term

Holiday dates and ECC closures 2025 - 2026

Cairns ECC is a term-time service which means we are closed during all school holidays, public holidays and local holidays. We also have a further 2 in-service days this academic session where the ECC is closed for children to allow for staff training to take place.

February

Monday 9th – Local holiday

Tuesday 10th – In-service Day

April

We close on Friday 3rd April at 3pm for the children and don't return until Monday 20th April 2026

May

Monday 4th – May bank holiday

Thursday 7th – In-service

June

We close on Friday 26th June at 3pm and children do not return until Wednesday 19th August 2026

Get involved with the ECC

Find us on Facebook
@CairnsECC
Ask us about accessing the Safer Schools APP

Upload to your child's Learning Journal

We always appreciate donations of:
Baby wipes (Plastic free)
Tissues, kitchen roll
Socks, pants and trousers

Contact us:
01563 533177
eaCairns.ECC@eastayrshire.org.uk