

South Africa's Most Important Investment

Powered by Practitioners

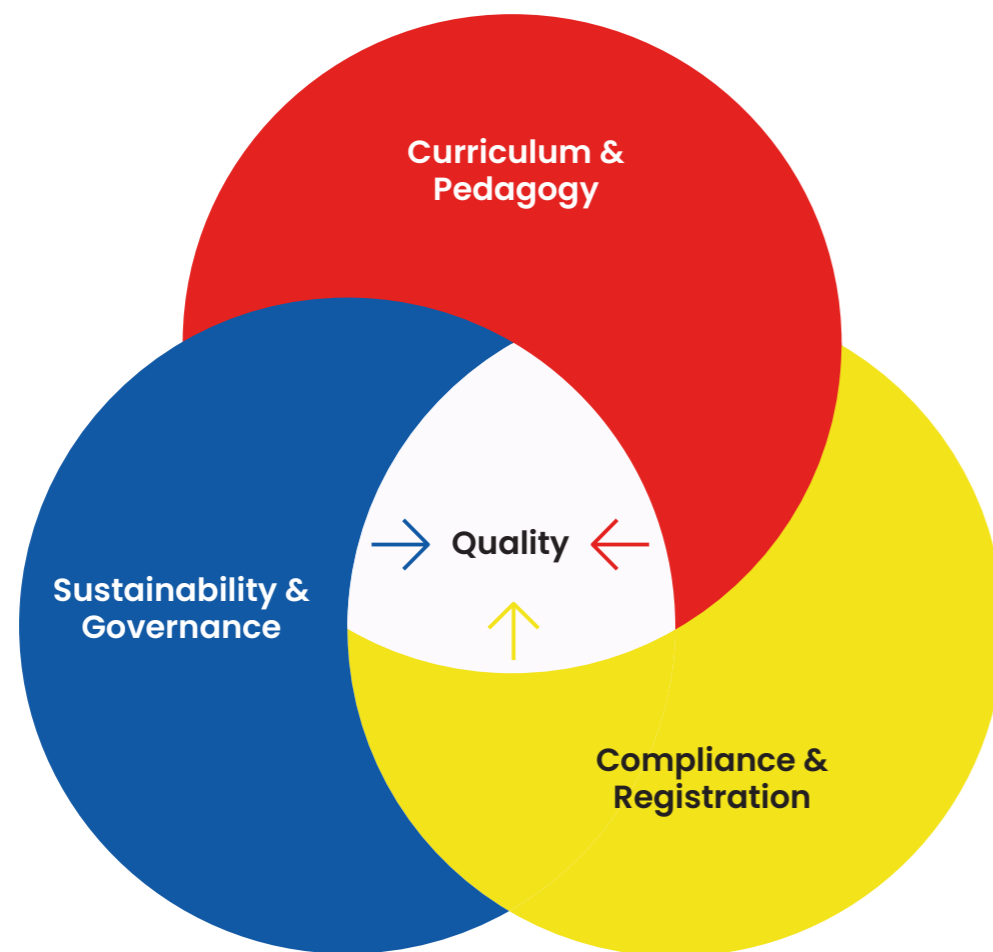


ANNUAL REPORT 2025

How KET Supports Early Learning in Knysna

South Africa has made important progress expanding access to early learning, with two thirds of three-to-five-year-olds now attending programmes. But access is no longer the most pressing frontier – quality is. The latest Thrive by Five Index (2024) found that only 55% of four-to-five-year-olds in early learning programmes are developmentally on track for school readiness, reflecting research showing that poor-quality programmes do little to improve outcomes.

KET’s early learning support model is place-based and systems-oriented. It is designed to cultivate quality learning. We do not deliver once-off training or isolated projects. We build relationships and deepen support over time. Our integrated Preschool Support Plan brings together three interconnected areas of work that enable quality early childhood development services.



In a nutshell, we focus on building capacity, improving instructional quality and resources, supporting compliance and sustainability, and fostering collaboration across the local Early Childhood Development (ECD) ecosystem.

Specifically, we provide...

Curriculum & Pedagogy

Compliance & Registration

Sustainability & Governance

Further Education and Training in Early Childhood Development
 KET supports professional growth in the ECD sector by offering access to NQF Level 1 and 4 qualifications in Early Childhood Development with bursary support where necessary.

Practitioner Training and Support

- A structured, 12 module training programme delivered through monthly workshops, focused on core ECD teaching and classroom management skills
- Specialised support for Grade R practitioners to ensure Grade Rs are ready for Grade 1

Daily ECD Programmes

- National Curriculum Framework (NCF) aligned daily programme for three-to-five-year-olds, including themed content and daily lesson plans
- Baby and Toddler programme (6-24 months)
- Integrated communication and support for parents

Ongoing, On-site Coaching, Mentorship and Monitoring
 All partner sites benefit from regular visits by KET staff which provide monthly implementation/pedagogical support, continuous monitoring and practical assistance with quality assurance.

Catch-up for Developmental Delays
 The Blocks for Growth programme provides targeted, group-based therapeutic intervention delivered by occupational therapists for four- to five-year-olds with developmental delays.

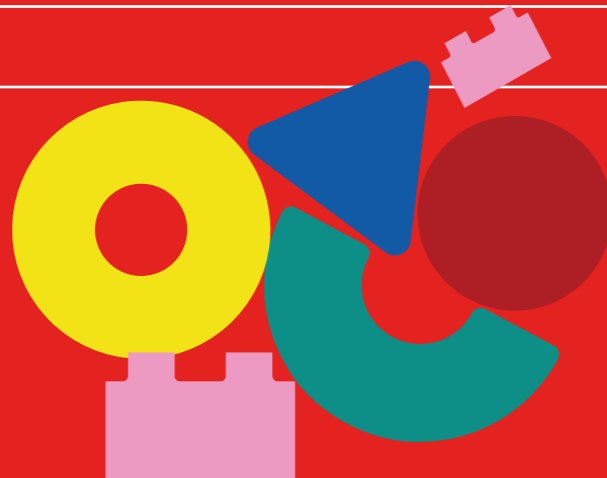
Government Compliance and Registration Support
 KET is commissioned by the Western Cape Education Department to support early learning centres in Knysna and Bitou to meet the minimum norms and standards set out in the Children’s Act and ECD regulations. Support includes on-site compliance assessments, guidance on registration processes, training for principals and parent committees, and facility upgrade grants to address infrastructure gaps.

Sustainability and Governance Support

- Small grants for facility upgrades and resources
- Fundraising support through participation in the Adopt a Centre for Excellence (ACE) programme
- Access to KET’s Feeding Scheme, ensuring nutritious daily meals
- Training and mentorship for centre Principals
- Training for parent committees and centre governing boards

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2025 in the ECD Classroom A Year of Grit and Growth

In early 2025, Nadia Kampher received news that would have deeply discouraged many people. **Bitou Round Table Crèche** – serving 57 children – would receive no government subsidy for six months. No warning. No plan B offered. “I knew we would make it – with the help of God, the parents, and the community.” And they did. Gospel shows, fun days, sports days – a fundraising event every single month. Some staff left, unwilling to take the salary cuts that kept the centre alive. In November, the subsidy finally came through. “Everyone was very happy and relieved.”

Bitou’s story is dramatic, but it is not unusual. Across the region, practitioners navigate financial uncertainty and staffing pressures as a matter of routine. What is unusual is the consistency with which they keep going.

At **Kanyisa Day Care**, principal Anda Sangotsha describes 2025 as a good year – and means it. Western Cape Education Department funding allowed the centre to build an office, and for the first time, teachers received a December bonus. In a sector where practitioners routinely earn below minimum wage, this is not a small thing.

Challenges remain, but Anda’s lesson is characteristically grounded: “Plan, and be consistent in everything you do.”

In Karatara, Nicolene Boukes and Nicolette van Rooyen started **Little Steps** in a family home in 2023 – one child, one room. By 2025, they serve 25 children, cared for from 6am until sometimes 7pm, registered within three months of opening, and recipients of a KET Principal Award. “On our own we are good, but together we are stronger – two halves of the same vision, one heart, and one purpose.”

Three centres. Three very different years. But the same truth surfaces in each: **the quality of early childhood development rests, more than anything, on the people willing to show up – through funding gaps, bureaucratic shocks, and the ordinary, relentless demands of caring for very young children. They do not always have enough. But they keep going. We thank every centre leader and practitioner across the Knysna region for their openness, their resilience, and their unwavering commitment to the children in their care. It is a privilege to walk alongside you.**



Knysna practitioners at a gross motor development training workshop in 2025.

Who helps me learn and grow?

Children between the ages of three and five often express their understanding of the world through drawings long before they can fully explain it in words. At this stage, drawings tend to focus less on realism and more on meaning – who is important to them, what they experience each day, and how they see themselves in relation to others. When we asked children to draw “who helps me learn and grow,” their pictures reflected the relationships that shape their early learning: parents, siblings and teachers. These drawings offer a simple but powerful reminder that young children experience learning not only through activities and lessons, but through the people who care for, guide and encourage them every day.



Prisca (Doctor)
 “I drew a doctor because she helps me get better when I’m sick.”



Alizwa (Family)
 “I drew my family—mom, dad, sister and me. We help each other and love each other lots.”



Iyazi (My sister and I)
 “I drew me and my sister because she loves me and my sister helps me at home.”



Izibele (Myself & my sister)
 “I drew me and my sister because she helps me, washes me, and cooks for me. She’s the best sister.”



Rushaan (Teacher Ntombi)
 “I drew my favourite teacher Ntombi, because she helps me learn and go to grade 1.”



Camila (Me and mom)
 “I drew me and mom because she helps me, washes me, cooks for me, and takes me out. She’s the best.”

Progress by focusing where it matters: **The moment of ordinary magic**

In early childhood development, quality does not live in policy documents or assessment tools. **It lives in the space between a practitioner and a child.**

It lives in the tone that calms a frightened four-year-old.

In five minutes spent clapping syllables.

In the careful guidance of a small hand learning to hold a pencil.

In the patience to tell the same story again — and again.

With the exception of targeted therapeutic support delivered through our Blocks for Growth (B4G) programme (see page 22), KET does not work directly with children. Our impact flows through the women who arrive at their centres each morning — often underpaid and under-recognised — carrying enormous responsibility for the country's future human capability. When practitioners are treated as professionals; when they are coached, trusted, and equipped; when their classrooms become places of order, language, movement, and joy — children thrive.

In 2025, across 67 partner ECD centres serving 2,752 children, we saw what becomes possible when practitioners are supported to do this daily work with confidence and consistency.

The Results We Measured

The Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM) is a nationally validated South African tool assessing whether children are developmentally on track.

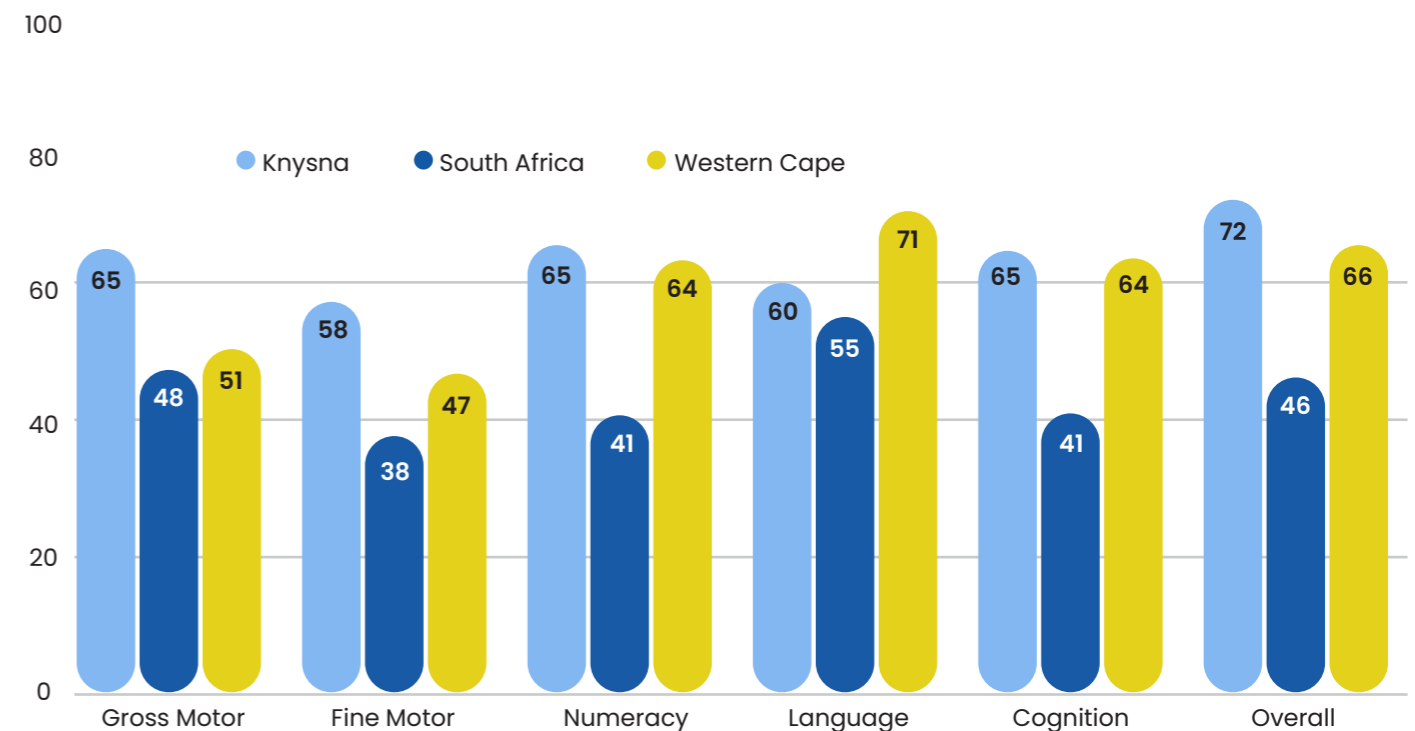
KET's 2025 ELOM assessment for four-to-five-year-olds (a sample of 75 learners from 16 ECD centres) found that 72% of children are developmentally on track—up from 68% in 2024 and well above the national Thrive by Five average of 45% and the Western Cape average of 59%. Children performed particularly strongly in gross motor skills and executive functioning. Emergent Literacy and Language was the only domain below the provincial average.

Task focus, a key predictor of school success identified in Thrive by Five Index (2024), was especially high: 88% of children demonstrated satisfactory levels of concentration and persistence.

It is worthwhile to remember that behind each percentage is a practitioner refining a literacy routine, practising phonological awareness daily, and reorganising a classroom to better support children's learning. *Read more about the ELOM results for Grade Rs (five-to-six-year-olds) on page 20.*

While the overall child development trajectory in Knysna is positive, our data also points to clear areas requiring sharper focus. Language and early literacy remain the most vulnerable developmental domains. Social-emotional readiness — particularly confidence, regulation, and peer interaction — also requires sustained attention.

Percentage of Knysna's 4–5-year-olds on track in comparison to the rest of the province and country



Active learning with practitioner Keshia Miles at the Learning Tree Preschool



Practitioner Dikeledi Setumo from The Learning Tree working one-on-one with a young learner to build numeracy skills through the Numba programme.

Strengthening Everyday Practice

Strengthening the daily programme has been central to improving quality across centres. Clear routines, developmentally appropriate lesson plans, and practical strategies bring learning to life through structured play, storytelling, movement, sensory exploration, and intentional social-emotional support – creating classrooms where children feel safe and ready to learn.

In 2025, KET’s five Preschool Area Leads conducted 516 coaching visits, delivering more than 442 hours of classroom-based guidance. These visits provide practical, in-the-moment support to practitioners, helping translate training into confident daily practice.

In addition, 28 training workshops created spaces for reflection, skill-building and professional solidarity, drawing an average of 38 practitioners and principals per session. Workshops with particularly strong participation included sessions on coaching and mentoring for principals, baby and toddler development, using music in the classroom, structured professional report writing on child development, and ending the year well while preparing for the year ahead.

Daily attendances at centres remained strong – 86% for children and 92% for practitioners – a quiet but powerful sign of shared commitment across centres.

Q & A

Teacher Lwando Kraai attended 16 of our Teacher Development Workshops in 2025. We asked her about her experience.

Q: What motivated you to keep coming back to our workshops?

A: Every workshop gave me ideas that I can use immediately in my classroom. They gave me confidence that I’m teaching the right content in the right way.

Q: Out of all the workshops you attended, which one stood out as the most useful for you, and why?

A: Planning lessons. It helped me understand how to plan daily activities for the class and has made teaching more organised and purposeful.

Q: Can you share an example of how you’ve used something you learned in a workshop in your classroom?

A: I have now included activities that help children with their sensory play, and a lot of language, like including stories.

Q: Since attending the workshops, what changes have you noticed in yourself as an ECD practitioner?

A: I am more confident, and creative in my teaching. I plan better and I manage my class effectively.

Q: Have you noticed any changes in the children since you started applying what you’ve learned? What looks different in your classroom now?

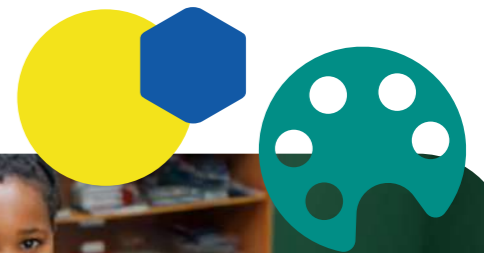
A: Children are more engaged and excited to learn every day. They participate and communicate better with each other.

Q: Do you use KET’s lesson plans? How have they supported your daily teaching and planning?

A: Yes. They help me to stay organised and make sure that I cover all the learning areas. The templates save me time and give me confidence.

Q: What would you say to another practitioner who is unsure about attending Teacher Development Workshops?

A: I would encourage them to attend because the workshops are very helpful and practical. They help you grow professionally and make a difference in your classroom.



Practitioner Lwando Kraai in action in the classroom

Working Towards Sustainable Centres

One of the clearest lessons from our work in 2025 is that the sustainability of ECD centres depends not only on infrastructure, resources or compliance, but fundamentally on the strength of leadership at each site. Across Knysna, principals play a critical role in determining whether centres remain stable, trusted and responsive to the needs of families.

The most resilient centres tend to share common characteristics: **strong relationships with parents and community members, a clear sense of purpose, and leaders who actively seek partnerships and opportunities for support.** Despite financial constraints and regulatory pressures, these principals continue to create environments where children feel safe, cared for and ready to learn.

At the same time, many centres remain financially fragile, relying on modest fees, irregular subsidies and the dedication of underpaid practitioners. Strengthening sustainability therefore requires more than compliance support – it requires investment in leadership development, practical management skills and a stronger local ecosystem for early learning.

KET's role is to walk alongside principals as they build these capacities over time, strengthening leadership, improving management systems and connecting centres to networks of support. Through this work we aim to help ensure that ECD centres can continue serving their communities sustainably.



A peek into a classroom at Wonderland Educare



Practitioner Alice Wildeman has the full attention of her class at the Learning Tree Preschool

AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Getting registered with government and accessing the per child ECD subsidy

As a Western Cape Education Department (WCED) partner, in 2025 KET was contracted to assist every ECD centre in the Knysna and Bitou municipalities on their path to registering and applying for funding. KET's role is to support centres to comply with the Children's Act of South Africa, as well as provide practical tools, mentorship, and peer networks that strengthen leadership and decision-making. By investing in good governance and capable leadership, we hope to help build centres that are not only able to survive, but to grow sustainably and provide quality early learning for the children and communities they serve.

In 2025, the WCED continued a large campaign to find ECD centres that were operating but not officially registered on their system. Because the Department needed time to focus on helping

these unregistered centres, all centres that were already registered had their registrations extended automatically. The WCED also made it easier for centres to qualify for the most basic level of registration (Bronze registration). The updated requirements meant that centres that had previously struggled to meet the standards were now able to register successfully.

In 2025, KET worked with 151 early childhood development centres across Knysna and Bitou, supporting them in the process of registration and ongoing compliance with government norms and standards. This represents an increase of 22 centres from the 129 sites supported in 2024. By year end, 139 centres were registered, with 11 centres still working toward registration.

Expanding ECD opportunities through SmartStart

SmartStart is a national social franchise that expands access to early learning by supporting women in communities to start and run structured early learning programmes for young children. As a SmartStart franchisor, KET has been able to support more than 50 women to create new early learning opportunities, reaching over 1,000 children in our broader ecosystem. Being part of the SmartStart network also connects KET to a wider national movement advocating for greater access to quality early childhood development across South Africa.



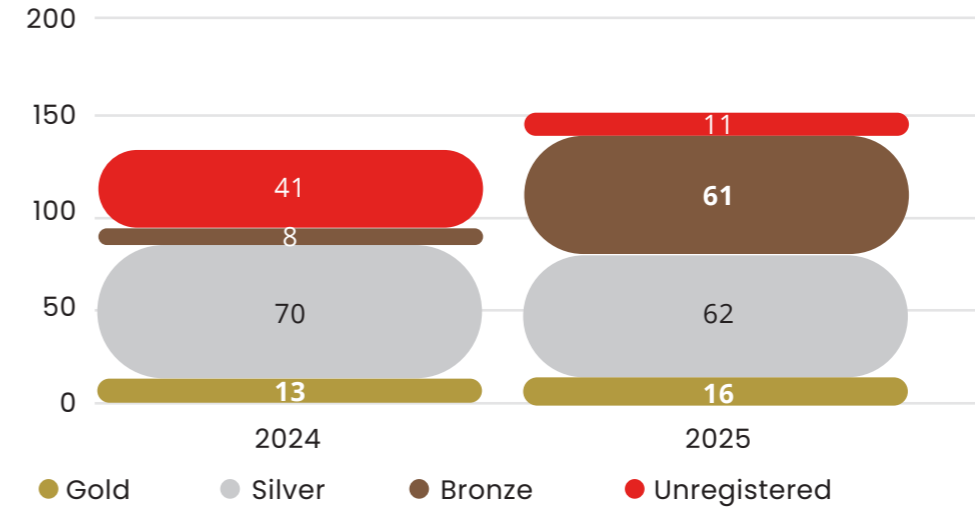
Strengthening Centres Through ACE

The Adopt a Child's Education (ACE) programme contributes to the sustainability of partner ECD centres by providing an additional stream of support that helps cover essential operating costs and maintain stable early learning environments.

Although originally framed as supporting individual children, the contributions have always been directed to centres to strengthen their ability to provide quality care and education. Through this mechanism, the programme supported 818 children between 2022 and 2025 (194 children or rather 17 centres benefited in 2025).

As our understanding of centre sustainability has evolved, the programme is now transitioning into an Adopt-a-Centre-for-Excellence model, which more transparently focuses on strengthening the financial sustainability of whole centres.

Registrations 2024 vs 2025



Preschool Registration Support

- 17** On-site Governing Body Training Workshops hosted
- 211** On-site Compliance Visits
- 9** Information/ Training Workshops Hosted

Aftercare Registration Support

- 83** On-site compliance visits
- 2** Information Workshops

Professionalising ECD

Professionalising the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector remains one of South Africa's most urgent challenges. Many practitioners entered the field through passion and community need rather than formal qualifications. While their commitment is invaluable, limited access to accredited training has constrained career progression, fair remuneration, and consistent quality standards.

The KET Training Centre addresses these barriers by providing accessible, accredited training within the local community. Our aim is not only to build practical competence, but to elevate ECD practitioners as professionals who shape children's long-term outcomes.

In 2025, the Training Centre operated for the first time as an independent QCTO-accredited provider, offering the Occupational Certificate: Early Childhood Development Practitioner (NQF Level 4). An initial cohort of 26 students enrolled; at the halfway mark, 17 remain actively engaged, attending one intensive week of face-to-face training per month. **With retention**

at 65% – above the typical 50% drop-out rate for similar programmes – we are encouraged by their commitment and provide wrap-around support to help them succeed.

Many students are already employed in ECD centres, while others volunteer to meet workplace learning requirements. This integration of theory and practice strengthens classroom competence and improves employability upon completion. Students describe the training as both personally transformative and professionally empowering. They speak of growing in confidence, patience, and courage, while gaining a deeper understanding of child development, play-based learning, planning age-appropriate activities, and engaging effectively with parents. The practical guidance from facilitators is frequently highlighted as especially valuable. For many, the programme represents the foundation of a long-term career in Early Childhood Development – equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to create safe, nurturing learning environments for young children.



NQF Level 4 students preparing classroom resources



The Learning Tree Rooted in Nature, Growing for the Future

The Learning Tree is KET's model preschool in Khayaletu township, serving just over 100 children annually and already holding a waiting list for 2027 – evidence that high-quality, demand-driven ECD is possible in this context.

In a world facing climate instability and rapid urbanisation, helping young children form a connection with nature is essential. Children protect what they learn to love. Regular time outdoors strengthens attention, emotional regulation, physical development, and creativity, while fostering belonging and responsibility.

Nature-based learning sits at the heart of The Learning Tree's approach. What was once a landfill site has been transformed into an indigenous forest garden and outdoor classroom. After removing more than 300 bags of litter and

clearing invasive vegetation, we created hiking trails, labelled indigenous trees, and established a dedicated learning space. Daily forest visits nurture curiosity and environmental stewardship.

Water safety is another key focus. To date, 39 Grade R learners have completed a structured water safety programme – a vital life skill in coastal Knysna. In just three months, children move from fear to confidence, building resilience and self-belief.

Our environmental work extends beyond the preschool grounds. Through our "Kasi Clean Up" initiative, we recycle approximately 11,000 bottles annually from the informal area where The Learning Tree is based. We also support local litter collection efforts – modelling shared responsibility and community care for the environment.

Featured centre: Wonderland Educare

Wonderland Educare began in 2010 when Thelma Mtwla saw young children in her community roaming the streets without care. She started with four children in her home. As enrolment grew, her father built a small classroom in the yard, and together with her two sisters she kept the centre running. Today, her daughter – who holds a Level 5 ECD qualification – is also part of the teaching team.

Over time, Wonderland became registered and now receives a government subsidy, though it continues to operate with limited resources. Looking ahead, Thelma hopes to expand to four classrooms with a larger play area, so that more children can be accommodated and fewer families turned away. We asked Thelma a few questions about their ECD practice at Wonderland Educare:



Practitioner Patiswa Mtwla doing morning ring at Wonderland Educare

Q: Can you describe your classroom and what a good learning day looks like for you and the children?

A: Children must feel safe and excited to be here. I greet them one by one, by their names. We start with free play to allow them to adjust, then morning ring and then our table activities and other activities for the day.

Q: What does an “exceptional learning environment” mean to you as a teacher?

A: An environment where every child feels safe, supported and motivated. It’s about creating relationships with quality teaching and making sure that children are able to express themselves.

Q: How has your approach to teaching and learning changed over time?

A: I used to think that teaching is about children listening and following instructions only. Now, I focus more on the child – guiding learning instead of controlling it. I know that they learn through exploring and play.

Q: What are some of the choices you’ve made in your classroom to support children’s learning and development?

A: Displaying children’s artwork; comfortable classroom environment; playful and educational activities; having a clear daily programme with pictures helps them understand what comes next so that they can transition better.

Q: What changes have you noticed in how children engage, behave, or learn in your classroom?

A: They engage easily with others and they are getting familiar with the rules of the class. The children behave much better than when they started – the classroom is no longer noisy and they are adapting to routines.



Q: How do you feel you’ve grown as an ECD practitioner in recent years?

A: A lot – the training that I attend at KET helped a lot and still is useful. The KET Preschool Area Leads are also working hand in hand with us, always there to assist. I manage my class well, notice children’s developmental stages, and I know that we must acknowledge their progress.

Q: What are you most proud of when you look at your classroom today?

A: Effectiveness, I believe our classrooms are well organised but I stand corrected on that.

Q: What kind of support or resources have helped you on this journey?

A: KET’s Numba Numeracy programme, puzzles, counting objects, and the supporting workshops that we get from KET.

Q: What advice would you give to another practitioner who wants to create a strong, nurturing learning environment?

A: Planning is the best, because it keeps you calm, makes your day easy and less stressful because you know what to do and it makes you organised. Always be open for new experience, be open for constructive advice ask for help and be flexible. Change is good!

BUILDING EMOTIONAL LITERACY: Strengthening School Readiness Through Local Partnership

Grade R—the reception year that bridges early learning and formal schooling—is recognised in policy as a legal requirement for South African children. Yet, despite being compulsory, access to quality Grade R remains uneven. Provision is often patchy, with significant disparities in teacher training, learning environments, and developmental support. As a result, many children still enter Grade 1 without the social, emotional, and cognitive readiness needed to succeed in school.

The Knysna Initiative for Learning and Teaching (KILT), which focuses on supporting quality education in Knysna’s public primary and secondary schools, and KET have joined forces in a collaborative effort to strengthen school readiness across the area.

With KILT’s support, KET is able to extend its long-standing work with ECD centres into the Grade R year, offering intensive teacher support and developmental assessments for children. This collaboration builds on KET’s established relationships with local preschools, its expertise in early learning, and its network of trained facilitators known as Preschool Area Leads.

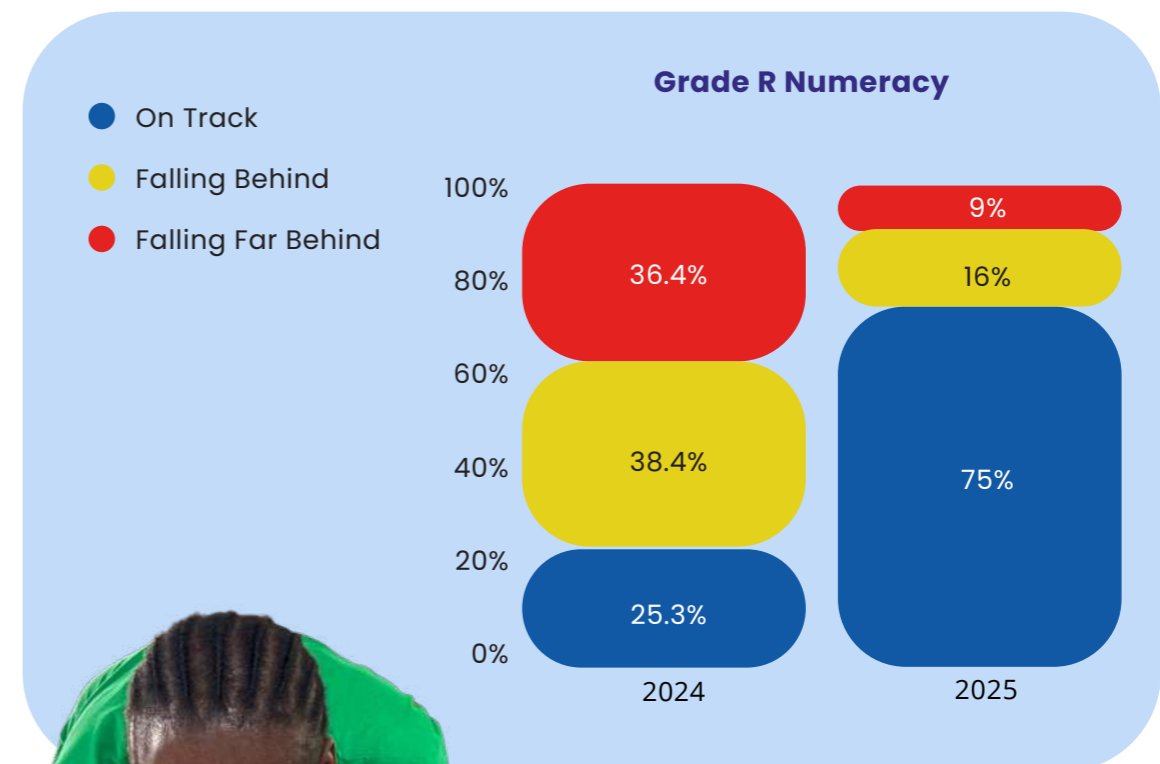
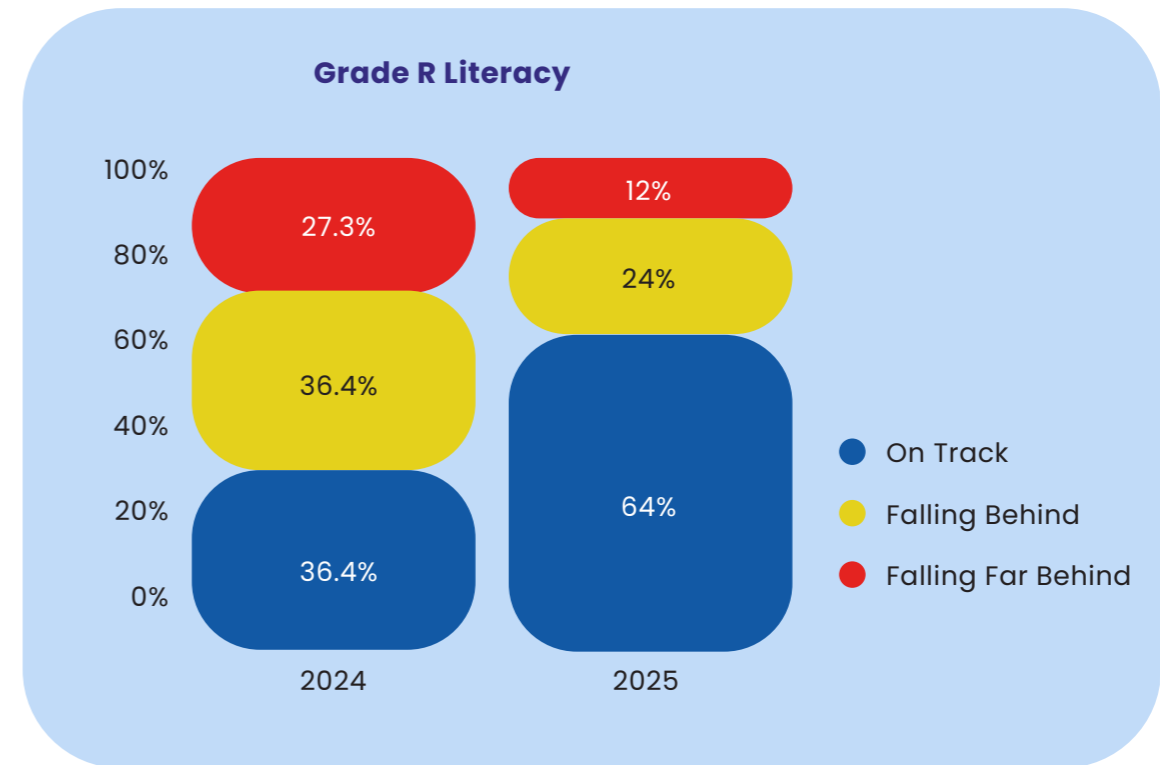
The partnership with KILT enables KET to provide regular on-site mentoring, supply high-quality teaching resources, and conduct developmental screenings that help teachers tailor support to each Grade R child’s needs.

This partnership reflects a place-based strategy that strengthens the education pipeline from early learning into basic education. KET focuses on building strong foundations for school readiness,

while KILT works to improve school functionality, support teachers, and enhance learner outcomes in primary and secondary schools. **The approach recognises that early learning and basic education are deeply interdependent:** without strong foundations learners struggle to succeed in school, and without functional schools early gains are quickly lost. Evidence also shows that integrated, place-based strategies that align education, health, and social support within a community can significantly improve learner outcomes.

By aligning resources and support within a defined geographic area, KET and KILT demonstrate how coordinated local investment can strengthen education systems over time. A key future priority will be to document and share insights from this work, contributing to national efforts to build a stronger and more equitable early learning system for South African children.

The ELOM-R (Early Learning Outcomes Measure – Reception Year), indicates encouraging improvements in Grade R learners in KET partner schools. In Language, 64% of children are now on track, compared with 36% in 2024, while in Mathematics 75% are on track, up from 25% the previous year (based on a sample of 68 children). These gains suggest that focused support to teachers and classrooms is beginning to translate into stronger foundational learning for children.



Making Sure No Child Falls Behind

By the age of four, children from disadvantaged backgrounds can already be significantly behind their peers in language, motor, and cognitive development – gaps that often widen without early support. When delays go unidentified, children are more likely to struggle with learning, confidence, and adjustment throughout their school years. Early screening and intervention are therefore critical to ensuring children enter formal schooling ready to learn.

Through our Blocks for Growth (B4G) programme, we screen approximately 500 4-5-year-olds each year for developmental delays. In 2025, 268 children participated in bi-weekly therapy groups facilitated by occupational therapists and trained implementers, receiving targeted, play-based support designed to build the foundational skills needed for classroom participation and learning. Their ECD Practitioners were also supported with strategies to reinforce these skills in daily classroom activities, multiplying the impact of the intervention. In 2025 2,175 therapy sessions were delivered across 24 centres.

Children who began the year developmentally at risk improved from an average developmental score of 53% in the beginning of the year, to 85% by year-end. While around 15% of children still require ongoing support, the progress made affirms the power of timely, relational intervention. Therapists also provided 236 Individual Therapy Sessions across 14 ECD Centres in 2025.

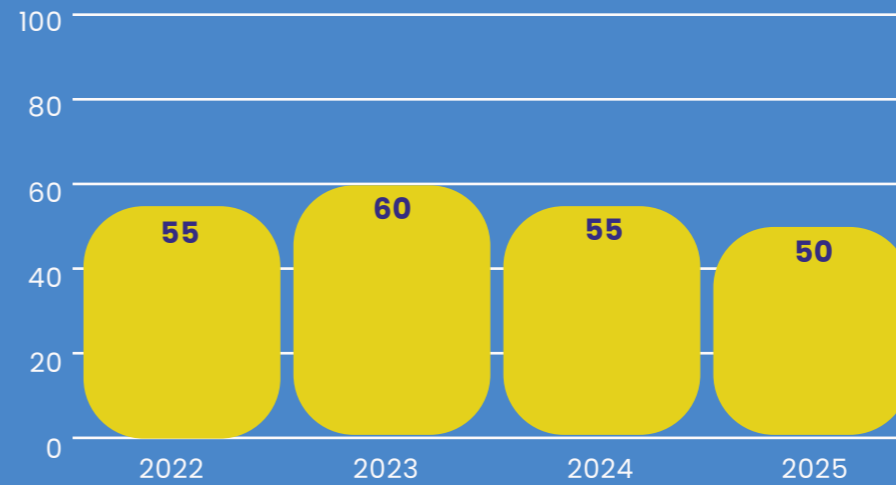


Thembela Ketshom from the KET's Blocks for Growth Programme facilitating a therapy group.

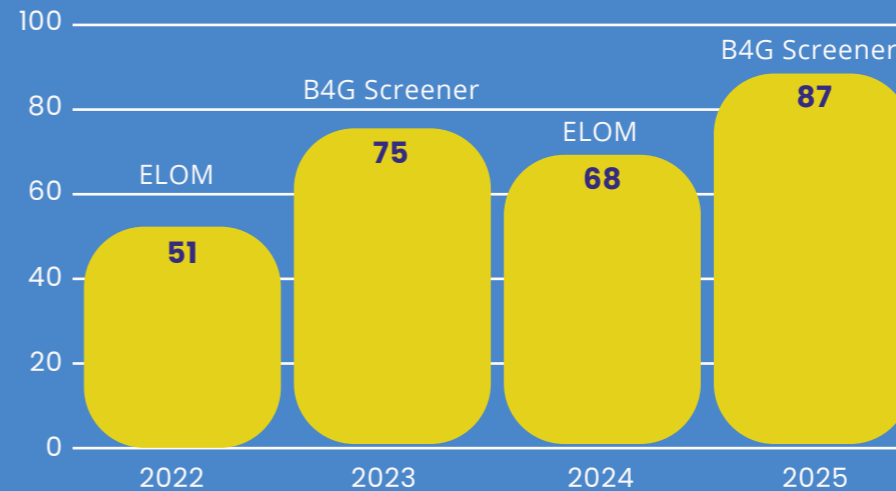
“This programme helped my child a lot with his brain development. He gained more confidence on how to write his name and how to count. He also improved his pronunciation. As a parent, I am really thankful of how B4G helped our kids”.

Parent of a child who participated in B4G in 2025

Percentage of children identified as “not on track” to be ready for Grade R (n=500)



Percentage of children initially “not on track” who achieved developmental readiness by year-end (n=250 on average)



Note that depending on the year, either the ELOM assessment or the B4G screener is used as the primary measurement tool. While the two instruments are not directly comparable longitudinally, each provides a useful indication of the progress achieved over the course of a year of therapeutic intervention.

“The B4G programme helps the learners in my class a lot. It is very helpful especially for those whose first year it is in a creche. The small groups help the learners to feel free to speak, especially those who are withdrawn. The learners learn to be more spontaneous. The learners’ big and small muscles develop well through the activities”.

ECD Practitioner from the Humpty Dumpty Creche and Pre-Primary School

2175 group therapy- and 236 individual therapy sessions offered

1105 stimulation packs with holiday resources for parents provided

350 Practitioner Training sessions delivered

60 parent sessions hosted and attended by 155 parents

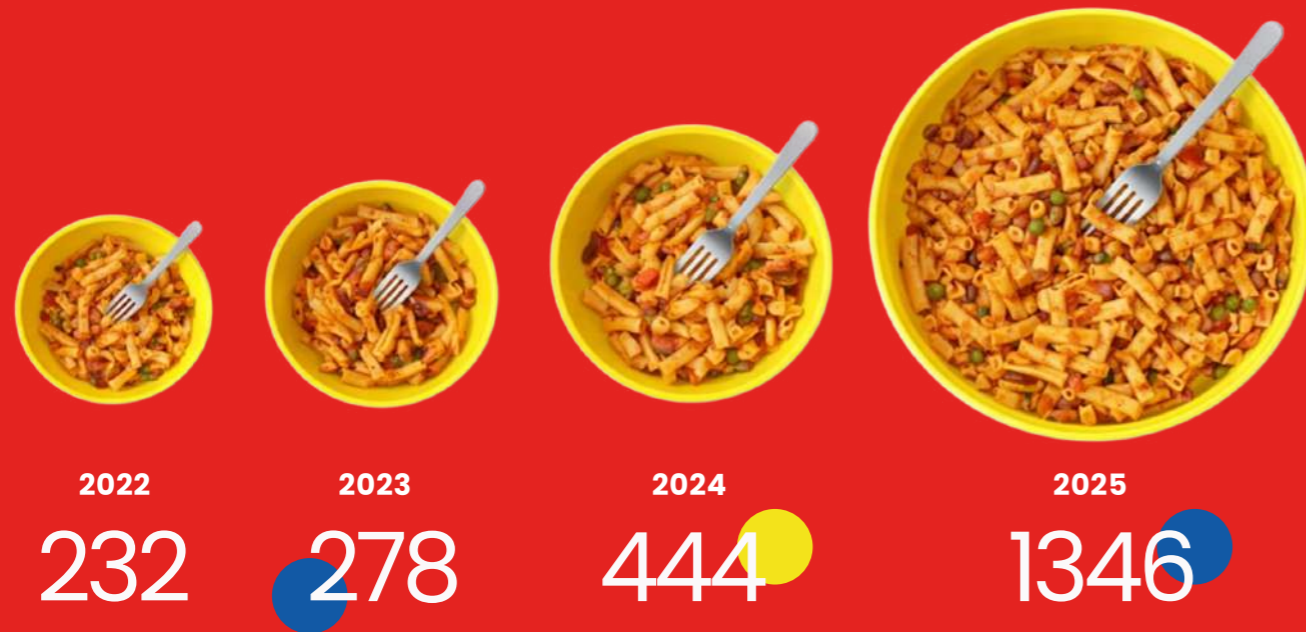


Essential Nutrition ECD is more than classroom stimulation

Good nutrition is essential for young children’s health, concentration and ability to learn. Providing meals also improves attendance. In 2025, KET’s feeding scheme continued to provide vital nutritional support to ECD centres across Knysna.

Thanks to an increase in funding from the Paul van Zuydam Foundation, we were able to significantly expand the reach of the programme. The number of children benefiting from the feeding scheme has grown steadily in recent years:

Number of children receiving a daily meal through the KET nutrition programme (2022-2025)



Over the course of 2025, the programme provided 254,078 individual meals, ensuring that children attending under-resourced centres received regular, nutritionally balanced food to support healthy growth and learning. We strengthened the nutritional quality of meals by increasing protein portions, informed by insights from our mid-year nutrition audit. We also piloted a new food purchasing and delivery system in partnership with Food Lover’s Market Knysna, which allows centre-specific food packs to be prepared and delivered directly to sites. This has improved oversight of both food quality and quantities.

As part of the ELOM school readiness assessments, sampled children are also measured to determine their nutritional status, including indicators of stunting. Encouragingly, no cases of stunting were detected among children participating in KET’s groups.

What Parents Told Us

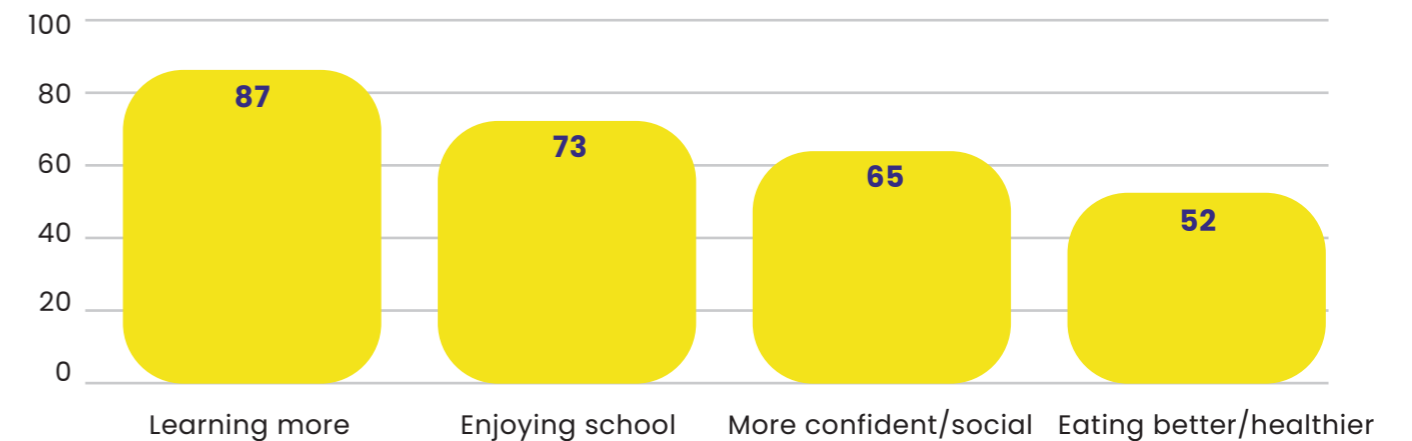
In November 2025, we conducted a parent survey across our partner ECD centres. A total of 276 parents from 48 centres participated, representing 72% of KET partner sites. The results show strong trust in the centres serving young children in Knysna. Parents report clear improvements in their children’s learning, confidence and social development, and consistently highlight the care and dedication of teachers.

Parent satisfaction is exceptionally high, with 97% of parents reporting that they are very happy with their child’s experience at their centre.

“My child is very excited to go to school every morning... he can count, say a prayer, and even sing Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika.”

Parents also report clear developmental benefits. The most common outcomes mentioned were improvements in learning, social confidence and enjoyment of school. Many parents also noted improvements in children’s health and nutrition.

Percentage of parents who says their children are:



Encouragingly, 72% of parents believe children learn both at home and at the ECD centre, highlighting the importance of strong partnerships between teachers and families. At home, parents most commonly support learning through everyday activities such as singing, playing and reading together.

Parents also feel connected to their centres. Eighty-seven-percent (87%) feel involved in their child’s learning, and 82% receive weekly WhatsApp updates from teachers about classroom activities.

While overall satisfaction is very high, the survey also highlighted opportunities to support families further. Some parents expressed concern about the cost of nutritious food, while others requested practical guidance on supporting learning at home. Overall, the findings confirm that KET partner centres are trusted community spaces where children are safe, learning and thriving, while also highlighting opportunities to strengthen support for families.

ECD Awards for Outstanding Practice

Leader Award for exceptional leadership in supporting fellow principals, organising meetings, and fostering a strong, collaborative ECD community dedicated to helping children thrive: Bubble Gummers Nursery & Preschool; Gladys Thomas – IkamvaLethu Pre-school

Principal award for excellent administration, management, presence and guiding teachers: Nadia Kampher – Bitou Round Table Creche; Anda Sangotsha – Kanyisa Daycare; Nicollete van Rooyen and Nicolene Boukes – Little Steps Daycare & Preschool

Practitioner award for creating an exceptional learning environment: Cherry-Ann Janklaas – Born to Care Creche; Lucille Gelant – Bubble Gummers Nursery & Preschool; Elizabeth Petro – Klanke Kalante Speelgroepie

For embracing the Blocks for Growth teacher training and extending their learnings to benefit children beyond the groups: Janine November – Humpty Dumpty Creche & Pre-Primary; Jaydine Jacobs – Jaydine’s Daycare; Mercia van Rooyen – Gummy Bears Preschool

Grade R School Readiness Award: For excellence in developing school ready children: Klanke Kalante Speelgroepie; Knysna Speelskool; Siyafunda Educare Centre

For facilitating improvement in children’s literacy and numeracy: Cherry-Ann Janklaas – Born to Care Creche; Gladys Thomas – IkamvaLethu Pre-school; Patiswa Mtwā – Wonderland Educare Centre

For using excellent and creative ways to involve parents in the learning process : Nadia Kampher – Bitou Round Table Creche; Julie Ann Hoffmann – The Learning Tree Model Preschool

Feeding Scheme: For facilities going above and beyond to ensure that children receive proper nutrition: Phakamani Daycare; Ethembeni Daycare

Journey of excellence award for exceptional progress: Vanessa Hufkie – Rainbow Kids Creche; Requle Williams – Carol’s Daycare; Charmaine Majola – Little Butterflies

Most workshops attended: Nicolene Boukes – Little Steps Daycare & Preschool; Luwando Kraai – Judah Square Educare; Gloria Sisilama – Kanyisa Daycare

KET STAMP OF APPROVAL This facility has proven to increase the quality of learning in the ECD Sector through functional governance, tracked children’s progress and effective use of learning programmes in a safe and well-equipped learning environment.

Newly awarded in 2025: Klanke Kalante Speelgroepie; Knysna Speelskool; Siyafunda Educare Centre; Paula Whitney Creche

Facilities that maintained their status: Happy Faces Educare; The Learning Tree Model Preschool; Judah Square Educare; Bubble Gummers Nursery & Preschool; Noluthando Creche & Preschool; Wonderland Educare Centre

Practitioner Patiswa Mtwā brings learning to life through song and clapping at Wonderland Educare.



Learning in motion: Practitioner Keshia Miles from The Learning Tree leading her class through song and movement.



Mentioned by a centre principal during an interview in 2025
“You must have a heart ❤️ for the children, 🧑 or everything else will fall apart.”

2025 in Numbers

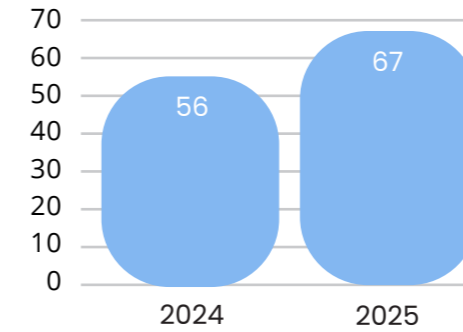
In 2023–2024, we made a strategic decision to focus our programmes exclusively within the Knysna Municipality. Since several ECD organisations operate in Bitou, it is more practical and cost-effective for those organisations to support centres there. As part of this shift, partner sites in Plettenberg Bay were transitioned to locally based organisations. However, due to administrative constraints, ECD registrations

with the Western Cape Education Department could not be amended during 2025. As a result, our registration team continued supporting Plettenberg Bay centres while preparing to hand over this work in 2026. Pedagogical support, however, was provided only to partners within the Knysna Municipality. The statistics following therefore focus on our pedagogical support work in the Knysna Municipality alone.

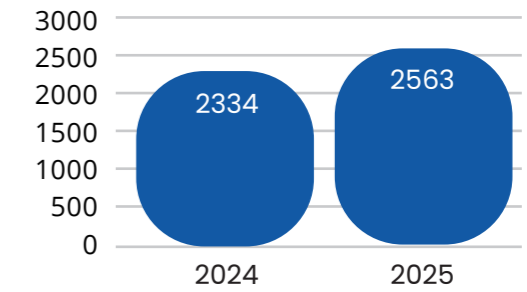
Practitioner Olviory Wynand supporting fine motor development through guided, hands-on activity at Happy Faces Educare.



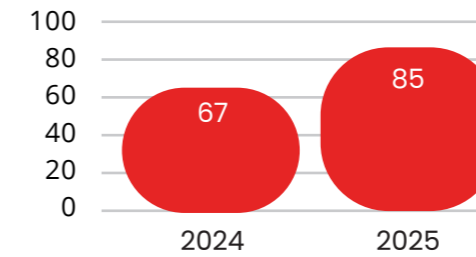
Number of ECD Centres partnering with KET for comprehensive support



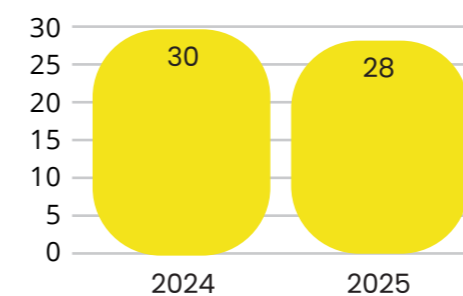
Number of children participating in early learning programmes at centres



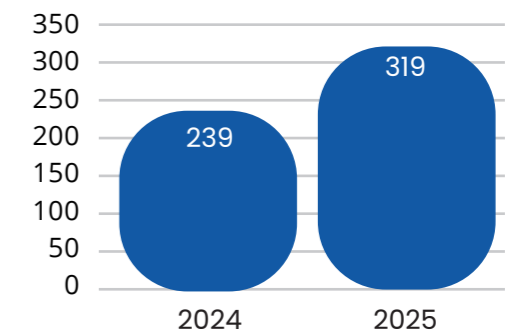
Average (%) attendance for children in partner centres



Number workshops focused on pedagogy



Number of ECD practitioners trained and supported



Looking ahead

The progress reflected in this report gives us confidence about the direction of early childhood development in Knysna.

In 2025 we saw encouraging improvements in children's developmental outcomes, growing practitioner confidence in the classroom, and stronger collaboration between centres working to improve quality. These gains reflect the steady work of practitioners and principals who remain deeply committed to the children and communities they serve.

At the same time, the year ahead requires continued focus. Across South Africa, early childhood development is increasingly recognised as foundational to education, social wellbeing, and economic participation. Yet many ECD centres still operate under significant pressure – with limited funding, complex regulatory requirements, and practitioners carrying immense responsibility for young children's development.

In response, KET's work in 2026 will focus on strengthening the everyday systems that sustain quality early learning. This includes deepening integrated support to centres so that principals can manage safe, compliant and financially sustainable programmes; strengthening classroom practice through consistent literacy, language and social-emotional learning routines; and expanding targeted developmental support for children who risk falling behind before entering school. Our Training Centre will continue to professionalise the ECD workforce by providing

accredited qualifications and workplace-based learning opportunities.

A central shift in our work is to more intentionally recognise and support practitioners as the professionals whose daily decisions shape children's development. When practitioners are confident, well supported, and recognised for their contribution, classrooms become more stable and effective learning environments for young children.

We will also continue strengthening the local ECD ecosystem in Knysna by building partnerships with our municipality, civil society organisations, and community supporters who share responsibility for young children's wellbeing. Through credible data, careful stewardship of resources, and collaboration across sectors, we aim to contribute to a more connected and resilient early learning system.

The work reported on in this report reflects a shared commitment. Across Knysna, practitioners, families, community organisations, and national and international partners are working together to strengthen early childhood development. We are grateful to our donors for choosing this work and for trusting KET to steward their investment. By investing collectively in the early years, we are not only improving opportunities for children in our community, but also contributing to the long-term wellbeing and prosperity of South Africa.

KET's latest audited financial statements are available on request. Please email admin@knysnaedutrust.co.za.

Principal Anda Sangotsha Kanyisa Educare Centre and KET's Preschool Area Lead Chaney Quine enjoying a moment with the children.



Practitioner Lukhanyiso Bhebula fully engaging two little ones in the Numba programme.



This was KET in

2025

Our sincere thanks to the KET team for their dedication and hard work in supporting the local ECD sector and strengthening early learning opportunities for young children in Knysna and Bitou.

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