Clackmannan ELC
Day Care of Children

Lochies Road
Clackmannan
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Telephone: 01259 217 486

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 January 2023

Service provided by:
Clackmannanshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002713

Service no:
CS2003015580

About the service

Clackmannan ELC is a daycare of children service situated in a residential area of Clackmannan, close to local transport links, shops and local amenities. The service provides funded early learning and childcare for Clackmannanshire Council, and provides care for a maximum of 94 children aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is situated within Clackmannan Primary School. The main playroom is a large open plan space with direct access to an enclosed outdoor area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 January 2023 between 08:45 and 17:15. Feedback was provided at the end of the inspection visit. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with several children in the service
- spoke with twelve families on the day of the inspection, one family over the telephone, and reviewed emails from eight families
- spoke with the senior leadership team and staff
- observed practice and staff interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff were nurturing and caring which enabled positive relationships between children and their families.
- Children benefitted from relaxed, unhurried snack times which supported their independence. Further consideration should be given to ensuring lunch times reflect this approach.
- The service should ensure children are supported to become fully engaged in their play and enhance their learning with effective questioning from staff.
- The nursery environment was safe, clean, homely and well maintained.
- The service made good use of their local environment which supported children to feel part of the community.
- The senior management team and all staff were dedicated to the ongoing development of the service, to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- Quality assurance processes could be further developed to enhance continuous improvement and measure progress.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together, outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1 - Nurturing care and support

Children's overall wellbeing was supported well as staff responded to them in kind, calm and respectful ways. One family member told us, "Staff nurture the children so well. I can't praise the nursery enough". This helped children to form positive and nurturing relationships.

Snack times were a positive, sociable experience for children where they enjoyed an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere in the nursery playroom. They could choose when they ate, which allowed them to enjoy uninterrupted play. Visual aids supported children to develop important independence skills, such as washing their hands and collecting their plates. Children were further encouraged to be independent by pouring their own drinks and serving their own food. Staff sat with children for most of the time, which provided a role model to encourage positive eating habits and social interaction. We highlighted the importance of this for all children for the full snack time. Children ate their lunch in the school dining hall which did not provide as many opportunities to develop independence and social skills. The service had started to consider ways they could improve their lunch time routine. This would ensure children benefitted from a relaxed, comfortable eating experience at all times.

Children were supported to understand and express their emotions through a variety of resources and planned activities, including daily emotion check ins. As a result, children were supported to develop their ability to understand their feelings, which provided them with important emotional literacy skills.

The service recognised the importance of promoting parental engagement to support children's outcomes. Home visits provided opportunities for children to meet staff before they started nursery and begin to build relationships. There were a variety of opportunities for families to be involved in their children's nursery experiences, including family PEEP sessions. Parents told us they felt welcome in the nursery and knew they could stay and play with their children anytime.

Quality indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests. There were opportunities for children to lead their own play and they could choose how they spent most of their time. We asked the service to be mindful of interrupting children's play through planned group activities. This would support children to engage in deeper, meaningful play.

Regular planning meetings and daily discussions enabled staff to discuss children's play and learning and extend their interest across a variety of areas. For example, staff identified a developing interest in dinosaurs, so they provided dinosaur resources in the water tray to extend learning. This ensured play experiences met children's needs and engaged their imagination. As a result, children were learning as they had fun.

Staff supported children's development of vocabulary and encouraged interactions, by effective use of Makaton. Videos of children demonstrating the sign of the moment, along with the spoken word, was shared with families, which promoted important communication skills.

Floorbooks captured children's thoughts and ideas about their play and experiences. More focussed interactions and effective use of questioning to extend children's thinking, would support children to widen their skills and enhance their learning through play.

Children's learning opportunities were further promoted through a variety of resource bags and games. The service had included ideas for using the resources which enabled families to use them at home. These resources extended play experiences to develop children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy and allowed families to learn and have fun together.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a well-designed nursery environment that was furnished to a high standard, comfortable and safe. Children were confident moving around the spaces available. This supported them to lead their own play and have fun with their friends.

Quiet spaces had been created within the nursery which provided opportunities for children's individual needs to be supported. There were soft rugs, cosy cushions, and dark tents, for children to explore and relax in. These calm areas provided safe and peaceful spaces.

Children were sensitively supported at sleep times as responsive staff knew children's routines. Individual sleep mats were used, and staff had an effective system in place to monitor children whilst they slept. This helped children rest and recharge which supported their wellbeing and overall development.

For some of the session, children had free flow access to the enclosed nursery garden which provided fun and challenging play opportunities. We saw staff joining in with children's play outdoors, which showed children they were valued. One parent told us, " Staff are always outside and engaging in play experiences with children". We asked the service to ensure staff were available to support children to enjoy outdoor play for their whole session. This would allow children to benefit from undirected active play in the fresh air when they chose.

Children's safety was promoted through risk assessments. These were regularly reviewed, and staff understood their responsibilities to work as a team to identify and remove risks. Staff spoke with children about safety, which enabled them to benefit from a variety of activities that provided challenge and fun in a safe way. We discussed ways that children could be further supported by including them in risk assessing areas. For example, the woodwork bench was not available for children to use on the day of the inspection. This resource provides an opportunity for children to build their self-esteem and confidence, and supports children to express their imagination and problem solve. Working with children to develop risk assessments and understand how to use tools safely, would enable them to enjoy the benefits and challenge it provides.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to their local and wider community. Staff told us of regular visits to shops and amenities in the local area. We saw photographs of children using local transport links to visit landmarks such as Stirling Castle and the Wallace Monument. This helped children feel connected and included in their community.

Children's artwork and photographs of them enjoying a variety of experiences were displayed throughout the service. An achievements wall displayed photographs of children succeeding in activities they enjoyed. This provided children with a sense of ownership of the space and promoted a strong sense that children matter.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together, outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 3.1 - Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The management team and staff promoted the service values of Honesty, Respect, Achievement, Fairness, Nurture. This was evident through the positive and welcoming approach experienced during the inspection. One parent told us, "It's the team there that make the nursery have such a warm and inviting atmosphere".

Regular communication took place with parents and carers, with some families describing the nursery like an extended family. The service used a variety of methods to communicate with families, including Twitter, and online communication apps to share children's learning and progress. This helped parents feels included in their children's nursery experience.

Almost all staff had leadership roles and worked well to share responsibilities and develop their areas. For example, a staff member worked with the team to make the environment communication friendly with the use of visual aids. This supported all children to engage in learning opportunities and enhanced children's communication and language development through their language-rich environment.

The service had started to consider how they could introduce quality assurance systems, to monitor how well the service is doing. We suggested a quality assurance calendar could be used to ensure important information is checked and enhance practice. For example, we found medication records had not been reviewed within expected timescales. Children's online learning journals needed closer monitoring to ensure their progress and development was tracked and shared with parents. The service should develop more formal monitoring systems to identify areas for improvement to influence positive change to outcomes for children and families.

An improvement plan had been created for the service. We found this did not fully reflect all the ongoing work the management team and staff were involved in. For example, they had identified a need to improve the lunchtime experience for children. We discussed with the management team ways they could support improvement planning to be more focussed and meaningful. This would help them to bring about positive changes to children's experiences and outcomes.

The staff team worked well together, and leaders welcomed feedback and suggestions for improvement. Staff were encouraged to be part of the service development and reflect on their practice together. One parent told us, "Staff care and want to do a good job and do what's best for the children". The leaders within the setting were working hard to create a shared approach to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. This showed they were committed to improving outcomes for children.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together, outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.3 - Staff deployment

Staff were warm, responsive, and caring in their approach. They joined in children's play and carefully listened to them to follow their interests. All staff knew children well and understood their individual needs.

The management team recognised and valued the importance of ensuring the service was always appropriately staffed. Staff understood their roles and most of the time were flexible to support children's individual choices, interests and needs. Staff became task orientated at times throughout the day, when children were being grouped together to take part in planned activities. This reduced opportunities for quality engagement and free flow access to the outdoors.

The service had developed a wellbeing pack to maximise staff attendance. There was a positive ethos within the service as staff told us they felt supported in their work. We highlighted the use of the ELC National induction Guidance to support current staff to identify areas for development or priorities for training. This would give staff more confidence in using best practice documents to guide and enhance their practice.

Children experienced good role modelling and a happy, positive atmosphere due to staff treating each other with courtesy and respect.

Staff were passionate about their roles and committed to the children and families in the service. This allowed for positive communication with families. Parent's described staff as "brilliant" and "welcoming". One parent told us, "The staff have so much time for the children and genuinely care about them".

Children and families benefitted from having opportunities to develop relationships with all staff in the service. Families knew who their child's keyworker was and told us all staff had taken time to build relationships with them. Staff took a shared approach to ensuring all children were supported to achieve their potential. This allowed children to benefit from the range of skills, knowledge, and experience of the whole staff team. One parent told us, "All staff have been very welcoming, not just to our child, but the whole family".

Children's continuity of care and partnership working with parents was supported by staff ensuring time for discussions with parents. These were either arranged during the day or at pick up and drop off times. Parents told us that staff understood their children's needs and felt comfortable and welcome in the service.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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