Darvel Early Childhood Centre
Day Care of Children

Campbell Street East
Darvel
KA17 0BP

Telephone: 01560 320 785

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
3 October 2023

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000142

Service no:
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About the service

Darvel Early Childhood Centre is a day care of children service provided by East Ayrshire Council. It is located within a purpose-built building within the Darvel Primary School campus. The service is located in the town of Darvel and is in close proximity to local amenities, including shops, and bus routes. Darvel Early Childhood Centre is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 88 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 October 2023. The inspection was carried out by three 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 since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with people using the service and their family representatives
- spoke with most staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

• Children benefitted from nurturing interactions with staff, which helped them to feel valued and loved.

• Children experienced high quality care, play and learning. They had fun, joy, and laughter throughout their day.

• Children experienced interesting and motivating play and learning opportunities, particularly within the secure out door play space.

• Staff were deployed in such a way that supported continuity in children's care and their effective supervision.

• A continuous culture of improvement was embraced and enabled children to have consistently positive experiences.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning? 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support
Keyworker groups helped children form attachments and to feel safe and secure within the setting. Staff were attuned to children's individual needs, responding well to their changing preferences providing comfort and reassurance. We observed happy children having fun, talking, and laughing with friends and staff. Nurturing approaches and respectful interactions by staff helped to build trust and demonstrated to children that they mattered.

The service had achieved the UNICEF silver rights respecting schools award. We observed that children were supported to reflect on and know their rights. One child spoke confidently to us about what their right to shelter and a warm home meant for them. Children's rights and the values of the setting were promoted and embedded through daily practice. The implementation of 'star tickets' supported children to understand the values of the setting and we observed nurturing conversations between staff and children when issuing 'star tickets' which supported a sense of pride and achievement. Overall, rights respecting practice was a key strength of the service and fostered a culture of respect.

All children had personal plans in place and parents confirmed that they had been involved in developing and reviewing these with staff. This included children's individual likes, dislikes and information about their care routines. We observed respectful and meaningful verbal discussions between staff and parents at children's handover times. This promoted continuity of care between the home and setting and supported children's wellbeing.

Children sat with their keyworkers or familiar staff members and enjoyed relaxing and unhurried mealtimes. We observed staff prepare children for what to expect by referring to visual prompts and supporting children to try new foods. Staff sat and ate with children role modelling positive food habits and most children were encouraged to develop independence by self-serving foods and drinks. As a result children were developing key life skills.

To further support all children's emotional wellbeing, management and staff should review and improve key transitions of the day. We observed that the pace of the day particularly around lunch time did not support children's stage of development as children were expected to engage in group activities for lengthy periods of time. We discussed our observations with the management team and on the second day of our inspection, some improvements had been made.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning
Children were engaged in play activities of their choice, developing their creativity and problem-solving skills. The organisation of the playrooms and outdoor areas encouraged children to independently select resources that supported their play ideas. For example, sensory materials such as play dough and sand, and 'Loose parts' which are items with no fixed purpose that can be moved and manipulated by children as they try out their play ideas, supported children's creativity while they used their imagination to have fun and engage in learning.

Children benefitted from an environment which offered play-based learning opportunities. The staff team had recently reviewed and adapted their planning and recording approach to ensure this was child centred and responsive to current children's interests. As this was a newly introduced process, the management team should continue to support the staff to embed and evaluate the planning cycle recording where breadth and depth of learning Is facilitated to ensure meaningful experiences for all children attending the setting.

Children's views were evident throughout the setting, some of children's work including art work and models and their comments on play and learning were displayed throughout. Learning walls were newly introduced and reflected children's language which identified their curiosities and enjoyment in play. This provided children with a sense of inclusion and ownership of their play spaces.

Play experiences available helped develop children's skills with language & literacy. Within the indoor playrooms we observed adult supported singing and story times, and adult led discussions supported the introduction of new language and vocabulary. Outdoors children confidently retold nursery rhymes and stories whilst using loose parts to imitate familiar characters. However further opportunities to introduce factual books to inform learning and opportunities to develop skills in numeracy and mathematical concepts indoors would further support children to reach their potential.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was clean and well ventilated with good quality child sized furniture and equipment. This gave children a clear message that they were welcome and that their comfort was important. Key information about how the service operated was displayed to help parents feel included and well informed about how children spent their day. We observed families access their child's playroom at the end of the day. However, following consultation with families, parents chose not to enter the playroom when arriving at the setting each morning. We suggested further consideration is given to supporting parents to access their child's play and learning environment at the beginning of the day as this will further strengthen the existing positive relationships.

Cleaning schedules, risk assessments and playroom audits supported a clean and safe environment for children. However, we observed that an obtrusive smell was present in the children's toilet area and we asked that this was improved promptly. In addition, we found that the playroom environment would benefit from some cosmetic improvements such as painting or cleaning of walls and some floor coverings to further promote a calming and stimulating environment. The management team had already identified these improvements and were working with the provider to prioritise these.

Children's safety was further promoted as staff understood their roles and responsibilities around infection prevention and control. For example, they supported children to wash their hands at appropriate times, demonstrating good practice. This minimised the risk of cross infection keeping children and staff safe and healthy.

Children were supported in play spaces that continued to be developed by staff. Staff told us they were continuing to make adaptations in consultation with children, and we saw through the service self-evaluation processes and improvement plan that playroom improvements were prioritised. We agreed that

children would further benefit from some indoor play spaces being better resourced, that imaginative and creative play experiences should be further enhanced and cosy, calming spaces to rest and relax should be provided consistently when the bluebell room is not available. In addition, We found that play zones could be more inviting and encouraged staff to further consider well planned invitations to play in all areas to ensure children experience rich play and learning across all indoor areas.

How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well
Vision, values and aspirations for the service were shared by staff, the management team and parents. Staff confirmed they felt connected to the vision and values of the setting which meant that children were cared for by adults who aspired to provide high-quality early learning and childcare.

Children and families views were valued. They were consulted regularly through a variety of methods including; questionnaires, face to face chats and consultations at family engagement groups. Their views and suggestions supported the services ongoing improvement journey, demonstrating they were valued partners within the setting.

The improvement plan was developed in partnership and embedded strong communication ensured a shared understanding of the improvement priorities of the service. Quality assurance processes including monitoring and Self-evaluation which lead to improvements within the service was evident and approaches were consistent. The team had created a floor book which tracked some improvements, however, further consideration should now be given to tracking the impact of changes and interventions for the service, or individual children and families. This will ensure children and families receive support at the right time to meet their needs.

The management team were visible, approachable and valued strong relationships. Staff participated in annual appraisals and had an open door to support from the manager was available, which meant staff were able to discuss their practice and professional development as well as personal matters. All staff we spoke with confirmed they felt personally and professionally supported within their role and described their work environment as 'happy,' 'supportive' and 'welcoming'.

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment
Children benefitted from being cared for by a committed staff team who were passionate and proud to work at the service. Staff were kind, warm and nurturing to the children and their families. Parents spoke positively about the staff team and of their experiences at the service. Comments made included; "The staff at Darvel are just amazing," "My child has only recently started at the centre but the staff have been great and very nurturing" and "My child has loved starting nursery, after being nervous about being left without their parents they were made to feel very nurtured and secure in the nursery environment".

There was an appropriate number of staff throughout the day to ensure the wellbeing of all children. Some staff were deployed to areas that best met their skills, knowledge, and experience. For example, staff who were knowledgeable about nature were outdoors. This meant that children benefited from high quality experiences and positive engagement outdoors.

The staff team had established positive working relationships with each other, creating an inclusive, motivated and solution focussed team. Ongoing reflection on their practice ensured an ethos of continuous improvement. This meant that staff were able to develop professionally and provided children with a happy and supportive environment as staff practice reflected best practice guidance recommendations.

Time to come together through various meetings including staff and around the table meetings and daily huddles provided opportunities for staff to reflect and supported them to become familiar with all children and families in their care. This meant that should keyworkers be absent, other staff members were well informed, ensuring continuity of care and learning for all children.

Staff worked together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagements with children. For example, staff lunches were well planned to minimise the impact on the children while enabling staff time to rest and be refreshed. The service had a positive ethos of attendance. The management team supported staff absences effectively through wellbeing check-ins with staff. As a result, there was continuity of care for children by staff who knew them very well.

Staff told us the management team had created conditions where they felt confident to initiate well informed change. All staff had further leadership responsibilities, for example the emotional literacy and outdoor champions. Many staff had been involved in projects, for example Eco Accreditation and Rights respecting school accreditation. This supported staff confidence and developed their skills to promote positive outcomes for children and families.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

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