Dunlop Early Childhood Centre
Day Care of Children

Main Street
Dunlop
Kilmarnock
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Telephone: 01560 484 098

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 May 2023

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
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About the service

Dunlop Early Childhood Centre is located in the village of Dunlop in East Ayrshire. The service is provided by East Ayrshire Council and is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school. Accommodation is located within the grounds of Dunlop Primary School.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 15 May 2023 and Tuesday 16 May 2023. 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 since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service and consulted 15 of their family members by Microsoft forms questionnaire
- spoke with all staff and management
- observed practice and daily life for children attending the service
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

• Positive attachments contributed to children feeling well supported, valued and loved.

• Children were happy and busy whilst actively leading their own learning.

• A culture of continuous professional development supported staff to develop confidence, when providing positive outcomes for children.

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?	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? 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support
Children experienced loving, nurturing and responsive care and support. Respectful interactions and positive attachments with staff supported children to feel safe and well cared for. Strong engagement with children demonstrated to them they were listened to. This promoted an inclusive care setting where all children mattered.

Children were well supported to communicate and express their needs and emotions and the use of emotion works programme supported a whole school approach to prioritising wellbeing. We observed staff listen to children and skilfully responding to their verbal and nonverbal cues for seeking comfort and reassurance. Individual strategies of support promoted children's continued happiness and enjoyment in the service which further encouraged a feeling of security and belonging.

Staff had sound knowledge of children in their care and confidently discussed how their needs could be met. Personal plans were in place for all of the children that we sampled and were routinely shared with parents. Effective working with families and other professionals contributed to the development of specific strategies and individualised plans to support children when additional support was needed. All parents we spoke with agreed that staff knew their children well. This promoted children's continued development and achievements within the service.

Families were invited to share in their child's learning through responsive and planned approaches which included stay and play sessions, parent days and verbal discussions at handover times. This promoted continuity of care between the home and service and supported children's wellbeing. The service should now consider inviting parents into the setting as routine practice at drop off and pick up times to further strengthen their existing approaches.

Children enjoyed sociable mealtime experiences, where their independence was supported as they were encouraged to self-serve foods and drinks. However, we found that at times the noise level was disrupting and impacted on children's opportunities to seek support. We observed that staff engaged well with children, however, should be more mindful of their body positioning to ensure children's cues for support at mealtimes are consistently recognised.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning
Children were supported to achieve as staff recognised their right to play and understood child development. The use of differing learning approaches such as progression tools and benchmarks enabled staff to plan daily activities which promoted progress and learning. Play experiences developed children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy and regular assessments of children's individual learning supported continued achievement.

Whilst we recognise that the approaches to planning for play and learning were well considered, we found that they were not focused on the individual needs of children. Planning documentation outlined pre-set experiences, outcomes and expected achievements in skills for children which has the potential to limit

spontaneous creativity, curiosity and exploration. Planning should be reviewed to ensure it is play based and informed by children's choices, wishes and interests.

On the second day of our inspection, we observed that improved invitations to play and increased opportunities for creative and sensory exploration resulted in children displaying higher levels of engagement. The management team should monitor the daily set up to ensure consistency for children and continue with their plans to introduce a model to measure children's involvement levels as this will ensure a consistently high-quality enabling environment for children.

Meaningful praise and skilful interactions encouraged children to explore their surroundings. We observed children having fun as they independently explored play experiences and activities were easily accessible, promoting choice. Effective questioning used by some staff promoted children's thinking and understanding. This led to extended play and learning for some individual children.

When access to all play areas was available this supported children's choice and continued enjoyment. However, we found that the pace of the day was structured to include regular disruption to children's chosen play and they were required to engage in large group adult led activities which limited opportunity to lead their own play and learning. We have asked that the pace of day is reviewed to limit disruption to children's free play and to ensure consistency in high-quality child-initiated experiences.

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
Children's personal information was stored securely to ensure families privacy. Information was accessible to relevant staff whilst remaining confidential.

Children's safety was promoted as relevant risk assessments and maintenance procedures were implemented. Staff's knowledge and practice demonstrated a sound understanding of their responsibilities of maintaining a safe environment for children.

Children benefitted from a safe, secure, homely and clean environment. All areas were bright, well ventilated and maintained to a good standard. Furnishings were comfortable and in a good state of repair. Cosy spaces where children could rest, relax and be alone contributed positively to their emotional wellbeing and the calm environment supported children to remain settled and relaxed. Children's artwork and photographs were displayed throughout the service promoting their sense of belonging, pride and inclusion.

The layout of play areas enabled children to freely move around and access activities with ease during free play. This promoted independence and experiences were broadened as some children confidently moved and transported materials and resources between play spaces.

We found that the service prioritised children's physical activity and access to outdoors making good use of community resources such as local park, Dean park ranger activities and the multi-use games area. The planned approach to a 'mini forest' experience provided children with opportunities to explore their community and engage with nature and the world around them. We observed children having a good understanding of safety and ownership of the forest environment. This provided high-quality experiences for children which supported children's wellbeing and the development of lifelong learning skills.

Effective action was taken to maintain a clean environment and reduce the spread of infection. This ensured children's continued health and wellbeing. Children were supported well to follow positive hand and respiratory hygiene. This encouraged their learning of self care and keeping healthy.

To further enhance children's play and learning, they would benefit from the offering of more risk enabling play. Further development of loose parts play and more imbedded responsive approached to digital technologies will support this and ensure children consistently experience high-quality play and learning experiences that stimulates curiosity, exploration and imagination.

How good is our leadership? 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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well
The commitment, passion, enthusiasm and motivation of senior leadership team was supporting a shared vision for high quality care and support for children. Staff spoke highly of the support from the deputy head teacher and head teacher which enabled them to feel happy and settled within their role.

Positive communication, good relationships and regular meetings between staff and management meant staff were kept informed about what was happening in the service. This helped to ensure staff remained knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities. Collegiate meetings enabled all staff to contribute the life of the service and gave the team protected time to discuss children's specific interests, needs and development. This effectively contributed to a responsive staff team working together to meet children and family's needs.

Effective, purposeful communication with families through the use of online platforms ensured families could share learning. This supported a family approach to learning new skills together, supporting wider family wellbeing and developing confidence. All parents we spoke with confirmed they felt fully informed and involved in their child's care and learning.

Management and staff were reflective of their work and completed self-evaluation group tasks. The team worked well together to gain a good understanding of Care Inspectorate's 'Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare.' This supported the development of the improvement plan and ensure continued positive experiences and outcomes for children.

Management and staff effectively shared their vision of what was important to the service and the varying formats of the improvement plan ensured children and families were informed of planned improvements. Parents and children were regularly consulted regarding their views of the service and were involved in directing future service delivery. We discussed how this process could be strengthened by sharing with children the impact and actions taken as the result of their views being sought.

The current improvement agenda and quality assurance processes were progressing well and had a positive impact on securing very good outcomes for children and families. Shared responsibilities between management and staff supported clear direction and opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles. This encouraged staff's confidence in their roles and skills to support children to reach their full potential.

How good is our staff team? 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 4.3: Staff deployment
The service had recently experiences significant changes to their staff team. The compassionate staff team worked well together to create a calm and relaxed environment where children were encouraged and supported to achieve their potential. Staff respectfully listened to children and took account of their views, demonstrated children mattered and were at the heart of the service.

Children and families benefitted from staff's wide range of knowledge and experience. A well planned high-quality induction process and effective sharing of professional learning supported new staff's confidence as they settled into their role. This also supported a shared understanding, as all staff developed a good awareness of the values, aims and vision of the service.

The staff team had undertaken a wide range of training and professional learning experiences which benefitted individual children and families. We found that they completed high-quality post training evaluation and shared their learning with colleagues to ensure children were cared for by a skilled staff team.

Positive communication among staff promoted safe and effective supervision of children. We observed a planned parents day, where staff were required to meet with parents on a one to one basis and found that sufficient, consistent staff remained available for children which contributed to consistency of care, promoting fairness and children's sense of security and being well cared for.

Daily tasks and staff breaks were managed well to ensure children's needs were continually met. Appropriate levels of staff throughout the day promoted children's emotional wellbeing and positive play and learning experiences.

Children's risk of harm was reduced through staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures. Staff were confident about safeguarding measures and wider issues which may affect families and quickly communicated concerns. This contributed to children remaining safe.

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	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - 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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