New Cumnock Early Childhood Centre
Day Care of Children

Afton Bridgend
New Cumnock
Cumnock
KA18 4AX

Telephone: 01290 338 593

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
9 September 2026

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000142

Service no:
CS2003016960

About the service

New Cumnock Early Childhood Centre is a daycare for children service situated in New Cumnock, East Ayrshire. The service is provided by East Ayrshire Council. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 82 children not yet attending primary school at any one time: No more than a maximum of 10 children aged two to three years and no more than 72 aged three to those not yet attending primary school. At the time of our inspection, 48 children were registered with the service.

The service has sole use of the premises and the outdoor play area. Children can freely move between indoors and a secure outdoor area. The centre is within walking distance of local amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday, 8 September and Wednesday, 9 September 2026, between the hours of 09:15 and 16:30 on day one, and 09:15 to 16:00 on day two. 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
- received completed electronic questionnaires from four families and 10 members of staff
- spoke with the staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvements are needed throughout this inspection report.

Key messages

- Strong values, empowered staff and positive teamwork helped children experience nurturing, inclusive care and meaningful learning opportunities.
- Strengthening quality assurance, reflective practice and management oversight will support sustained improvement.
- High-quality, child-centred play and learning enabled children to thrive, building confidence, curiosity and skills across all areas of development.
- Skilled staff interactions and responsive planning supported children to make very good progress in their learning and wellbeing.
- Warm, nurturing relationships and strong partnerships with families helped children feel safe, valued, included and emotionally secure.
- Children's rights, wellbeing and individual needs were consistently supported through responsive care, effective planning and safeguarding practices.

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

Leadership	4 - Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

The service had clear visions, values and aims which were well understood by staff and reflected in daily practice. Staff were able to explain how the service's values influenced their work with children and families. Positive links had been developed with children, families and the wider community, helping to promote a shared understanding of the service's purpose.

Staff demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and could discuss how learning from training had influenced practice. They described the positive impact of Rights Respecting Schools approaches and other professional learning opportunities on outcomes for children. Staff interactions were respectful, responsive and inclusive. Children benefited from warm and caring practitioners who understood their individual needs and worked together to provide positive experiences. A Parent/Carer told us, "Always makes the effort to discuss our child's progress and what topics they cover."

Staff had opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities and confidently described their lead roles. There was evidence of collaborative working, including projects linked to wellbeing, road safety and children's rights. Although family engagement initiatives had not always achieved the desired level of participation, staff reflected on these challenges and had identified actions to strengthen engagement and build further partnerships with families.

Some quality assurance processes were in place, including infection prevention and control audits which had been completed effectively. Policies and risk assessments were available and had been reviewed when required. Management had implemented processes to support the service through a challenging period of reduced administrative support and staff absences, helping to maintain continuity for children and families.

There was scope to strengthen leadership systems to ensure quality assurance activities were implemented consistently and effectively. Peer observations had not been completed and monitoring of staff practice had not taken place regularly, and planned audits had yet to be completed. Self-evaluation processes were not yet fully embedded within the service. While some self-evaluation evidence had been gathered, this was based on the previous framework and did not always clearly demonstrate the impact of improvements on outcomes for children. As self-evaluation processes continue to develop, leaders should ensure that findings are used to identify clear improvement priorities, drive service development, and evidence positive outcomes for children and families.

Opportunities for professional dialogue and reflective practice would benefit from further development. While staff meetings had taken place, records of these meetings were not available and therefore did not consistently evidence discussions around quality assurance findings, service challenges, or improvement actions. Introducing more regular staff and room meetings would strengthen communication, support reflective practice, and promote a shared understanding and ownership of improvement priorities across the team.

Management oversight would benefit from further strengthening in some areas. For example, we identified

that not all relevant notifications had been submitted to the Care Inspectorate, including those relating to external building works, periods of reduced service provision, and an accident. In addition, the registration certificate displayed within the service required updating to ensure the information was accurate and current. Strengthening oversight of regulatory responsibilities would support compliance with legislation and guidance, while helping to ensure that required information is submitted and maintained appropriately.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced very high-quality play and learning opportunities which promoted their confidence, curiosity and overall development. They were highly engaged in their play and demonstrated enthusiasm, creativity and sustained concentration. Children led their own learning and were supported by staff who responded sensitively to their interests and ideas.

Children were deeply involved in a junk modelling project where they worked together to build houses from boxes and recycled materials. Children confidently discussed their own homes, shared ideas with their peers, and used their imagination to extend their play. This supported their communication, creativity, problem-solving, and social skills. Parents shared: "I can only say I have witnessed painting, drawing, storytelling etc ." and "The outdoor area at the centre is where my child spends most off his time, his key worker ensures the door is open when safe so he can explore when my child wants to."

Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of child development and recognised the importance of supporting children according to their stage of development rather than age alone. They confidently linked their practice to national guidance and 'Realising the Ambition', ensuring learning experiences were tailored to children's individual needs and abilities.

Planning was responsive and child centred. In the two-year-old room, planning clearly reflected children's interests and accurately matched the experiences children were having. Children's achievements and learning were shared with families through displays on the wall of learning records. While planning in the 3-5 room was at an early stage due to the start of the term, staff had clear systems in place to capture children's learning and use this to inform next steps.

Children benefited from rich opportunities to develop literacy, language and numeracy skills through meaningful play experiences. Staff supported children to retell the story of The Three Little Pigs using puppets, participate in rhymes and songs, and explore mathematical language while making playdough and discussing quantities. Children independently accessed resources from outdoor storage areas, encouraging choice, confidence and responsibility.

Interactions between staff and children were a significant strength. Staff were warm, nurturing and highly responsive. They used skilled questioning and effective scaffolding techniques to extend children's thinking, curiosity and problem-solving abilities. Children were given time to think, explore and express their ideas, helping them become confident and successful learners. A parent told us, "They go above and beyond in their role ensuring my child is happy and safe, keeps me up to date with anything happening in the centre.

They are a credit to the centre."

Staff observations of children's learning were of a very good quality. Learning journals demonstrated that observations were carried out regularly and provided meaningful information about children's progress, achievements and next steps. Staff clearly used their knowledge of children to support ongoing learning and development.

There was scope to further enhance the already positive experiences available to children by increasing opportunities for sand and water play. We were pleased to see that this had already been identified by the service, with new sand and water trays having been ordered. Extending these opportunities will support children's sensory exploration, schematic play, early mathematical thinking, and overall wellbeing.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support.

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Throughout our visit, children were supported with affectionate and warm interactions. Staff offered reassurance, praise, encouragement and comfort when required. As a result, children appeared happy, settled and emotionally secure within the setting. Children confidently approached staff for support, demonstrating strong and trusting relationships.

Children's rights, inclusion and participation were embedded in practice. The service had achieved the Silver Rights Respecting Schools Award, reflecting its commitment to promoting children's rights. Staff treated children with respect and encouraged them to express their views and make choices throughout the day. We observed positive relationships between children and staff, and children showed respect and kindness towards one another. This created a culture where children felt valued, listened to and included.

Relationships with families were a key strength. Staff welcomed parents into the setting at drop-off and collection times and encouraged meaningful communication about children's experiences and wellbeing. Home links were further supported through communication bags and other home link bags as well as ongoing discussions with families. Parents had access to playrooms and were included in the life of the service. Parents shared: "My child has become more confident around peers and doesn't struggle leaving me in the mornings as my child has a strong relationship with his key worker" and "Staff are very friendly and professional. They support my child to grow and develop."

Personal plans we sampled were effective and child centred. Personal plans contained relevant information about children's needs, preferences and wellbeing. Reviews took place following significant changes or at least every six months. The plans reflected children's individual circumstances and demonstrated that staff knew children well. Chronologies were completed to a good standard and provided a clear record where additional support or wellbeing concerns had been identified.

Medication procedures were managed safely. Records contained the information required to support safe administration and accountability. Staff demonstrated an understanding of their responsibilities and appropriate procedures were followed.

Staff showed a strong understanding of child protection responsibilities. They confidently explained the action they would take if they had concerns about a child's wellbeing and were clear about reporting procedures. This helped provide assurance that children would be protected and supported appropriately.

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

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