Bellsbank Early Childhood Centre
Day Care of Children

Bellsbank Primary School
Early Learning and Childcare Facility
Craiglea Cresent, Bellsbank
Dalmellington
KA6 7UA

Telephone: 01292 551 195

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 May 2022

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000142

Service no:
CS2003041854

About the service

Bellsbank Early Childhood Centre is based within Bellsbank School Campus in the town of Dalmellington, in East Ayrshire . This daycare of children service is registered to provide care for a maximum of 43 children at any one time. Of these a maximum of nine can be under 12 months of age and a maximum of 34 can be aged from two years to those who are not yet attending primary school, with no more than 10 aged between two and three years of age. Children are cared for in designated playrooms, which all have access to a secure outdoor play area.

The service is provided by East Ayrshire Council.

What people told us

We spoke with eight children during our inspection and observed the interactions between staff and other children. Children who spoke with us said that they liked going to the service. They told us they had lots of friends there and liked the toys they had to play with. Nineteen parents responded to an online survey and three spoke with us by telephone. Parents were happy with the service provided. Their comments included the following:

'I just wanted to say I think that the ECC has been doing a fantastic job keeping parents updated & involved as best as possible while also following all the restrictions that we've been going through the past few years, it finally feels like things are slowly starting to get a bit more normalised'.

'I think the building is excellent and they seem to have lots of different toys etc for my child to play with and use. He always has a great time he tells me about all the different things he gets to try and loves his teachers'.

One parent felt that the entrance area was unsafe due to congestion in the car park. We found that this had been resolved by access to the top car park with a path now leading down the hill to the centre. This allowed the centre's parents use the top care park at drop off and collection times.

We have included parents', carers' and children's views throughout this report.

Self assessment

We did not ask the service to complete a self-assessment before this inspection. We looked at and discussed, the service's improvement plan as part of our inspection.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of environment	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	4 - Good
Quality of management and leadership	4 - Good

Quality of care and support

Findings from the inspection

This quality theme is evaluated as very good. We found major strengths resulting in positive outcomes for children, with very few areas for improvement.

Children were valued and respected as individuals. They benefitted from warm, caring, inclusive and nurturing care and support. Staff gave children lots of praise and encouragement to do their best, and lots of cuddles and reassurance when they needed it. Children were happy, confident, and having lots of fun in their play and learning.

Personal plans clearly set out how children would be cared for. Involvement between families and other people involved in children's care and support meant these helped children to achieve their potential. All of the parents who returned our survey and spoke with us were happy with their involvement in their children's learning. Parents said, 'They talk to us regularly about my child's care what he's been learning, how he's getting on with other children etc. We also have meetings about his care plan'.

Children had lots of opportunities to make choices about their play and learning. They were fully involved in fun and meaningful play experiences. We saw children measuring furniture, following recipes at the mud kitchen, testing their climbing skills, throwing and catching balls and singing.

Lunch time was a happy and sociable experience for children. They were supported by staff, who sat and chatted with them, helping them to cut up their food and pour their own drinks. Children chose their meals from two options at the start of each day. One of the options appeared dry and unappetising for young children. We noted that some children did not eat all of this, and staff told us that was often the case. We asked the service to undertake a review of the suitability of lunch options, and to ensure that improvements are made if required. This will ensure that children are receiving sufficient and suitably nutritious food as part of their daily experience.

Children were protected from harm by staff who had a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They had participated in child protection training and were alert and responsive to potential signs of abuse. Staff worked very well with families, and support was offered when people needed it most. The service had very good links with other agencies and worked closely with them to meet children's needs.

We were satisfied there were appropriate arrangements in place to limit the risk of infection.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 5 - very good

Quality of environment

Findings from the inspection

We evaluated this quality theme as very good, where several important strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweigh areas for improvement.

Children benefitted from a recently built bright, warm clean environment which was equipped with high quality furniture and resources. Direct access from each of the playrooms to extensive outdoor areas, meant that children could choose where the wanted to play. The outdoors area had been carefully designed to ensure that children could maximise their time there, for example with shelter and direct access to a toilet. Almost all children played outside for the majority of our inspection visit. Staff and parents told us that this was generally how children spent their time. This helped children to be healthy and active and to learn in a natural environment that promoted curiosity, enquiry and exploration.

We saw that staff effectively supported spontaneous risky play. For example, they encouraged children to think about what they needed to do to stay safe when climbing and supervised the children well. This was helping children to learn new skills and encouraging them to think about the risks for themselves as part of their learning.

In line with the service's nurturing ethos, cosy areas had been developed in each of the playrooms and outside. We saw that children made good use of these for rest and relaxation, and to take themselves away when they wanted some quiet time.

We noted that within two of the playrooms there were no designated sinks for cleaning resources such as art materials. We have referred to staff deployment and monitoring and evaluation to support ongoing improvements to the service within the staffing and management and leadership theme. We suggested that the impact this had on staff time, and potentially children's experiences, should be considered as part of this.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 5 - very good

Quality of staffing

Findings from the inspection

We evaluated this quality theme as good, where several important strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweigh areas for improvement.

Staff were warm, friendly, caring and worked well together. This helped to create a welcoming and nurturing place for children. Staff had built positive, trusting relationships with families. One parent told us that the staff were what made the centre so good. She said that; 'they go above and beyond for children and their families'.

Staff who spoke with us were passionate and motivated to do their best for children and their families. Staff shared a vision for high quality care and play. They worked together to continually develop the service, helping children to reach their full potential. Going forward, staff should continue to refer to best practice guidance, including 'Realising the Ambition, Being Me', to further improve learning experiences indoors.

Room team meetings provided focused time for discussions about children's needs. Staff used these to share information about their learning, and to develop clear plans to support children and their families. Staff told us they missed the opportunities to meet as a whole staff team. These opportunities should be reinstated with appropriate Covid-19 mitigations.

Staff were committed to ongoing training and professional learning. They told us how this helped them to reflect on their practice to make improvements to children's experiences. For example, training on the outdoor learning environment led to positive changes about using natural materials to help children in all areas of their learning.

The service was suitably staffed to meet children's needs. Careful consideration of children's wellbeing needs meant that one to one care was given when needed. This helped ensure all children felt safe and valued and could be fully involved in the centre.

We asked the service to review staff deployment and playroom organisation, to provide consistently high-quality experiences indoors. We also asked the service to review the lunch staffing arrangements, to ensure that all staff can sit with their group of children for their whole lunch experience.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of management and leadership

Findings from the inspection

We evaluated this quality theme as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed any areas for improvement.

The management team provided effective leadership and support. The shared vision, values and aims for the centre and school were implemented effectively in practice, resulting in a respectful and inclusive ethos.

Staff embraced their leadership roles, undertaking independent research and learning to fulfil their roles and to meet children's individual needs. Staff were familiar with current best practice guidance. They told us how applying this in practice had resulted in positive changes for children and families. Staff had a sound understanding of child development. Their knowledge helped them to recognise and respond to children's needs. A visiting specialist told us that staff were skilfully involved in working with them to support children.

Staff told us they felt well supported and valued by management. Staff were routinely involved in self-evaluation processes. This ensured a shared understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. Regular monitoring of all aspects of the service supported positive outcomes for children. Monitoring recognised and celebrated staff skills and knowledge and informed clear plans to support good practice. Targeted and planned support was provided where required to support staff practice. Monitoring was used to support staff practice as it recognised their skills, experience and areas they could develop.

The service was clear about priorities for improvement. Development of partnership working with parents was a key area. Management and staff were keen to re-instate group sessions with parents, previously recognised as a key strength of the service. We consider that access to a suitable space within the campus for this purpose would support positive outcomes for children and their families.

The recommendation we made in our previous inspection report about developing quality assurance processes had been met. However, we discussed how further development of effective monitoring and evaluation processes will support continuous improvement.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

Previous recommendations

Recommendation 1

Staff should enable and support children to plan and lead their own learning and provide meaningful experiences which motivate them and have fun playing and learning.

Health and Social Care Standards 2.27 which state:

'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity'.

This recommendation was made on 16 December 2019.

Action taken on previous recommendation
Staff had made a range of improvements in this area.

Developments in the outdoor area provided very good opportunities to promote children's curiosity and learning in a natural environment. Staff talked enthusiastically about their learning in relation to outdoor play and learning, including loose parts and creativity, and how they were implementing this. Staff had made significant development in the use of floor books. Children's interests and prior learning clearly underpinned planning processes. We saw that children were consistently able to lead their own learning, supported effectively by staff, and were fully engaged in meaningful play for extended periods.

This recommendation is met.

Recommendation 2

Management should progress with monitoring the work of staff and the service as a whole.

Health and Social Care Standards 4.23 which state:

'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed'.

This recommendation was made on 16 December 2019.

Action taken on previous recommendation
The management team had worked hard to improvement monitoring arrangements.

An annual monitoring calendar had been developed and was regularly amended to ensure its effectiveness. Management had developed their own audit/monitoring tools, and monitoring processes highlighted areas for improvement, which were shared with staff. Staff felt that monitoring was a positive and supportive process. Effective approaches to improvement cycles were supporting ongoing developments within the service.

This recommendation is met.

Complaints

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

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
13 May 2019	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good 3 - Adequate 4 - Good 4 - Good
28 Mar 2018	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good 2 - Weak 5 - Very good 4 - Good
8 Feb 2017	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good 2 - Weak 5 - Very good Not assessed
21 Mar 2013	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
22 Sep 2009	Unannounced	Care and support	4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
15 Oct 2008	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good

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