Springvale Early Years Centre
Day Care of Children

Sannox Drive
Saltcoats
KA21 6BN

Telephone: 01294 607 025

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 July 2024

Service provided by:
North Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003327

Service no:
CS2003044484

About the service

Springvale Early Years Centre is a day care of children service situated in the residential area of Saltcoats. The service is provided by North Ayrshire Council.

The service is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of 78 children as follows:

- a maximum of 18 children zero to three-years-old only
- a maximum of 60 children three-years-old to those not yet at primary school only.

The care service will operate throughout the year. At the time of our inspection, 58 children aged two to five-years-old were registered with the service.

The service is close to transport routes and other local amenities. Children have access to an entrance area, designated playrooms, a lunch room, fully enclosed outside areas, children's toilets, and nappy changing facilities on ground level.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 9 July 2024 between 10:00 and 18:00, and 10 July 2024 between 09:00 and 18:00. Feedback was provided on 12 July 2024 between 09:30 and 12:00. Two inspectors carried out the inspection.

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

- spoke with children using the service
- received 18 completed questionnaires
- spoke with staff and the leadership team
- spoke with one visiting professional
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The nurturing ethos of the service contributed to children feeling happy, secure and confident.
- Children were achieving and empowered to lead their play and learning.
- The leadership and staff team were passionate about supporting children and families.
- Strong, effective leadership and commitment to continuous improvement contributed to high quality outcomes for children and families.
- There was an ethos of distributed leadership within the service, and staff were passionate about their additional responsibility for champion roles.
- Children and families were supported by a motivated and skilled staff team who worked closely with each other to provide high quality, inclusive experiences for all 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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very 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 found significant strengths in aspects of care provided, and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support
Children benefitted from staff who were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach. We observed this consistently throughout the inspection. Children were affectionate with staff and engaged well with them, and friendships formed with their peers were evident. As a result, children were happy, secure and confident.

Overall, families agreed they were happy with their child's care and support in this service, commenting:

"She's made good relationships with staff and friends and always comes home happy."

"Continuity of staff and how they genuinely care."

"Making friends; socialising with peers."

Staff's understanding of children's individual needs, including food allergies, intolerances, dietary preferences, and emotional support, had a significant positive impact. This knowledge was used to create and update children's personal learning plans, ensuring their needs were met, and families were kept informed, understood and supported.

Detailed information was in place for children who required additional support. Staff and families were aware of and involved in updating this information, which included advice from other professionals. Staff used the methods to support children in regulating who were settled throughout our visits.

The leadership team organised mealtimes for children, meaning they did not have to wait until the food arrived. Staff further supported mealtimes by sitting with children, supervising them well and providing assistance based on individual needs. Mealtimes were unhurried and relaxed, a sociable experience, and children were reminded to take their time while eating and not to put too much food in their mouths at once. This helped to support safer eating practices.

There were opportunities for children to develop their independence skills, such as pouring drinks. We discussed where mealtimes could be extended to support children's independence, particularly for older children, with more opportunities for self-serve, helping to tidy their plates/cutlery when finished, and staff eating with children to provide a positive role model and encourage positive eating habits. The head of centre shared how the leadership and staff team recently evaluated the lunchtime routine. In the new term, improvements will include three lunch sittings, which will give children more self-serve opportunities.

Children's personal care needs were carried out discreetly, supporting their privacy and dignity. Staff used these opportunities as a one-to-one time to build positive relationships.

Medication was stored securely, labelled and out of children's reach. Staff understood children's medical needs well, and medication was given safely, supporting their health and wellbeing. However, we found an inconsistency in the recording of one medication regarding the dosage amount that could lead to unsafe practices. The service swiftly ensured this was amended to ensure children's safety. The leadership team should continue auditing medication to ensure the wellbeing of children and influence positive outcomes.

The leadership team's collaborative approach, working well with families, staff and external professionals, made everyone feel valued and involved in identifying appropriate next steps and strategies for children, and supporting school transitions. This included visits to feeder schools for children to meet their teachers, learn about the school routine, and for the service to share essential information detailed within a child's communication passport and social story.

Staff's commitment to protecting children was evident in their annual participation in safeguarding training, and the setting's robust child protection policy and procedures equipped them with the knowledge and skills to keep children safe.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children were engaged and enjoying their play and learning. They actively participated in a balanced mix of planned activities, such as structured games in learning sessions, and spontaneous activities like free play and exploration. This was an area for improvement identified by the leadership and staff team and should continue to be developed. This approach will allow children to take the lead and ensure breadth and balance in learning, with staff providing the necessary support.

Listening to stories, playing board games, role-playing and drawing all sparked children's imagination and curiosity, and supported their social development. Staff's highly skilled interactions and thoughtful questioning as children played further supported them in developing language and literacy skills.

Staff provided additional support for children who required adult assistance to play. Using visual aids and Makaton to support communication and understanding of play routines significantly enhanced children's play and learning experiences. This inclusive approach fostered a sense of value and inclusion in all children within the setting.

Small group activities further promoted children's early numeracy development. Children were learning mathematical concepts such as number recognition, counting forwards and backwards, and subitising, the ability to immediately recognise the number of objects in a small group without needing to count them. We discussed how this learning could be extended in the playroom so that children who wanted to continue playing could do so.

During our visit, children participated in a planned learning experience with dominoes, learning how to make a pizza for home. This planned experience, which resulted from the children's request following a successful visit the previous year, showed their eagerness and excitement to learn and explore. It allowed children to learn new vocabulary and processes, and foster a sense of connection to the community.

Trackers that record children's health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy, supported staff in capturing children's care, play and learning. These highlighted children's progress and guided staff in providing the best experiences and outcomes for children.

The service recently transitioned to a digital platform to share children's progress with families, enhancing their involvement in their children's learning. Staff planned for children based on their observations and children's interests. Observations helped them understand children's progress and achievements and ensure their play and learning needs were met. Overall, families felt the digital platform was a positive change. However, one parent/carer commented:

"I was quite disappointed when they removed the observation folders and moved to do online journals. I feel the learning journals are not specific to my child and often would just be from a group activity, whereas with previous observations were based on my child's learning."

The leadership team recognised that sharing information online was in the early stages and will be developed further in the new term with more detail to support individual children's play and learning progression.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of 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 an environment that was well-furnished, homely and inviting. The entrance was decorated with lots of attractive information, which helped promote family engagement.

The spacious, bright and well-ventilated playrooms provided a very good environment for children. The high-quality furniture, strategically placed play zones, and bright airy atmosphere enhanced the learning experience for children aged three to five-years-old.

We visited the setting during the summer holidays outwith term time. As a result, not all play zones were open and children aged two to five-years-old played together indoors and outdoors, supporting transitions. However, consideration was given to the various activities and experiences to reflect children's interests, stimulate curiosity and imagination, offer challenges and extend their play and learning.

The setting provided children with various sensory, and cause-and-effect play opportunities indoors and outdoors, such as splashing in puddles, playing with large drums in the rain, and using shaving foam and playdough. These activities were designed to stimulate the children's senses and support their social communication development.

The Zen Den positively impacted children who required adult support to play. Its inclusive approach helped them learn about schemas and develop their play and learning. It allowed children to self-regulate their emotions and enjoy their time spent in the setting for extended periods throughout the day.

Online journals, a tool for sharing children's play and learning experiences with their families, provided valuable insights that supported our findings. Most parents and carers expressed that engaging play experiences, mainly outdoor play, significantly contributed to their child's development, commenting:

"We particularly like that she has access to these types of play to allow her to take positive risks within a safe environment. She loves being outdoors so it's important for us that she spends as much time outside as she wants. It would have been nice to have had a sports day or similar event for all parents to attend this year."

"The outside area is really wonderful. Lots of nature and I'm sure a swing from the trees, they have tires and wooden pallets etc it really is the best part of my son's day."

"My child enjoys playing in the sand and using the wheelbarrow. He loves running around and playing on the bikes."

The leadership and staff team will continue to review children's access to all outdoor play and sports activities, include family feedback in this process, encourage participation and ensure their voices are heard in shaping the future of the service.

The nappy changing facilities were in line with best practice guidance. During the inspection, we discussed infection prevention and control improvements to prevent cross-contamination. For example, porous materials should be in lidded boxes, crumbling plaster on one wall should be repaired and toilet/nappy changing doors should be closed. The leadership team's swift action in implementing these changes demonstrated the setting's commitment to keeping children safe and its dedication to continuous improvement.

Children were consistently prompted to wash their hands at key times of the day, reinforcing the setting's dedication to infection prevention and control. Staff, too, were mindful of the need for regular handwashing and maintaining a clean environment as an opportunity to promote children's health.

The setting's commitment to safety was evident in the measures in place, which should instil a sense of security in children and their families. These measures include a secure entry system, registers, boundary fencing, gates and risk assessments for the environment and individual children.

Accident and incident forms were completed and shared with families at handovers and online, and appropriate first aid was administered when needed. These were regularly audited, which helped identify common or reoccurring themes and the appropriate action required to maintain children's safety.

How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of 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 leadership team was welcoming, approachable and engaged well during the inspection. Children benefitted from a positive ethos and a culture of continuous improvement guided by a leadership and staff team who were passionate, committed, inspired and motivated to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

The setting's improvement plan prioritised high quality practice, improving children's outcomes and establishing and maintaining strong working relationships with families. This should help families feel valued and included, and promote a shared partnership in delivering high quality care, play and learning for children.

The leadership and staff team's positive attitude and inclusive approach helped shape the service's improvement journey. Their efforts have led to developing a shared vision, values and aims, which will be further refined in the new term with the active participation of staff and families, ensuring everyone feels included.

Overall, families agreed they were involved meaningfully to help develop the service, with one parent/carer commenting:

"Questionnaires are sent out regarding any thoughts parents might have."

Regular communication with families took place through various methods, including conversations at handovers, regular questionnaires and planned family learning events, such as phonological awareness and book bug sessions. This supported parents in continuing their children's learning development at home.

Staff confidently spoke about how they had been actively involved in self-evaluation as a team, identifying priorities, and introducing improvements which had positively impacted children's experiences and outcomes.

Regular meetings support staff in reflecting on the service provided, evaluating care, play and learning opportunities for children, and available resources. Staff were encouraged to share feedback or suggestions with the leadership team in the playrooms and on private social media platforms.

Robust quality assurance processes, guided by the leadership team, have allowed staff to review and monitor various aspects of the service in a focused and meaningful way. This has led to the development of the Zen Den. This quieter room allows children to self-regulate and explore schematic play without interruption, fostering a sense of calm and independence that enhances their development and learning experience. Additionally, the recent staff training on phonological awareness helps support children's understanding of sounds and spoken words, which is embedded in the curriculum rationale to support children's progress in literacy.

The service's collaboration with other professionals to support children and meet their needs was highly effective. Feedback from one professional was positive, highlighting the good working relationship and communication they had with the service. This collaboration supported the service in maintaining positive relationships with families, with one parent commenting:

"I get invited to tac meetings to discuss my child."

The leadership team's commitment to staff wellbeing was evident through regular discussions and one-to-one staff appraisals. These initiatives, led by the centre's head, supported staff personally and professionally, and directly impacted the quality of care provided to children. They also offered an opportunity to identify training needs and allow staff to reflect on their practice.

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of 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 setting was appropriately staffed by a committed team whose dedication significantly enhanced the quality of care, play and learning experiences for every child, ensuring their safety. This was a source of reassurance for parents and carers, who overall felt a strong connection with staff caring for their child, with one commenting:

"All staff are approachable, friendly and caring. I have never had any concerns about leaving my child in their care. We are able to talk to any member of staff and feel that they all know our child well."

Staff were enthusiastic, happy and engaged, which helped to foster a positive atmosphere. The leadership team was not counted in the adult-to-child ratio, so they could and did support the playrooms where required. Staff were committed to ensuring they undertook regular training to keep their knowledge and practice up-to-date. As a result, children were supported by a skilled team that communicated and worked well together.

Staff spoke positively about teamwork and felt that the relationships between team members were strong. This positive attitude towards teamwork and staff positioning across playrooms meant that staff could respond quickly to any potential hazard and children's changing needs, to ensure children were supervised and supported effectively.

Staff breaks were well managed to ensure that children were supported during key times of the day, including mealtimes, drop-off and collection times.

The quality of engagement with children throughout the day was very good, and staff were fully attuned to each child's needs. As a result, children enjoyed positive and engaging one-to-one support and small group activities.

Staff were motivated, keen and committed to the continual development of the service. They were supported and encouraged to take on more responsibility and leadership roles, which helped them develop their knowledge, skills and confidence.

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?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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
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