Kirkmichael Early Years Centre
Day Care of Children

Kirkmichael Primary School
Woodside Avenue
Kirkmichael
Maybole
KA19 7PP

Telephone: 01655 885 806

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 October 2025

Service provided by:
South Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003269

Service no:
CS2013319440

About the service

Kirkmichael Early Years Centre is a day care of children service located in a rural village setting in South Ayrshire. The service is provided by South Ayrshire Council. The service operates from a dedicated space within Kirkmichael Primary School and provides a care service to a maximum of 12 children aged two years to those not attending school. At the time of inspection, seven children were registered with the service.

Children have access to a playroom and a secure outdoor yard directly connected to the indoor space. The layout supports free-flow access between indoors and outdoors.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out by the Care Inspectorate on 30 September 2025, we gave feedback onsite on 1 October 2025. One inspector from the Care Inspector carried out the inspection. The inspection focused on three headers: Leadership, Play, Learning and Development, and Children Are Supported to Achieve.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed previous inspection findings, registration details, and information submitted by the service. We considered intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

During the visit, we:

- Spoke with children, staff, and parents.
- Observed interactions, routines, practice and daily life.
- Reviewed planning, assessment, and personal planning documents.
- Assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.
- Considered feedback from families and staff.

We used our findings to evaluate the quality of care and learning, and to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

As part of this inspection, we assessed core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary throughout the report and have made one area for improvement within 'Children are supported to achieve.'

Key messages

- Children felt safe and cared for through warm, nurturing relationships.
- Children were engaged in play that supported their learning and development.
- Staff responded well to children's individual needs, though planning needs strengthened.
- Children's voices were starting to influence their learning experiences.
- Families were welcomed, with communication and involvement improving.
- Leadership supported early improvements through reflective practice.

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	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - 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.

Children benefited from a clear and shared vision that promoted thinking skills, wellbeing, and a love of learning. Staff created a respectful and nurturing environment where children felt safe and confident. Children demonstrated awareness of their rights, including the right to be safe and to have food and water, which supported their emotional security and sense of belonging.

The service's aim, 'We may be small but we've got it all,' reflected ambition and pride. The parent handbook, currently being updated, reinforced the commitment to giving children the best possible start in life. While input from nursery children and families was limited, staff recognised the importance of involving them more meaningfully. Children were observed to be happy, engaged, and supported in their learning, contributing to positive outcomes in wellbeing and development.

Children's experiences were central to the service's developing self-evaluation processes. Led by the new principal teacher, staff began using reflective tools to identify areas for improvement. Early signs of progress were evident, with a growing focus on how changes impacted children's learning and wellbeing.

Although systems were at an early stage, staff showed a commitment to continuous improvement. Children's voices were heard informally, and there was a willingness to strengthen family engagement. As evaluation processes became more embedded, children's experiences and outcomes were expected to improve further through more responsive planning and practice.

Children were cared for by safely recruited staff who understood their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff provided nurturing support and were beginning to engage in reflective practice. While the induction programme had not been fully implemented, initial steps in staff development were positive. Support from the local authority helped staff build confidence in observation, planning, and tracking, which contributed to more intentional and responsive interactions with children.

Staff were committed to improving their understanding of the service's vision and values, which, once fully aligned with the early years setting, will further enhance consistency in practice and outcomes for children.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, Learning and Developing

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.

Children were observed to be deeply engaged in play that supported their learning, wellbeing, and happiness. They explored freely outdoors, painting reclaimed materials, singing songs, and creating imaginative games. Staff supported active play such as hopscotch and dancing, contributing to joyful and

inclusive experiences. Children's laughter and enthusiasm reflected a strong sense of enjoyment and emotional security.

Children had freedom to choose from a range of resources, which supported creativity and problem-solving. They explored water flow, created patterns with natural materials, and initiated games. While provocations were limited, children demonstrated curiosity and independence. Provocations are carefully chosen activities, objects, or setups that early years educators use to spark children's curiosity, thinking, and creativity. Enhancing the environment with richer provocations would further stimulate exploration and learning.

Children showed creativity and focus, particularly when making potions and investigating nature. Some missed opportunities for deeper enquiry were noted, such as when a child's interest in a slug was not extended. Staff were encouraged to respond more flexibly to child-led curiosity to maximise learning outcomes.

Outdoor play was a clear strength, with children choosing to spend most of their time outside. Free-flow access supported autonomy, though the indoor environment lacked appeal. Improvements to indoor areas, such as better resourcing of the home corner and craft areas, would offer children more balanced opportunities for play and learning. Practical solutions for storing outdoor resources and managing indoor warmth were discussed to support comfort and sustainability.

Children led their own learning through play, with staff supporting their ideas and interests. Continued development of the environment and resources will further enhance children's creativity, enquiry, and independence.

Interactions were warm, respectful, and responsive. Staff listened attentively and engaged in meaningful conversations, helping children feel valued and secure. Staff used some higher-order questioning to extend thinking, encouraging children to explore and explain their ideas.

Children's achievements were celebrated through conversations and involvement in daily routines, such as preparing snack. Reintroducing digital journals like Seesaw was identified as a way to strengthen communication with families and celebrate learning.

Children demonstrated confidence and developing social skills, supported by the small group size. Staff promoted language and problem-solving through clear communication and restatement. Continued focus on planning and assessment will ensure these skills are nurtured effectively.

Planning was flexible and responsive, supported by the low number of children. Observations were at an early stage, with staff receiving support to improve consistency and reflection. Children's voices were not yet central to planning decisions, and tracking of progress was inconsistent.

Support from the local authority was in place to strengthen the observation, planning, tracking, and assessment cycle. Staff and management were committed to embedding these processes to ensure children's needs were fully met and learning outcomes improved.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing Care and Support

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.

Children experienced warm, responsive care that supported their emotional wellbeing and development. Care routines were personalised, with staff showing awareness of individual needs, such as supporting children during mealtimes and nappy changes with dignity and respect. These routines helped children feel safe, valued, and secure.

Interactions between staff and children were consistently kind and compassionate. Staff responded sensitively to children's emotions, offering calm reassurance and support. The small group size enabled staff to spend quality time with each child, fostering strong emotional connections and promoting confidence.

Children were observed to be relaxed and happy in the setting. The environment, with its direct access to a small outdoor yard, supported positive relationships and emotional wellbeing. Staff qualifications and experience contributed to a nurturing atmosphere where children felt cared for and respected.

Personal plans were in place for all children and included some identified next steps. Staff had begun to link children's interests to activities, such as supporting a child's wish to help prepare snack. However, personal plans lacked sufficient detail in relation to each child's specific health, safety, and welfare needs. This limited the effectiveness of the plans in guiding staff to provide consistently responsive and individualised care. To ensure children's wellbeing is fully supported, personal plans should be further developed to include comprehensive information about each child's unique circumstances, including any medical requirements, risk assessments, and strategies to support emotional wellbeing.

In addition, personal plans were not consistently dated to show they had been reviewed or discussed with families. Some children's voices were present but not fully embedded in planning processes. Staff recognised the need to enrich personal plans to reflect holistic development and ensure they are working documents that guide daily practice (see area for improvement 1).

Transitions between settings were supported informally, and staff were aware of children attending multiple services. Strengthening links between settings would ensure consistency and continuity of care. Planning was currently aligned with Curriculum for Excellence.

Families were welcomed into the setting and had daily contact with staff. The small community feel supported strong relationships, and staff were aware of each family's circumstances. Communication was respectful and responsive, with regular engagement events led by the head teacher.

The reintroduction of the Seesaw app was underway and expected to improve communication and sharing of children's learning. Staff were committed to strengthening family involvement and ensuring parents felt informed and included in their child's development journey.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure that personal plans consistently reflect each child's individual health, welfare and safety needs, and are reviewed in partnership with families at least every six months.

This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring plans are working documents that clearly identify children's interests, progress, and next steps, and include meaningful input from children and families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:
'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met as well as my wishes and choices (HSCS 1.15).

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

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

Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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