Newmilns Early Childhood Centre
Day Care of Children

Newmilns Primary School
Gilfoot
Newmilns
KA16 9LP

Telephone: 01560 320 915

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 August 2026

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000142

Service no:
CS2016348008

About the service

This is a daycare service for children provided by East Ayrshire Council. The service is located within Newmilns Primary School and the Early Childhood Centre has its own entrance, toilet facilities and outdoor play area. The head teacher manages the service. Newmilns Early Childhood Centre was registered on 22 August 2016 to provide a care service to a maximum of 44 children aged from 3 years to those not yet attending primary school.

On the day of inspection there were 32 children registered. During our inspection, there were 27 children in attendance.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 and 26 August 2026, the inspection was carried out by one inspector 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
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess 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, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Staff and leadership team worked hard to embed effective self-evaluation processes, creating a positive, reflective culture where everyone contributed to improvement and felt confident in providing high-quality care.
- Warm, nurturing relationships and good use of personal plans ensured children's individual needs were met.
- Children experienced engaging, child-led play supported by skilled staff interactions.
- Well-resourced, stimulating indoor and outdoor environments promoted curiosity, independence and creativity.
- A committed, skilled and well-supported staff team provided consistent, high-quality experiences.

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	5 - Very 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 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The setting had successfully embedded a shared vision and purpose developed with children, families, staff and partners, which informed daily practice and supported high-quality experiences. Children's rights were effectively promoted through the Penguin programme, supporting children's understanding of their rights and providing continuity across the nursery and primary school. Plans were in place to extend this work through curriculum planning, as outlined in the service improvement plan for this year.

The management team demonstrated strong leadership, creating a positive and supportive culture for staff. Established staff champion roles and responsibilities helped ensure the service operated effectively and continued to develop. All staff had a clear understanding of the strengths of the service as well as areas for further development. They had used self-evaluation well to identify priorities and take action. Improvement planning was meaningful and linked closely to the vision and aims of the service. This ensured that changes made were relevant and had a positive impact on outcomes for children.

Staff were fully involved in the life and development of the service. They contributed to improvement planning through regular staff meetings, surveys and professional discussions. As a result, staff spoke confidently about the priorities of the setting and understood their role in taking these forward. This shared approach supported a strong sense of teamwork and collective responsibility.

The management team had supported staff well through clear guidance and regular communication. They provided tailored support to help staff meet the individual needs of children. This included offering bespoke advice and modelling good practice. As a result, staff felt confident in their roles and were able to provide consistent, high-quality care and learning experiences.

The staff team were professional, committed and enthusiastic. This contributed positively to children's experiences. Staff worked well together and there was a calm, respectful atmosphere across the service. Relationships between staff and children were warm and nurturing, this supported an ethos of rights respecting practice.

There were very good opportunities for staff to engage in professional learning. Staff accessed a range of training and development activities to support their practice. Mentoring arrangements were in place for new staff, and they were encouraged to continue their learning through National Induction Resource and further study. Recruitment processes were robust and followed safer staffing guidance. Appropriate checks were carried out to ensure staff were suitable to work with children. The service benefited from a stable staff team, with high levels of retention. This provided consistency and continuity of care for children and families.

Parents told us that staffing levels were very good, supporting appropriate ratios and allowing staff to respond to children's needs at a good pace. Staff reported that their wellbeing was well supported by the management team. This contributed to a positive working environment where staff felt respected and valued. The management team ensured that the service was well-organised and that staff were deployed in a way that met children's needs. Overall, strong leadership and effective management had created a well-run service with a clear focus on continuous improvement.

A number of parents shared positive feedback about the service and how it provided a positive experience for their children. Comments included: "There is always enough staff to meet my child's needs." Most parents told us that their child and them were involved meaningfully to develop the service." We agreed with the plans the service had in place to further develop these opportunities.

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.

The service demonstrated very good outcomes for children through high-quality play and learning experiences. Children were highly engaged, motivated and confident learners who led their own play, explored their interests and sustained involvement in meaningful experiences. The well-designed environment provided accessible, developmentally appropriate resources that promoted independence, creativity and curiosity, both indoors and out. Children were able to make choices and move freely between learning areas, creating a calm, purposeful and stimulating learning environment.

Staff interactions were consistently nurturing and skilful, with practitioners using effective questioning, modelling and responsive support to extend children's thinking and learning. Strong relationships and a child-centred approach ensured children were fully involved in their learning, developing confidence, communication, problem-solving skills and a sense of ownership over their experiences.

Children benefited from regular access to outdoor learning experiences, including opportunities to explore natural environments. These experiences supported children's physical development, creativity and wellbeing. Children were observed to be confident and capable as they engaged in active and adventurous play. They took appropriate risks and developed resilience and perseverance. The use of natural materials encouraged imaginative play and supported children to make connections with the world around them.

The service had embedded positive approaches to support children's emotional wellbeing. Children were supported to understand and express their feelings, and this was reinforced through consistent strategies used by staff. There was evidence that this work extended beyond the setting, with families engaging in shared approaches to support children's emotional development. As a result, children were developing confidence, self-awareness and positive relationships with others.

Planning for play and learning was responsive and child-centred. Staff used observations, knowledge of children and input from families to identify next steps in learning. These were used to inform experiences that supported progression and development. Parents shared positive comments including: "My child can be involved in a range of experiences to meet their individual needs and extend there learning, "I know my child is encouraged to try new things and make new friends," and "This small school and nursery enriches children's friendships, and relationships with staff, so I know my child's learning will continue from nursery into primary school. I couldn't ask for more.

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.

Across the setting, strong, warm and respectful relationships were shown between staff and children. Staff interactions were consistently caring, patient and responsive, ensuring that children felt safe, secure and valued. Children were observed to seek comfort, reassurance and engagement from staff, demonstrating the trusting relationships that had been established. Staff knew children well and had a clear understanding of their individual needs, preferences and routines. This was supported through detailed personal planning, which was regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with families. As a result, care was responsive and tailored, supporting continuity between home and the setting. Staff used this knowledge well to ensure children experienced a sense of belonging and emotional security throughout their time in the service.

Children who required additional support were very well-supported. The service worked closely with families and external professionals to ensure appropriate strategies were in place to promote children's wellbeing and development. This collaborative approach ensured that children received consistent support and were able to participate fully in the life of the setting.

The service placed a strong emphasis on respecting children's rights and promoting their voice. Children were given choices and encouraged to express their preferences in daily routines and activities. Staff were observed seeking consent during personal care and offering support in a respectful manner, responding appropriately to children's cues and wishes. This approach supported children to develop confidence, independence and a sense of control.

Communication was inclusive and well-supported. Staff used a range of approaches to meet children's individual communication needs, including visual supports, gestures and objects of reference. This ensured that all children were able to express themselves and be understood. As a result, children were confident communicators and engaged positively with others. Supporting children's emotional wellbeing was a clear priority. Staff used recognised approaches and resources to help children identify, understand and regulate their emotions. These strategies were embedded into daily practice and were understood by children. There was also evidence of strong partnership working with families, with shared approaches used at home to support children's emotional development.

Transitions were managed thoughtfully and with care. Staff worked closely with families to support children moving into the service and throughout different stages of their journey. Approaches were personalised and, where appropriate, staff supported continuity by moving alongside children. This helped to reduce anxiety and support children to feel secure during change.

The service promoted a strong sense of community and belonging. Relationships with families were a key strength within the service. Families were welcomed into the setting and provided with opportunities to spend time, engage in play and connect with others. This created a nurturing, inclusive environment where children and families felt supported. Overall, the service provided high-quality nurturing care and support, resulting in positive outcomes for children.

Parents shared positive comments:
"I am welcomed warmly into the service and can discuss my child's learning at any time."
"My child can rest relax or sleep whenever they like." "I have a very good relationship with the staff that care for my child, my child and I feel valued and listened by all the staff." and "My child is cared for in a safe environment daily."

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	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very 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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