Whatriggs Early Childhood Centre
Day Care of Children

Whatriggs Road
Kilmarnock
KA1 3SZ

Telephone: 01563 551 587

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 October 2026

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000142

Service no:
CS2017356235

About the service

This service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 5 September 2017.

Whatriggs Early Childhood Centre is based within the grounds of Whatriggs Primary School. The service is located in Kilmarnock and is within close proximity to local community resources including parks, woodlands and shops. The service is currently registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 103 children, 15 children aged two to under three years and 88 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 6 October and 7 October, between the hours of 09:30 and 16:30, both days. The inspection was carried out by 3 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 6 people using the service
- spoke with 9 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- reviewed communications from visiting professionals

Key messages

Strong, reflective leadership supported a positive ethos, with staff fully involved in improvement and confident in their role in delivering 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 service's vision, values and aims had recently been reviewed and clearly set out their vision, which stated that "here at Whatriggs we are committed to providing a safe welcoming fun and nurturing environment which promotes wellbeing, self esteem and enables children to feel happy secure included and motivated to learns and reach full potential". These, alongside the curriculum rationale, were shared with families through an information booklet which outlined the service's approach to learning, wellbeing and development. In practice, their vision and values were reflected in warm, nurturing relationships, a child-centred approach and meaningful learning experiences that supported children's wellbeing, confidence and development.

Leadership arrangements were well- established. The management team provided strong direction and had created a positive culture where staff felt valued, supported and motivated in their roles. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined which helped ensure the smooth running of the service and supported ongoing improvement. This contributed to positive outcomes for children and families. There was a strong culture of teamwork and shared responsibility across the service, with staff and leaders working collaboratively to support improvement. Staff were open, reflective and fully engaged throughout the inspection process, demonstrating a clear understanding of the service's improvement journey. They spoke positively about supporting one another and maintaining a focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for children and families.

Leaders were visible throughout the nursery and playrooms and had warm, positive relationships with children, demonstrating that they knew them well. They modelled best practice and promoted a consistent approach to care and learning. This helped create a nurturing environment where children experienced stability, consistency and positive relationships. Leadership opportunities enabled some staff to lead and champion areas including health and wellbeing, partnerships, literacy, outdoors, STEM and the recent Chatting Together programme. Staff spoke positively about these roles and the opportunities they provided to share ideas, develop confidence and support colleagues. This strengthened practice across the service and enriched children's learning experiences.

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. Staff had access to a range of professional learning opportunities, mentoring and further study. Recruitment processes were robust and followed safer staffing guidance, with appropriate checks completed. A stable staff team with high retention levels provided children and families with consistency and continuity of care.

Resources were used effectively to support children's learning and development. 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 high number of parents shared very positive feedback about the service and how it provided a positive experience for their children. Comments included: "There always seem to be a large number of staff in the rooms in relation to the number of children. And in addition to this there is an effective management team who I know support the rooms".

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Children play and learn

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 a very good standard in supporting children's playing, learning and development. Children were observed to be actively engaged, highly motivated and enjoying their time within the setting. They were busy, inquisitive and fully involved in a wide range of experiences that supported their progress across all areas of learning. The environment had been thoughtfully developed to provide a rich variety of opportunities for children to explore, create and use their imagination.

Resources were accessible and well-matched to children's stages of development, allowing them to make independent choices and take ownership of their play. Improvements to the layout had supported a more open and flexible approach, enabling children to move freely between areas and follow their interests. This contributed to a calm and purposeful atmosphere where children could sustain their involvement for extended periods of time. Staff interactions were of a high quality. Staff were attentive, responsive and demonstrated a strong understanding of children's individual needs and interests. They were skilled in knowing when to observe and when to sensitively intervene to extend children's thinking and learning.

Through effective use of language and open-ended questioning, staff supported children to develop their communication skills and deepen their understanding. Positive relationships were clear, and children were secure and confident in their interactions with staff. Children led their own play and learning and were encouraged to explore their ideas and interests. They were observed engaging in imaginative and creative play, often collaborating with others and developing their own narratives. Staff recognised these opportunities and extended learning in meaningful ways, ensuring children remained at the centre of the learning process. There was a clear focus on promoting independence, curiosity and problem-solving skills for children.

Children benefited from regular access to outdoor learning experiences, including opportunities to explore natural environments, which also included going to the local woodland area. 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: "I value the child-led approach, the freedom to access outdoor play and the opportunities children have to explore and develop at their own pace. Staff clearly know my child, celebrate achievements and are genuinely pleased when my child makes progress", "I really like the fact that the 2 year old room is a smaller class. I think it is very important at the tiny age of 2 that getting more 1 on 1 time with the teachers is important, developmentally and for emotional security".

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. There was scope to further enhance this by making children's rights more visible within the environment and daily practice.

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: "For me as a mother I'm completely happy to leave my child in the care of the staff. I know with full confidence my child will be looked after and cared for and treated with kindness and compassion. Peace of mind that my child is taken care of is my top priority and every morning, she runs in the door excited for the day ahead so that speaks volumes", "So far I've saw pictures of my child baking cakes, participating in group games, enjoying fresh air playing outside. Having snuggle time with books. Playing in the sand and water. My child is clearly having a ball". All parents spoken with as part of this inspection confirmed that they were always welcomed warmly into the service by all staff members at any time of the day.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The management team should ensure that children are cared for in a safe and hygienic environment and sufficient measures are in place to protect children during the Covid-19 pandemic, in line with current Scottish government guidance. In order to achieve this the management team should;

(a) Monitor staff practice to ensure staff are implementing the Scottish Government's Covid-19 best practice guidance; Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services, within their practice, and

(b) Carry out a detailed audit, reviewing infection prevention and control practice across the service to ensure compliance with Health Protection Scotland guidance "Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day care and childminding settings)".

This is to ensure that the care and support for children is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: "My environment is safe and secure" (HSCS 5.17).

This area for improvement was made on 28 July 2021.

Action taken since then
All children were very familiar with effective handwashing-some children needed prompting and this was supported in line with best practice guidance and kindness by staff.

Previous area for improvement 2

Children's personal plans should be reviewed to ensure they clearly outline how children's health, welfare and safety needs will be met. Plans should contain all essential information to support staff to meet children's daily care needs and should be accessible to staff working directly with children at all times. In addition, plans should also be further monitored by the management team to ensure consistency in staff recordings.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards 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) and "I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources" (HSCS 4.27).

This area for improvement was made on 28 July 2021.

Action taken since then

The needs of individual children were identified and supported appropriately. Personal plans reflected each child's holistic needs using SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, with care and learning routines clearly recorded. Staff worked closely with children, families and other professionals to provide timely support and promote positive outcomes.

Previous area for improvement 3

The management team should further develop their process for undertaking staff professional development reviews. This will ensure that staff are provided with the opportunity to discuss their professional development and identify individual achievements and areas for further development.

This is to ensure staffing is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 28 July 2021.

Action taken since then

Robust individual and team learning plans are now in place. These have identified leadership roles for all staff to enhance childrens experience at the service.

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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.scot

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.