# Ayr Grammar Early Years Centre
# Day Care of Children

Fort Street
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**Type of inspection:**
Unannounced

**Completed on:**
12 December 2023

**Service provided by:**
South Ayrshire Council

**Service provider number:**
SP2003003269

**Service no:**
CS2020378944

## About the service

Ayr Grammar Early Years Centre is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 64 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of whom no more than 10 shall be aged two to under three years.

The Early Years centre is located in a residential area in the town of Ayr, South Ayrshire, within Ayr Grammar School. Children are accommodated in two indoor playrooms and an enclosed outdoor play space. Children can also access a dinning hall and play area within the grounds of the primary school.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11th and 12th December 2023. The inspection was carried out by two 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 people using the service and members of their family
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice and daily life
- Reviewed documents

## Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing care from a responsive staffing team which helped them feel happy, secure and safe
- Parents told us they were very happy with the quality of the service provided by the team
- Children accessed an environment that supported high quality play and learning
- Staff promoted a positive team ethos and were respectful in their interactions with each other, families and the children in their care
- The senior management team should continue to develop clear roles and responsibilities to ensure quality assurances processes are fully embed

## 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? | 4 - Good |
| How good is our staff team? | 4 - 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 evaluated this key question as very good. We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were supported by staff who were kind, caring, and patient. We observed praise, cuddles and reassurance from staff which meant attachments and relationships were strong resulting in children being happy, safe, and secure in the service. One parent told us a strength for the service is the teams "excellent interpersonal relationships with children and parents".

Children were supported to develop their resilience and emotional wellbeing by a team who had focused on developing their knowledge, skills, and practice of the nurture principles. Staff had recently attended nurture and mindfulness training, as well as communication training. We could see the impact of training within the nursery environment and in the responsive interactions between children and staff. One parent told us the nursery is a "supportive and nurturing environment".

Children experienced mealtimes that were sociable and unhurried. Children and staff enjoyed spending time sitting together at the table and talking which ensured a positive social experience. Children were able to self-serve their own meals and drinks which promoted independence and developed their self-help skills. On day one we highlighted that the end of the lunchtime routine was very noisy as the primary children arrived in the hall. However, we noticed an improvement on the second day of inspection. The team have agreed to continue to monitor this to ensure a consistent and rich experience for children in their care. Water and milk were available throughout the day to ensure children remained hydrated. One parent told us "I love that my child has lunch in the main school dinner hall and they love being the "line leader", taking responsibility for what they eat and being encouraged to tidy up afterwards".

Children were supported by staff who knew their individual needs and personalities very well. Care plans were in place for each child and contained relevant information on their likes, dislikes, and routines important to them. Children were included in updating their care plans as staff spoke to them about what they wanted to learn and what their interests were. One parent told us the team provided "excellent person centred care for the children". Next steps were recorded and reviewed with families. We suggested care plans could be further enhanced by expanding the strategies recorded to help children to reach their goals.

Children's wellbeing was protected by a clear and concise safeguarding policy. Staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. They had recently attended child protection training and knew how to address any concerns appropriately.

Children's health was supported by a robust medication policy and procedure that had been reviewed since the previous inspection. All paperwork sampled was in line with current best practice guidance and auditing was undertaken monthly. Medication was stored in individual containers in the original labelled packaging.

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children were able to lead their play and learning at nursery as they were able to choose what they wanted to do, when and who with.

We observed children freely engaging in a wide range of opportunities such as block play, sensory play, outdoor play, and STEM activities. Staff were responsive to children's initiations and invitations to play and effectively scaffolded their ideas and extended their learning.

Children were meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences that promoted children's choice and independence. Activities available on the days of inspection included book bugs sessions, group yoga, Gaelic music lessons, stories, and phonics games. This meant children were engaging in a broad range of learning and developing lifelong skills such as balance and coordination. One parent told us "my child has come on enormously since starting in august. They were instantly made to feel at home, welcome and empowered to learn and develop".

Play and learning experiences available helped develop children's skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. The new teacher had introduced the Talk for Writing programme which enabled children to develop their ability to structure and tell stories at their own pace. We could see evidence of children's engagement with this programme throughout the playroom. Children could confidently tell us about their own story boards. This encouraged children to develop their imaginations. Staff members spoke positively about their plans to further enhance STEM opportunities into the nursery to broaden children's outcomes. One parent told us "The learning opportunities and variety of topics continues to surprise me when my child comes home and tells me all about what they have learned".

Children benefited from a variety of play-based learning opportunities within the nursery. The team had met regularly to review their planning and recording approaches to ensure they remained child centred and responsive to children's current interests. The manager, in partnership with staff, should continue to embed, sustain, and evaluate the planning and recording process to ensure high quality experiences for children in their care are achieved. We suggested new ways to record responsive planning to help support the planning cycle for the team.

Access to the local community enhanced positive outcomes for children as it helped develop their sense of belonging and confidence. The nursery accessed blocks of swimming at the local pool supported by families. Children were about to begin a block of tennis in the local courts. On the day of inspection children attended a panto at the local theatre. Staff told us they were keen to progress visits to the local care home to support intergenerational literacy through book bug session.

## How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good. We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

Children accessed an environment that was comfortably furnished and welcoming. The room had natural light and was well ventilated. There was ample space indoors and outdoors for children to play and explore together or alone if they chose to do so. Free flow access between the indoors and enclosed outdoor space ensured children's rights to lead their play and learning were respected.

Following the last inspection, the team had reviewed and created cosy, homely spaces that were inviting to children. We observed children access the space to relax alone or with staff and friends if they wished. Children also enjoyed spending time in a large block play area where they were able to build, create and problem solve with friends. The outdoor spaces had been expanded to ensure a variety of experiences were available sparked children's creativity and curiosities. This gave a strong message to children that they mattered. One parent told us "Lovely environment that my child feels safe in".

Natural, opened ended materials were available to stimulate children's curiosities and extended their play. Loose parts play was also available for children within the playroom. Toys and resource were plentiful and structured to meet the needs and interests of the children attending. Children could lead their play as they could easily access toys and equipment at their level. The team had recently purchased new bikes and trikes for the children which will add to the active play opportunity's available within the environment. All parents agreed with out questions that they feel their child has access to a good range of quality toys and play materials.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place in line with current guidelines. Children and staff were confident in effective hand washing procedures. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was available and stored appropriately for support with personal care needs. All parents commented positively on the clean, well organised and maintained environment for their children.

Risk assessments were in place with relevant mitigation measures noted. However, we suggested the team review risk assessments relevant to the nursery during team meetings to ensure it reflects the current space and activities on offer.

Monitoring and supervision had now established in the nursery to ensure children were always accounted for. This included busier times of the day such as transitions to lunch time, parent drop off and pick up times. This ensured children remained safe and secure in the environment.

## How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

The team had been through a period of significant change over the past year with a new manager, staff turnover and new staff members starting with the team. The team engaged well with the inspection process. They were open and transparent in their engagement. One parent told us "The team are amazing which clearly shows how well managed the nursery is."

At the previous inspection it was suggested the team identify a set of visions, values, and aims that reflected the current aspirations of the children, their families, and the wider community. As the new team has now formed, we would encourage them to revisit this to help define the roles and responsibilities that are important to the nursery moving forward.

Staff were committed to providing children with high quality early learning and childcare at the nursery. Staff were passionate when discussing their lead roles within the service and the impact of projects on children's outcomes and experiences. We signposted the team to the Care Inspectorate HUB and practice documents we think could further support staff developing lead roles.

Children were at the heart of any changes and improvements in the nursery. The team met weekly to discuss what was working well and share new ideas. We encouraged the team to use the care inspectorate's self-evaluation toolkit and quality framework to consider the key questions; what we are doing, how do we know and what can we improve on. This will support the team to further embed a culture of self-reflection and support them on their improvement journey.

We asked the senior management team to continue with plans discussed to implement effective quality assurance processes to help embed and sustain any further changes. We have repeated the area for improvement made at the previous inspection (see area for improvement 1). For example, observations of staff practice, staff supervision and mentoring and sampling of planning and children's learning. The areas the team had focused on improving since the last inspection, such as the environment, were achieved to a very high standard. This showed us the service had capacity to improve to ensure positive outcomes for the children in their care.

Children and their families views were actively sought and helped inform improvements.
Families told us they felt comfortable and confident to approach the team to discuss any issues, ideas, and suggestions. Children's voices were recorded in floor plans and planning evaluation sheets on display within the nursery. This ensured children's rights were respected and empowered children to have ownership of their play, learning and environment at nursery.

### Areas for improvement

1. To improve the quality of children's daily experiences, management should ensure that continuous improvement is underpinned by robust monitoring and self-evaluation processes

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed" (HSCS 4.23).

## How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

Staff were deployed effectively throughout the indoor playrooms and enclosed outdoor garden which supported high levels of interactions and promoted the wellbeing and safety of children. One parent told us "The staff team are absolutely amazing and nothing is ever an issue to them, they are the most caring and nicest staff members I've ever met". Appropriate ratios were in place on the days of inspection. However, the team must be mindful of children's individual support needs and ensure these continue to be planned for.

Staff were flexible in their deployment during busier times of the day such as mealtimes, drop off and pick up times. This ensured children's needs were fully supported. However, we have asked the senior management team to review staff breaks to enable them to rest and be refreshed throughout the day.

Staff told us they used each other's strengths and interests to enrich children's play and learning experiences. We observed this throughout our inspection and when reviewing floor books. However, we have asked the team to review how frequently staff are rotating around allocated areas to ensure they can fully engage with the planning cycle and evaluate children's outcomes.

Staff were attentive and responsive to children in their care. Key worker systems were in place to support continuity of care. The head teacher and staff acknowledged the challenges of the past year using supply staff and the impact of unplanned absences on children, their families, and the team. New vacancies have now been filled and new members of the team have been a welcomed addition. One parent told us "staff shortages have made it difficult for the staff that are there but they do an outstanding job every day".

However, we have asked the senior management team to continue to monitor any unplanned and planned absences that occur and ensure these are clearly communicated and mitigated for to the team, children, and their families.

Staff communicated effectively with each other throughout the days of inspection. They were respectful in their engagement which supported a positive ethos within the service. The team told us they were proud to promote positive role models to children. One parent told us "The staff at the nursery are all so lovely and always make my child feel safe and welcome".

The team met weekly which supported their ability to self-reflect and evaluate what was working well and what could be developed. Staff told us access to technology and online emails were impacting their ability to undertake certain tasks, the senior leadership team advised this was being progressed immediately.

## 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

To ensure children are supported to determine the pace of their day and to encourage them to regulate their own emotions, children in the early years should have access to comfortable and quiet rest, relaxation or sleeping areas.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment and can use a comfortable area with soft furnishings to relax" (HSCS 5.6).

**This area for improvement was made on 19 January 2023.**

Action taken since then

Following the last inspection, the team had reviewed and created cosy, homely spaces that were inviting to children. We observed children access the space to relax alone or with staff and friends if they wished. We are satisfied with the progress the team have made for this area of improvement.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children's health and wellbeing, the provider should ensure that arrangements for the safe management of medication are improved.

This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring written permissions are clear, reviewed regularly and reflect the information provided by the prescribing professional or product information leaflet, ensuring information about administration is easily accessible,

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective" (HSCS 1.24).

**This area for improvement was made on 19 January 2023.**

### Action taken since then

Children's health was supported by a robust medication policy and procedure that had been reviewed since the previous inspection. All paperwork sampled was in line with current best practice guidance and auditing was undertaken monthly. Medication was stored in individual containers in the original labelled packaging. We are satisfied with the progress the team have made for this area of improvement.

### Previous area for improvement 3

To improve the quality of children's experiences, staff should ensure that children are meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences. Children's choice should be promoted, and their learning and development extended through skilful staff interactions.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "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, stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity" HSCS 2.27).

**This area for improvement was made on 19 January 2023.**

### Action taken since then

Children were able to lead their play and learning at nursery as they were able to choose what they wanted to do, when and who with. We observed children freely engaging in a wide range of opportunities such as block play, sensory play, outdoor play, and STEM activities. Staff were responsive to children's initiations and invitations to play and effectively scaffolded their ideas and extended their learning.

### Previous area for improvement 4

To improve the quality of children's daily experiences, management should ensure that continuous improvement is underpinned by robust monitoring and self-evaluation processes

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed" (HSCS 4.23).

**This area for improvement was made on 19 January 2023.**

### Action taken since then

We have repeated this area for improvement as quality assurance processes and monitoring was still to be fully embedded and sustained by the senior management team.

## 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? | 4 - Good |
|---|---|
| 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well | 4 - Good |

| How good is our staff team? | 4 - Good |
|---|---|
| 4.3 Staff deployment | 4 - Good |

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