Avondale Early Learning and Childcare
Day Care of Children

Avondale Early Learning and Childcare
Kirkland Park Avenue
Strathaven
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Telephone: 01357 522 451

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 September 2023

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2020379025

About the service

Avondale Early Learning and Childcare is a registered daycare of children service and is located in a residential area of Strathaven. The service is registered to provide care for 80 children aged three years to not yet attending primary school.

The service operates across one level from a purpose-built premises. Children are cared for in one large playroom with access to toilets and a large outdoor garden. The service is close to local schools, parks and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 and 6 September 2023 between 08:45 and 17:45. 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 children using the service and 29 of their family members
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- Children were settled and happy within the setting.
- Staff were responsive to children's cues and requests, helping them feel valued.
- Personal plans helped staff meet children's needs.
- Children's development was supported through sociable mealtimes. Further enhancements could maximise the overall experience.
- Children were engaged and had fun with toys and materials, supporting their natural curiosity and imagination.
- Children benefitted from bright, spacious and well decorated play spaces, helping them feel they mattered.
- Quality assurance systems should be further enhanced to support oversight of the day to day running of the service.
- At busier times of the day, staff deployment could be better utilised to maximise opportunities for 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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - 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? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were happy and settled in the setting. To help children feel safe and loved, staff were responsive to their cues and requests, interacting with warmth and love. Parents commented positively on their children's care. They told us staff "are all so kind with the children and the parents." and "staff are so friendly and you can tell they really care about the children who attend the nursery."

Staff knew children well and personal plans were in place for each child, which helped staff to meet their individual needs. These were reviewed regularly to help ensure they were reflective of children's development and shared with parents, promoting a partnership working. Parents commented "Staff seem to really care and know my child."

The use of online learning journals offered opportunities to share children's experiences with parents. Some parents commented they felt this was beneficial, however, some parents told us they would like more information shared on their children's learning and daily experiences. We discussed this with management who agreed to address this.

Mealtimes had improved since the last inspection. Mealtimes took place in the playroom and were more relaxing and sociable for children. We discussed some further enhancements to support continuing improvements. For example, children self serving their food choices.

Medication systems in place helped ensure the safe administration of medicine. We suggested some minor changes to help further enhance these. Management agreed to review these.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children benefitted from a variety of toys and materials to support their play. For example, block play, arts and crafts, stories, water and sand. These were stored at children's level helping them to make choices. We discussed with management on ensuring materials were replenished when they were low to help ensure children continue to have opportunities to lead their own learning.

Children's literacy development was supported through the use of "Bookbug" sessions, songs, stories and mark-making. For example, using pens, pencils and crayons. This helped support children's creativity and imagination. Children told us "the Gruffalo is the best story. I like singing Bookbug songs."

New ways of planning had been introduced and staff were adjusting to this way of working. The use of floor books to record experiences offered opportunities for children to contribute and share views on their learning through mark making and drawings. The manager was keen for feedback on this and we suggested some enhancements to help ensure children's learning was captured. For example, illustrating the start of experiences and the evaluations. This could contribute to effective tracking of children's learning and identify any gaps to support their progression.

Next steps for children were in place to help children achieve. However, some of these were not always reflective of children's learning and development. We discussed further monitoring of these to ensure these are relevant to children's interests and needs.

Children benefitted from opportunities to engage in risky play. For example, climbing and jumping. Staff supported this well and helped empower children to risk assess their own safety. In addition, staff offered encouragement and celebrated children's successes, helping to build their confidence.

At times during the day, children confidently moved between indoors and outdoors, helping to support their choices of where to play. However, at key points of transitions, children's play was interrupted to support daily routines. For example, at lunch time. Further consideration should be given to routines to reduce interruptions. We have discussed this under 4.3.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: High quality facilities

Children benefitted from a bright and welcoming environment. A well organised, spacious and attractive cloakroom supported children to feel they matter. In addition, the use of coat pegs to hang their jackets helped promote a sense of belonging.

Children confidently moved between the spacious indoor and outdoor environment, accessing good quality toys and materials. We suggested the service to develop shaded areas in the garden to protect children from weather elements. For example, by creating shelter to minimise children being exposed to the sun.

A number of safety measures were in place to help ensure a safe environment for children. For example, a secure entrance, an enclosed garden and risk assessments. Children were involved in risk assessing spaces to help promote a safe environment for them to play in.

Some cosy spaces were available for children to access as they wished. Further developments of these could contribute towards children's emotional development. For example, more regular use of the sensory room.

Outdoor spaces offered a variety of opportunities to support children's development. For example, risky play, physical activity, exploring water and block play. We discussed some areas needing some further development. For example, the mud kitchen area in the corner and "The Hobbit Hut" being closed. These would maximise children's experiences and choices of where to play.

We were satisfied appropriate infection prevention and control measures were in place. For example, regular handwashing, clean toilets and nappy changing facilities. This helped reduce the potential spread of infection.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

Management were welcoming during the inspection process and were responsive to inspectors feedback to support the service. They were committed to their role and making improvements where necessary. Families commented positively on the management team. They told us, "I feel the manager truly listens to parents and cares about her role and the children."

Self-evaluation helped the service to ensure good quality care for children, their families and meet individual needs. Staff were involved in self-evaluation which meant there was a whole team approach to promoting positive change to meet the outcomes for children and their families.

New methods had been introduced to help gather the views of families to influence change. Although this was in the early stages, this was a positive start to consulting with them. Families told us "I am often asked for feedback on how I think the service is run, which is reassuring as a parent to know that they are always striving to do better."

Staff monitoring was in place to help identify any gaps in practice and support staff in their role. We suggested this could be reviewed to help ensure this was a positive and meaningful way to enable staff to further develop their practice.

Quality assurance systems should be further developed to enable oversight of the operational day-to-day routines. This would contribute to identifying where practice could be improved. For example, daily routines, shaded areas in the garden to protect children from all weather types and the deployment of staff. Management agreed to address this.

Meetings offered an opportunity for staff to share important information and engage in professional dialogue. They discussed and reflected on best practice guidance, evaluating their service and identifying where improvements were needed.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

There were enough staff to meet the needs of children. They were kind, caring and mindful of being at children's level when engaging with them, helping them to feel valued. All children confidently approached staff if they needed to. Parents commented positively and told us there were "considerate staff members who understand my child's needs."

Staff were committed to their role and were passionate about caring for children. Staff appraisals helped identify their strengths, skills and knowledge, contributing to good outcomes for children. Staff spoke confidently about these and felt these were supportive of their role.

Staff supervised children well and moved between spaces to meet the needs of children. Staff breaks were communicated and had minimal disruption to children. However, at busier times of the day, staff became task focused which meant there missed opportunities to build on children's interests and fully meet what was important to them at that time. Staff deployment should be reviewed to ensure staff are positioned in a way that supports all children's experiences and play. Management identified this through their observations and agreed to review this.

Daily routines in place meant that all children were brought indoors before lunchtime. This meant some were inside for sometime before it was their lunch sitting. As a result, there were interruptions to children's play and learning. These routines should be reviewed to minimise disruption to children's play experiences (see area for improvement 1).

Whilst parents were able to drop off and collect their children from the playroom door, we discussed with management on now inviting parents into the playrooms. This would help to promote a sense of belonging, support children's attachment development and provide opportunities for sharing of important daily information. Some parents commented they would like more information on their child's day.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's learning and development, management should review daily routines to help ensure these meet children's needs and interests.

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, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

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 support children's wellbeing and development, the service should enhance personal plans to ensure they contain the information needed to meet children's individual needs. This should include, but not limited to, strategies needed to support children, any changes that occur in children's lives and next steps to support children's progression.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states 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).

This area for improvement was made on 3 August 2022.

Action taken since then

Personal plans for children had been developed and reviewed in partnership with parents. These included important information to help staff meet children's individual needs. Therefore, this area for improvement has been met.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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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