

Eassie Early Years Day Care of Children

Eassie Primary School
Eassie
Forfar
DD8 1SQ

Telephone: 01307 840944

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 May 2023

Service provided by:
Newtyle & Eassie Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2021000099

Service no:
CS2021000120

About the service

Eassie Early Years is registered to provide a daycare of children service to a maximum of 18 children at any one time from the age of two years to those not yet attending primary school. Of those 18 no more than five are aged two years to under three years.

The service is located within Eassie Primary School in the village of Balkeerie near Newtyle and is close to local farms, forests and green spaces. Children have access to the playroom and enclosed outdoor area and local amenities including the village hall and nature walks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 3 and 4 May 2023 between 10:00 and 15:30. Feedback was shared with the service on 04 May 2023. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- observed practice and daily life;
- spoke with staff and management;
- reviewed documents;
- spoke with children using the service and 12 of their family members.

Key messages

- Staff were very nurturing and caring towards children, who they knew well.
- Interactions were respectful and compassionate, supporting children to feel valued, loved and safe.
- The service worked well with external professionals and had created links with parents to meet children's needs.
- The service had developed strong links with the local community which impacted positively on children's experiences.
- Children were spoken and listened to in ways that supported them to feel respected, valued and included.
- Children experienced high quality facilities. Spaces were richly resourced and structured to meet children's needs.
- Open ended and natural resources indoors and outdoors provided children with rich opportunities to extend their play and learning.
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes enabled the service to deliver high quality care and supported continuous improvements.

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?	5 - Very 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 found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions which supported them to feel safe and secure. It was evident that strong, positive attachments had been formed between staff and children which supported meeting the holistic needs of children and contributed positively to their wellbeing.

Staff were nurturing and compassionate in their approaches, taking time to listen to children and offer comfort, cuddles and reassurance when needed. This contributed to trusting relationships and helped children feel valued and loved. Interactions were respectful and sensitive, with most staff getting to children's height level during discussions and play. This promoted children's self-esteem and confidence and provided children with the message that they mattered and were being listened to.

Staff knew children well and were very knowledgeable about each child's preferences and needs. They were clear on strategies in place to support children progress and achieve. Care was adapted to account for individual needs which ensured children experienced opportunities that were right for them.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Plans included detailed information on needs, interests and routines and how these would be met by the service. Families were included in developing and reviewing plans to ensure information was current and took account of their wishes and preferences. This contributed to a continuity of care for children and highlighted staff's awareness of the importance of partnership working with families. Staff were knowledgeable of children's plans, which helped them to tailor care and support for children. The team recognised the importance of seeking children's views within plans and consulted them about the care they received regularly. This ensured children could adapt their experiences and influence the support they were given.

Children with additional needs were supported very well, with individualised strategies to ensure they were included and progressing. For example, 'Let's Get Talking' provided a targeted group with opportunities for children to develop social skills and language development.

Children's emotional wellbeing and resilience was enhanced through a variety of experiences which allowed them to explore, express and regulate their feelings. Children were empowered through opportunities to develop their own individualised self-regulation strategies and coping skills, with access to a number of resources in place to support. For example, individualised Yoto cards with a variety of calming stories and music, cosy spaces to access which provided security and quiet, and breathing activities to aid relaxation. This enabled children to develop skills to manage and understand their emotions.

A proactive team welcomed multi-agency working to ensure children received the right care and support, which resulted in positive outcomes. This included effective partnership working with families to establish shared strategies, contributing to a continuity of care and consistency for children. The service was committed to collaborative working with both agencies and families to ensure children received the right support at the right time. As some children experienced blended care from other services, staff had developed close working relationships with other settings. This had resulted in effective sharing of best practice and supported positive outcomes for children and their families.

Mealtimes were a relaxed sociable experience for children. Children enjoyed food at a pace that suited them. Staff sat with children to offer support where needed and to ensure children stayed safe as they ate. Staff promoted discussions which provided good opportunities for the development of language and social skills and contributed to a positive mealtime experience. Foods were nutritious with a variety of healthy options for children to try, including fruits and vegetables. The service could develop the opportunities children have to develop life skills during mealtimes. For example, children could be included in preparing snack foods and setting up mealtime resources. This would enable them to be responsible and support them to be fully involved in the whole mealtime experience.

Staff developed children's awareness of their rights and those of others by promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through discussions and daily experiences children were able to develop their understanding and explore what having rights meant to them. As a result, children were empowered and well supported to have a voice in the setting.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children led their experiences and children's right to play and have fun was at the heart of the service provided and highly valued. This ensured children's voice influenced learning and children experienced play that was motivating and meaningful. Staff used observations of children's play to inform planning. As a result, children were able to explore their interests and experiences were engaging and challenging.

Children had fun with a range of high-quality learning and play experiences both indoors and out. Children were highly engaged in their play during our visit, exploring the play spaces both indoors and outdoors. Resources and experiences provided rich learning opportunities and promoted challenge. Within play experiences children could develop their literacy and numeracy. Opportunities were naturally promoted throughout the environment with real life connections. Children freely accessed toys and resources to extend their play which contributed to them developing a sense of ownership and independence. Through effective questioning implemented by most staff children's curiosity, problem solving and thinking skills were promoted. This added value and enriched children's play.

Planning approaches were child centred and responsive and flexible to children's needs. Children's voice was evident within planning, with children being consulted and encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions. This further highlighted staff's responsive approach to children's interests and their learning. Children had opportunities to plan their learning goals and next steps. Staff spoke to children about their learning targets and progress during play. This promoted a sense of achievement for children and supported their awareness of their progression and success.

Children's learning and progress was recorded through carefully considered observations. These were shared with children and families in journals and floor books. Parents shared that they valued online journals, feeling they allowed them to be included in their child's learning and experiences. One parent shared, "Journals gave me ideas to support me to extend my child's experiences at home". Staff gathered information from tracking and monitoring processes which enabled them to plan play opportunities to fill gaps in learning, and supported children to progress and achieve.

Experiences were enhanced through good links with the community, with a range of opportunities for children to participate in meaningful outings. Visits to local amenities, including forests, farms and the village hall allowed children to experience learning beyond the setting and extended children's interests. Children could explore natural environments and stay active. This developed their connections and sense of belonging within the local environment.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was secure, clean, comfortable with large windows providing lots of natural light and creating a welcoming feel. Furnishings were of a high standard and homely touches such as neutral décor and soft furnishings provided children with nurturing spaces and a sense of calm. Children's artwork, photographs and family photos were displayed, promoting a sense of belonging and ownership.

The lay out of furniture and spaces had been well considered and enabled children to explore and move around spaces independently, unhindered and comfortably. Children could access and choose activities and resources freely. Children were observed transporting resources around the setting which allowed them to extend learning and play. Children experienced interesting and stimulating play spaces and resources which inspired learning and provided excitement and a sense of wonder.

Spaces were well resourced and promoted learning through real life experiences with creative approaches used to support children lead play and learning. For example, a variety of real objects and open-ended resources allowed children to experiment, explore and inspired creativity. Children were supported to care and respect their resources and environment. This promoted children's responsibility and a sense of pride for their setting.

Children's health and wellbeing benefited from regular opportunities to access outdoor learning. Children could use the outdoor play area throughout most of the session allowing them choice in where they played. The outdoor area was well resourced with loose parts and natural materials, encouraging children to explore their curiosities and be creative and problem solve. The service had recently reintroduced a weekly forest school session, which was observed during the inspection. Children had opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities to support develop a range of skills whilst exploring the natural environment. The session contributed positively to children's self-esteem and confidence.

Cosy spaces provided children with areas where they could spend time alone or with peers. Spaces allowed children to rest and relax in comfort, offering quiet or focussed play times when needed. These offered safety and security to support children's emotional well-being.

Infection prevention and control measures supported a safe environment. The playroom was clean and well-ventilated throughout the day promoting air flow. Children and staff washed their hands at key times and regular cleaning took place which meant that the spread of infection was kept to a minimum.

Children experienced challenging and fun play experiences in a safe way. Risk assessments and daily checks were carried out to promote a safe environment with children meaningfully involved. For example, staff carefully observed play and used effective questioning to ensure children had considered their safety when challenging themselves. This was embedded within experiences and children confidently shared some of the safety rules and reasoning behind these. Children were confident in setting themselves challenges and were developing problem solving skills to safely manage risk.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service values and aims set out a clear vision for the setting, with children's wellbeing, inclusion and positive relationships with all using the service at the heart of provision and experiences. Our observations during inspection highlighted that this was embedded in practice.

Quality assurance systems were effective and well planned for. This included audits and monitoring of practice and children's experiences, with evidence used to inform improvements. This allowed the team to identify areas for development and action appropriately, resulting in positive outcomes for children. Policies were in place which underpinned practice and provision. To promote best practice we suggested minor changes to the service's missing child and medication policy.

Effective self-evaluation processes were in place which supported the team with ongoing reflections and to build upon service strengths and identify areas for improvement. An improvement plan identified priorities to support the continued improvement journey of the service with a focus on supporting children reached their full potential. National guidance was used within improvement planning which ensured improvements were well informed.

The team met regularly to reflect, plan and focus on individual outcomes for children and continual improvement. This ensured they were clear on current improvement goals and a collaborative and shared approach was applied. An effective cycle of reflection, self-evaluation and implementation of improvements impacted positively on outcomes for children and their families.

The service actively sought the views of families using a range of feedback methods, providing opportunities for families to evaluate the service and make suggestions. Families were kept well informed of developments in the service and were consulted on progress in regards to improvements. A 'you said, we did' display allowed families to observe how their suggestions and ideas had been considered and acted upon. This highlighted that families views were valued and could influence change. Although feedback we received from some parents identified communication could be better, we assessed that overall families were well informed and consulted.

It was clear that children's voice was highly valued by the setting and children were at the heart of provision. Staff recognised children as capable individuals and understood the importance of consulting with children in matters that effect and impact on them. Children were central to driving improvements and were supported to share their suggestions and ideas meaningfully and in a way they understood. As a result children inspired improvements.

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

Children benefited from a passionate and caring staff team that knew the children well. Children experienced caring and nurturing approaches supporting them to feel loved, secure and valued. The quality

of engagement with children throughout the day was positive, with most staff attuned to children's needs and preferences.

The setting was effectively staffed to meet the needs of children. There was a good mix of skills, knowledge and understanding across the staff team and children benefited from a variety of experiences as a result. For example, some of the team were skilled in arts and crafts, including wood work and baking. Staff used their skills and interests to enrich play opportunities.

The deployment of the team throughout the day ensured that children's individual needs were being met by the appropriate number of staff. There were some missed opportunities to extend learning where staff were less experienced or skilled. However, we saw minimal impact of this on children's experiences during inspection as more experienced staff had a good awareness of when to step in to support children and were very attuned to children's cues.

We found that a member of staff had not been registered within the required timescales with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The manager acted immediately to rectify this and a risk assessment was put in place. It would be beneficial for the manager to develop a system to monitor and track staff registrations with the SSSC. As part of recruitment and induction the service should ensure newly recruited staff are clear on their responsibility in applying for registration.

Overall there was a positive ethos amongst the staff team. Staff had developed close working relationships and communicated with each other with mutual respect. This contributed to a warm and welcoming atmosphere and children benefited from a happy and fun setting. Staff were flexible and supportive of each other, this approach ensured that children experienced consistent care, play and learning throughout the day. Staff communicated well which allowed them to share key information to support children's needs and maintain ratios. Our discussions with the team highlighted that most were passionate and enthusiastic about their role and they spoke positively about their work. It was clear that they were committed to providing high quality care and experiences for children and families.

Training opportunities supported staff to develop their skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children. Staff understood the benefits of training in furthering outcomes for children and most were motivated and keen to continue with their development. Training opportunities reflected the needs of children using the service. As a result children experienced care that was right for them and staff were skilled in providing effective support.

Staff absence was managed effectively and well planned for. This ensured ratios were met and consistency maintained for children and families. The working pattern of some of the team provided flexibility to support busier times, absence and outings. This meant that children were cared for by the right number of staff at the right time.

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?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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