

Pennyburn Primary School Early Years Class Day Care of Children

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Pennyburn
Kilwinning
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
8 February 2024

Service provided by:
North Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003327

Service no:
CS2003016032

About the service

Pennyburn Primary School Early Years Class is provided by the local authority and is based within Pennyburn Primary School in Kilwinning, North Ayrshire. The service is situated close to public transport links and other local amenities. The early years class comprises of two playrooms, with attached 'quiet' rooms, a lunch room, a canopy area and three fully enclosed outdoor play spaces. The service is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 52 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of these 52:

No more than 16 are aged two to under three.

No more than 36 are aged three to not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 February and 7 February 2024 between the hours of 09:30 and 17:15. 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:

- observed children using the service
- received completed electronic questionnaires from nine families using the service
- received completed electronic questionnaires from 14 staff
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with one visiting professional and received electronic questionnaires from three external professionals.

Key messages

Children experienced warm and caring interactions which supported their overall wellbeing. Staff knew the children's needs and preferences well. Collaborative practice with external agencies was a particular strength of the service.

The environment and play experiences should be developed to capture children's interests and curiosities. This would support children to engage meaningfully in their play and learning.

The service had experienced significant changes and challenges, however the leadership and staff team all demonstrated a strong commitment to improvement. The service were in the early stages of their improvement journey.

Overall, staff worked well together as a team. They communicated respectfully and supported each other. Staff deployment should be improved to ensure all children's needs are met at the right time.

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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support.

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children.

Children experienced warm and caring interactions which supported their overall wellbeing. Staff knew the children's needs and preferences well. Most parents 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'staff know my child well, including what they like and what is important for their care.' One parent told us, 'the staff are lovely and they really do care for the kids.' We saw positive engagements and strategies identified in children's support plans being implemented, this contributed to most children feeling secure in their experiences. Some children's needs were not consistently met at the right time. The service had identified that improvements were required prior to the inspection. The local authority had recently provided additional leadership staff to support the service and improvements were in the early stages.

Personal plans were in place and reflective of children's preferences, health and well-being needs. These were reviewed regularly with families and most showed clear progression. As a result, children were supported in their well-being and development. Collaborative practice with external agencies was a particular strength of the service. Children requiring additional support had clear and detailed individual support plans. These had been developed in partnership with families and multiple professionals with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and families. One external professional stated, 'the staff - both management and practitioners - have actively and openly engaged with our service' another told us, 'the nursery management team and keyworkers are very skilled and dedicated to joint working with external partners' describing the staff as 'very child-focussed.' As a result, most children were well supported, staff had a clear understanding of children's health and well being needs and there was an inclusive ethos in the service.

Children experienced a sociable mealtime with some opportunities to develop their independence. All children sat together while they ate and cleared their own plates with support where required. We observed positive interactions during lunch time, however the lunch room was loud and busy, with staff task focussed and rushed at times. This meant that staff were not always immediately available to respond to some children's needs. The service had identified that lunchtime was in need of development and discussed splitting the lunchtime into two sittings. The mealtime experience should be improved to ensure that children experience a relaxed and unhurried sociable experience, with more opportunities to develop independence and engage in meaningful conversations (see area for improvement 1).

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

Children had opportunities to make choices and lead their own play and learning. We saw children having fun imaginatively in the home area, engaging with water play and working together building structures with magnets. In the 3-5 playroom we observed some children running or wandering around the playroom with little engagement or interest in the play experiences available. Staff were positive in their interactions and attempted to re-direct children's play. At times, staff had to prioritise their attention as many children required support at the same time. This led to missed opportunities for quality interactions and extending

children's learning. Staff told us they have found it difficult to provide quality experiences due to a number of challenges this year and were trying their best. One staff member told us, 'the setting is lovely, and we have so many great staff with great play ideas, we just need more support.' This was also reflected in comments from parents, one parent stated, 'the staff have lots of kids and do try their best, however some of the kids just end up left to find things to do and there isn't always much structure for the little ones who maybe need a bit more help.'

The need for support had been recognised prior to the inspection and clear plans were in place to make improvements. The leadership team were in the early stages of reviewing, revising and trialling new planning processes collaboratively with staff. We agreed that the service needed to embed a robust child-led planning and observation cycle. This would ensure that play and learning experiences capture children's interests and curiosities. Staff should consistently use effective questioning and interactions and support children to explore their ideas and learn new skills. This would provide appropriate challenge for children and help them progress and engage meaningfully in their play and learning (see area for improvement 2).

There were some opportunities for children to develop literacy and numeracy skills. Children would benefit from holistic opportunities to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills throughout the indoor and outdoor environment. This would support children to reach their full potential.

Community opportunities had been restricted due to staffing levels. Staff were keen to re-establish community links, the service told us about plans to visit the local fire station and parks in the near future. Children would benefit from regular access to the local and wider community. This would enable children to form strong links to their community and extend their learning about the world around them.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing, independence and opportunities for high-quality social engagement and learning in a calm and relaxed environment, the service should ensure that mealtimes are reviewed and improved.

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

'I can enjoy unhurried meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

2. To improve outcomes for children, the service should develop high quality play and learning experiences that are interesting, stimulating and fun. Planning, resources and staff interactions should add depth, progression and challenge to all aspects of children's play and learning.

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

'As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open-ended and natural materials' (HSCS 1.31) and '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).

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

Children experienced an environment that was warm, well-ventilated and bright. Children moved freely around the playroom and could independently access resources to lead their own play. Resources were limited and should be developed to stimulate and challenge children's play. Staff told us, 'with the lack of resources it's hard to provide a high quality learning environment for children in the setting. I believe with a better variety of resources this would be possible.' Another staff member stated, 'the environment has been changed a few times to try and get the best from it, it is homely but all areas could be improved with better resources inside and outside.' This improvement area had been identified prior to the inspection and the service had recently secured additional funding. We saw evidence of the planned new resources and agreed that these would have a positive impact on the environment and staff's ability to provide high quality play spaces for children.

Both playrooms had a smaller 'quiet' room attached. These were well furnished and provided a comfortable and calm space for children. These areas were not always available for children to use, the service told us this was due to a lack of staff. Children would benefit from a quiet, comfortable area to rest, regulate their emotions or sleep when required. The service should consider ways to make better use of their quiet rooms to provide children with a consistent area away from the busy playroom when needed.

Staff understood the health and well-being benefits of facilitating free flow outdoor play. Children in the 3-5 room had free flow access to outdoors and while this was not possible in the 2-3 room, staff were skilled at picking up on children's cues and facilitating outdoor play. The large outdoor area was not currently in use due to recent wind damage, this had been reported and was in the process of being repaired. In the meantime, children had access to a canopy area and a smaller outdoor area where we saw children having fun stacking crates, climbing and playing in sand. Only a few children chose to access the outdoor area during our inspection despite appearing to want to run, jump and climb. The service should continue with their plans to develop the outdoor environment and ensure that outdoor play experiences and resources are exciting and inviting for children. This would have a positive impact on children's health and well-being.

Children experience an environment that was clean and clutter free. We observed good infection prevention and control practice and could see a clear process for reporting repairs. As a result, children experienced an environment that was safe and well-maintained.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The service had experienced significant changes and challenges. The leadership and staff team all demonstrated a strong commitment to improvement. In the weeks before the inspection, support plans had been developed and leadership staff were realistic about their improvement priorities and timescales. As a result, staff felt positive about the future of the service.

The service had recently changed from a stand-alone centre to a nursery class within the primary school. The service planned to revisit their vision, values and aims to ensure that they reflected the needs of the current children, families and staff team. We also suggested revisiting the roles and responsibilities of all

staff. This would ensure that all staff have a clear understanding, and promote a shared responsibility for change and improvement.

Letters helped keep parents up-to-date on aspects of the service. Some parents felt that they were not consulted or well-informed on recent changes. We advised the service to explore further ways to gather families' views regarding the quality of the service and provide feedback when families' views resulted in change. This would ensure that all families feel valued and included in the life and development of the service.

There had been some opportunities for staff to be included in self-evaluation. The impact of staff's involvement was not clear. Staff were aware of the current improvement priorities, but did not feel that they had been fully included in the development of these. We discussed the importance of all staff being meaningfully included in the improvement process, resulting in clear actions. This could help ensure that planned improvements become embedded over time, and give all staff a shared sense of ownership over the improvement journey.

Some quality assurance and monitoring processes were in place, these were still being developed and did not consistently lead to measurable improvements. For example, there had been some monitoring of children's 'special books' but it was not clear if this information had been shared with staff or lead to improvements in practice. Further work was required to ensure that quality assurance processes were robust, effective and sustainable (see area for improvement 1). This would ensure that children consistently experience high quality care and support the service to maintain a cycle of continuous improvement.

The service were in the early stages of their improvement journey. It was clear to us throughout our inspection that all staff were motivated and had a positive outlook on change and improvement. Outcomes for children and families were at the centre of the service's practice and plans for development.

Areas for improvement

1. To develop a cycle of continuous improvement, the service should develop robust and sustainable quality assurance and monitoring processes with clear priorities, actions and timescales. This should involve self-evaluation that meaningfully includes children, their families and the staff team.

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

Staff mostly worked well together as a team. They communicated respectfully and supported each other. This created a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for children. The leadership team understood the importance of continuing to develop and embed positive collaborative relationships across the whole staff team.

There was an appropriate number of staff on duty to meet the required staff to child ratio. Staff deployment was not always sufficient to meet children's needs. At times, we observed multiple children requiring support or comfort at the same time and not enough staff available. As a result staff were stretched and some children's needs were not met at the right time. The service should ensure that staff are appropriately deployed to meet the individual needs of all children at all times (see area for improvement 1).

Staff did not have regular opportunities to meet as a team or individually with management. As a result, some staff did not feel professionally supported. This had been highlighted prior to the inspection, and planned dates were in place to re-establish team meetings and 'time to talk' for staff. We agreed that this was important to ensure that all staff feel included, valued and supported to develop their knowledge and skills. The staff team would also benefit from more opportunities for senior and leadership staff to role model best practice and provide support across both playrooms.

The leadership team recognised the importance of ensuring that staff absences were covered. The service was using central team staff to cover a high level of staff absences, attempting where possible to provide consistency for children. Central team staff that we spoke to during the inspection were well informed on children's health and well-being needs. Some parents stated, 'all the staff are brilliant with my child' and 'the staff are all friendly, my child loves attending.' Some parents told us that they were not familiar with staff, stating, 'at times I do not even know who new staff are, I do not feel comfortable leaving my child at times' another parent told us, 'I used to know every staff member by name with a welcomed smile, now it's changed so much.' The service should consider ways to build relationships and facilitate introductions between families and all staff. The service was not currently offering opportunities for parents to spend time in the service. They recognised the importance of this, and discussed their plans to re-establish 'stay and play' sessions and parent group sessions. This would help develop genuine partnerships with parents and support positive outcomes for children and families.

Areas for improvement

1. The service provider and manager should ensure there are appropriate numbers of staff to meet the individual care needs of children across the day.

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

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15) and 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19).

Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website (www.careinspectorate.com) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate

How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate

How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate

How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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