

Catrine Early Childhood Centre Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 February 2024

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000142

Service no:
CS2003015813

About the service

Catrine Early Childhood Centre provides a daycare of children's service to a maximum of 87 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 87 are aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school full time, with no more than 15 aged 2 to under 3.

The service is provided by East Ayrshire Council and is located in a residential area within the village of Catrine, East Ayrshire. The head teacher of Catrine Primary School is the named manager of the service and a deputy manager is based on site within the early childhood centre.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between Tuesday 20 and Monday 26 February 2024. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. On the first day of our inspection the service was operating a reduced capacity model as the result of ongoing staff absences. This meant that during most of January and February 2024, children were not accessing their full early learning and childcare entitlement. By Monday 26 February 2024, our second visit to the service, they had returned to their original model of service delivery and all children could access their full entitlement.

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
- received feedback by Microsoft forms from 12 parents or carers of children attending the setting
- spoke with staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff were warm, caring and nurturing, which supported children to feel loved, safe and secure.
- Staff knew children very well and responded to their needs sensitively in line with information recorded within their personal plans.
- Strong relationships had been established with families, which resulted in positive outcomes for children.
- Children were happy, having fun and participated in high quality play experiences, which supported them to progress in their learning and development.
- Access to the well resourced garden area provided children with rich play opportunities which supported their overall wellbeing.
- The newly renovated environment was safe, clean, homely and well-maintained to ensure children's safety.
- Staff were skilled, knowledgeable and committed to the continuous development of the service.
- Distributive leadership was celebrated and used to self-evaluate the service and plan 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?	5 - Very 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 how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff were warm, caring and nurturing and engaged with children at their level which supported them to feel loved, safe and secure. Parents told us, "I like that my child feels included and enjoys their time at the ECC. I like that the staff are caring and welcoming and provide advice and support" and "The warm, caring, nurturing environment is so welcoming to children and parents alike. The staff all know the children well and have clearly spent time developing relationships and building a rapport".

Personal plans were in place for all children, which gathered important information to meet their needs. All parents who responded to our questionnaire strongly agreed that they are fully involved in developing and reviewing their child's plan. Where required, staff worked closely with other professionals to create support strategies for individual children and staff were skilled at recognising when children may benefit from additional interventions. Where children had an identified additional support need, this was supported by accurate chronologies, Individual learning plans and assessments of risks. This was managed sensitively to ensure children received nurturing care and support that was right for them and meets their needs.

Parents were supported to be involved in the life of the setting. Through a well planned programme of family engagement sessions including, stay and play, book bug, curricular and seasonal events staff took time to get to know children and their families. Home link initiatives such as the lending library enabled fun and learning to be shared at home. As a result, staff knew families well and provided responsive care for children which promoted their wellbeing. Where staff identified support was needed for individual children and/or their family this was provided in a sensitive caring manner, and at times through planned targeted group sessions which supported the development of trusting respectful relationships as well as building confidence and resilience.

Children experienced relaxing, unhurried and sociable mealtimes. Staff sat with children and engaged in meaningful conversations, which contributed to their language development and supported them to make sense of the world around them. Meals were mostly nutritious, and dietary and allergy requirements were catered for carefully, respectfully, and safely. We concluded staff had developed and facilitated mealtimes that were nurturing for children and supported their overall wellbeing and development.

We found staff were confident in reporting child protection or safeguarding concerns. Child protection lead officers had been appointed and all staff had taken part in child protection training. We were satisfied that staff were aware and confident in their role and responsibility to keep children safe and protected.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences which promoted independence, choice, and creativity. Children had the opportunity to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills throughout their play, staff encouraged this naturally in their interactions. One parent told us, "My child has blossomed since attending Catrine ECC. They have come on leaps and bounds in terms of literacy and numeracy but have also developed new

interests and gained lots of new skills through immersive play. This is clearly down to the great planning of learning experience set for the children every day".

Planning approaches were child-centred and responsive to children's interests and stages of development. Staff observed children to gather children's interests, and this, along with staff knowledge of children, informed the planning processes and linked to the national curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence. This supported staff to gather children's wow moments, achievements and document their development, enabling them to track children's progress over time.

Children's experiences, learning and progress was captured on the service's online Learning Journal application which parents had access to, and could make comment on. Most parents who provided feedback to us agreed or strongly agreed that they were fully involved and informed about their child's learning and development.

We found staff had a very good understanding of child development and supported children's right to play. Children were empowered to be fully involved in their play and learning through skilled interactions of staff who offered support and challenge when needed. Some staff were observed using effective questioning to extend children's learning and thinking. This meant children benefited from a staff team who were skilled in observing and extending their learning.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how 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 recently renovated setting was comfortable, furnished to a high standard, homely, welcoming, and benefited from natural light and ventilation. Children had ample space for their needs and they benefited from a wide range of high quality resources to support their play and learning. Soft cosy areas had been created throughout the play spaces and sensory resources were available to support children to rest, relax and self-regulate throughout the day. Parents told us, "The playrooms always look inviting for the children with lots of different activities available for them to access independently" and "The new nursery building is a fantastic learning environment for the children. The staff provide a happy, safe and comfortable space for my child to explore and learn." We concluded that the play and learning environments supported children's wellbeing and sent a strong message to children that they matter.

The indoor and outdoor environments were well structured and developmentally appropriate for children. Spaces were well resourced, set out attractively and we saw children freely move between the play spaces which reflected their interests and invited them to explore and be curious.

During our inspection we noted that children had the opportunity to play and learn outdoors, whilst benefitting from fresh air and exercise. The outdoor areas had been carefully planned to capture children's interests and spark their imagination and we saw children enjoy playing outdoors. Parents who provided feedback told us, "My child loves the outdoor space and is never discouraged from this space even when it is raining. The staff know my child is happiest there." However, on the first day of our inspection, we observed that there was a delay in children accessing the outdoors. Parents told us, "During recent periods of staff absence children haven't always been able to go outside to play when they want." We discussed with the management team that staff deployment should be considered to ensure children's access to outdoors is

maximised particularly during periods of reduced service. The management team agreed children's access to outdoors remains a priority.

Arrangements were in place for monitoring, maintenance, and repair for the building. Staff completed daily risk assessments which highlighted a range of potential risks, and detailed clear mitigations and measures that were in place to support the environment to be safe. The high quality facilities available meant that children benefitted from a safe, secure, and well-maintained environment.

The team had established systems to ensure children were always accounted for. We observed staff undertaking regular head counts, checking registers were correct throughout the day and updating visual boards. This meant staff kept children safe by ensuring they were accounted for at all times.

Robust Infection, Prevention, and Control (IPC) policies and procedures were in place. For example, we observed staff and children practice effective hand hygiene and the building was visibly clean and free from clutter. This was protecting children and staff from the possible spread of infection.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how 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 leadership team were passionate and committed to their role to help ensure positive outcomes for children and they were clear about their individual roles and areas of responsibilities. We received some feedback from parents and carers about the management and leadership of the service. Comments made included: "The manager is very approachable and friendly and definitely has the experience, skills and knowledge as well as the dedication to care and support my child's learning" and "The leadership skills come across as strong and confident. I also think the management demonstrate an appropriate level of transparency, this has been particularly true recently during difficult staffing levels. Management were open, honest and appeared to be hands on when their team needed them."

The service had recently involved staff and parents in reviewing and updating their vision, value and aims. The reviewed aims were clearly displayed and promoted within the service, on the service's website, blog and App. The service had developed posters containing their aims which were displayed throughout the community to ensure a shared understanding. By involving people who used the service, this highlighted that the service valued and respected people's ideas, views and opinions.

We found that the management team had a very good understanding of the importance of using the views of children and families to inform the planning and development of the service. The management and staff used regular questionnaires and family involvement initiative evaluations to inform improvements. Feedback about people's views were shared in the entrance of the setting for families to see. This meant children and families were meaningfully involved and influenced change within the service.

Quality assurance systems in place included audits and monitoring some aspects of practice, such as the introduction of new planning systems to ensure a consistent team approach. Where areas for improvement were identified, this was shared with staff and plans put in place for improvement. These processes highlighted the service's commitment to making and sustaining improvements.

The management team valued the importance of self-evaluation and improvement planning for the service. Staff had taken part in various self-evaluation activities to gather their views and inform the current improvement plan. Some priorities identified were to further strengthen numeracy through play and to expand community learning experiences. We found that the team were collectively working towards achieving the identified targets, and should continue with this approach to maximise outcomes for children.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 4.3: staff deployment

Staff worked extremely well together to create a welcoming environment. They were nurturing, friendly and caring. Staff valued relationships at the heart of their work and they were passionate about ensuring positive outcomes for all children.

Management and staff understood that continuity of care was important for children and communicated well with each other when tasks took them away from their responsibilities. For example, children's needs were considered when planning daily routines and transitions during busier periods, such as mealtimes. There was flexibility for some staff to move with children across play spaces to support meeting individual children's needs. As a result, children were very well supported across the day.

Staff had an enabling attitude which supported children to progress. They had a varied range of skills and experience, which supported their practice. The management team recognised and valued individual strengths, skills and knowledge and these were meaningfully applied to support the needs of children. Staff made very good use of professional development opportunities, and selected training that would benefit children such as 'understanding behaviours in children'. We found that some staff had undertaken 'MIDAS' training to enable them to drive a mini bus, staff shared their future plans to use this to support children access their wider community. Staff told us they felt fully supported to access learning and development opportunities and as the result of this, they felt valued and motivated.

Distributive leadership across the team meant a comprehensive approach was in place for self-evaluating and improving practice. This meant leaders created a culture of improvement, and everyone was working towards the same vision to provide high quality early learning and childcare. We found that as the result of staff leadership roles significant improvements had been made to improve play and learning environments. This included the introduction of authentic furniture pieces and resources within the imaginative area where we saw children explore their imagination and develop language skills in this area. At the time of our inspection, the service were working towards achieving a digital schools Scotland award and was striving to ensure digital learning was embedded throughout the service. We saw that families were encouraged to engage through technology such as electronic questionnaires and QR codes and we sampled various sources of evidence demonstrating children's enjoyment and engagement with digital learning. Prior to the completion of this inspection report the service had achieved a digital schools award and shared with us their plans to encourage other early learning and childcare settings to further embed digital literacy and learning. We encouraged the service to continue to celebrate and share their success.

The provider and management team recognised and valued the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed throughout the day. On the first day of inspection the service was operating at reduced capacity as the result of ongoing staff absences. Most parents who responded to our

questionnaires made reference to the reduced operating model and whilst a few parents expressed concerns that their child was not accessing their full early learning and childcare entitlement most spoke positively of how staff had supported them through this transition. Comments made included; "The staff are lovely, it's just been a shame about the absences recently. However the staff have been very accommodating", "There has been a recent period of staff absence resulting in reduced hours available to the children. The quality of care provided has still been brilliant but the quantity had to be reduced, of no fault to the ECC" and "Overall the staff team are brilliant! They have continued to provide a high standard of care during a stressful and challenging time during this period of reduced service which has been outwith their control." By our second visit to the service, they had returned to their original model of delivery and children had returned to accessing their full provision.

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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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