

Larkhall Children's Centre

Day Care of Children

90 Muir Street
Larkhall
ML9 2BZ

Telephone: 01698 886 560

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 March 2024

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2003015307

About the service

Larkhall Children's Centre is located in Larkhall, South Lanarkshire. The service is registered to provide a care service to 148 children aged from birth to not yet attending primary school.

Children are cared for within two nearby buildings. Each playroom has access to an enclosed outdoor play area, including grassed areas within the grounds. The service is close to shops, parks and public transport links. There are good opportunities to develop community links with several services which are nearby.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 March 2024 between 09:15 and 16:15 and continued on 12 March 2024 between 09:45 and 15:30. Feedback was shared with the management team on 13 March 2024 at 10:30.

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 approximately 20 children using the service and consulted with 33 of their parents/ carers
- spoke with most staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- consulted with three visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and having fun.
- All staff were caring and nurturing in their interactions with all children.
- Children had daily access to a variety of outdoor play experiences. Plans were in place to develop all available outdoor spaces.
- The temporary manager and management team were dedicated and committed to ensuring a calm, nurturing play and learning environment was maintained for all children.
- A planned focus on parental participation will ensure families have increased opportunities to be involved in the life of the nursery.
- More robust monitoring systems would support the overall development and improvement focus of the service.

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?	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?

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.

1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with all children. They knew children's care and support needs and the needs of their families very well. They were responsive to children's cues and requests throughout the day. Children's routines, preferences and needs were followed and most children were happy and settled.

Staff ensured children's personal care needs were met. To respect children's feelings, dignity and choice, staff asked children if they could change their nappy or assist them to wipe their nose. They recognised when children were tired, needed a quiet time to rest and relax or time to waken fully from their nap. This was part of the caring, nurturing ethos.

Personal plans were in place for all children. Although reviews took place with families in person or by telephone, we advised where there should be more detail or updates to information. This would ensure personal plans were a clear, current reflection of the individual child. Management told us personal plans were due to be reviewed and updated with all families over the coming weeks.

To meet all children's needs and ensure children met their full potential, support was sought when required from external professionals. These well-established relationships, with staff undertaking relevant training and agreeing clear strategies for individual children supported children to thrive and develop. One professional told us, 'I have good working relationships with all the staff and always gain access to the key worker who are happy to engage with me and we work together around strategies to support children with additional support needs.'

Most of the 33 parents/carers we consulted with agreed staff knew their child well, including what they liked and what was important for their care. Most felt fully involved in their child's care, including their development and review of personal plans. Parental comments included, 'My child comes out most days singing songs and very happy,' and 'I thoroughly enjoy seeing updates in the learning journals.'

Children chose from healthy options for snack and lunch. Older children had a rolling lunch which meant they could choose when to eat within smaller group settings. Lunchtimes were calm, pleasant and unhurried experiences for all children. To add to this positive experience, we advised where some areas could be improved to ensure consistent practice across all playrooms. One example was to ensure a member of staff remained seated at each lunch table with the children, while another staff member attended to any other associated tasks. This would ensure children's safety while eating, support relaxed conversation and develop children's social skills. Children told us, 'I like carrots. Bunnies like carrots', 'I think it's steak pie.'

Medication policies and procedures were in place to ensure children's health and wellbeing. Management and staff were receptive to additional information which would further support children's health and safety in this area.

1.3: Play and learning

Trusting, nurturing relationships with staff supported children to settle into the service and become confident in leading their own play indoors and outdoors. There was fun and laughter as children took part in a variety of experiences, for example in imaginative play using loose parts, climbing and exploring their environment and investigating the different properties of musical instruments. We observed some good quality observations and interactions from staff. This supported and extended children's interests, knowledge and skills and created a fun, play and learning environment.

Makaton which is a communication tool using speech, signs and symbols was used with all age groups and a sign of the week was displayed and shared with parents. This fully supported some children's needs and included all children and families.

Planning approaches were child-centred and responsive to children's requests, interests and stage of development. Children with additional support needs had clear strategies in place which supported them to interact, play and learn. As a result most children were happy and progressing well.

Most play spaces were well resourced which meant children could make choices of where to play and what to play with. Staff had identified areas which needed additional or new resources and had planned the development of other areas, such as the 'home corner' within each playroom. These additional resources would invite and engage children further in imaginative play.

Play experiences developed children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy with books, mark making opportunities, number games and rhymes evident for all age groups. Some staff skilfully undertook observations, provided support for some and deeper questioning for others to support and extend play and learning opportunities. This met the needs of individual children.

Children's achievements and progress were recognised and celebrated. Parents told us, 'They are always changing activities to meet children's needs and interests' and 'we are kept up to date with their activities on the learning journals. It's great to see all they have been doing and achieving.'

A recent 'bookbug' session led by staff had been very well attended by parents and children. This event shared language and literacy ideas which parents could re-create and extend at home. Plans were in place to re-introduce 'stay and play' sessions. This would enable groups of parents to join their children in play at nursery and continue to build relationships between staff and families. There were some links with the local community, such as the nearby fire station. Parents had donated items to support the development of the outdoor areas and it was hoped to create an outdoor group. Plans were in place to re-establish links, for example, with the local library and nearby care home for older people, which would extend children's knowledge and understanding of their world.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The service was spacious, clean and generally well-maintained. Playrooms were bright and welcoming with direct access to designated outdoor play areas.

Cloakroom and foyer areas provided space for children to store their belongings at individual pegs and storage boxes. Cosy corners, dens, sensory and multi-purpose areas provided additional spaces for children to have quieter times with staff in smaller groups. This gave a message to children and families that they mattered. Parents we consulted with agreed that the service was clean, well-maintained and that their children were safe. They told us, 'The setting is always clean with a good variety of toys and learning set ups. Displays of the activities the children have been participating in are always on display and kept up to date.'

Secure entry systems with fob access to most playrooms contributed to children's safety. Information on the Care Inspectorate's resource for keeping children safe, 'Look, Think, Act' was displayed for staff, parents and visitors. Outdoor play areas were fully enclosed and daily risk assessments were undertaken prior to children going outdoors. To provide consistency and ensure children's safety when playing outside, we advised these forms should be more robust. To ensure everyone was clear and aware of the importance of this, management agreed to discuss and update these with the staff team.

Most outdoor play areas were hard ground surfaces. There were a variety of activities for active play in the fresh air and good use was made of loose parts materials. Children were having fun as they confidently navigated an obstacle course of crates and planks of wood, slid down larger apparatus and rolled balls and water down guttering. There was limited daily access to the available grassed areas. Developing these areas as planned would provide more opportunities for children to plant, dig and experience a natural environment each day. Staff shared examples of previous positive experiences which they planned to re-establish. This included children choosing, planting and caring for fruit and vegetables in the garden and using these in baking and cooking activities. This contributed to children's overall wellbeing, achievements, knowledge and skills.

Handwashing facilities, toilets and nappy changing areas were accessible from each playroom. Most staff were vigilant with their own hand hygiene and promoting effective hand hygiene with children at relevant points in the day. We discussed actions to be taken in some playrooms to improve infection prevention and control, for example ensuring doors to toilets and nappy changing areas are kept closed at all times. This would contribute to children's overall health and wellbeing and limiting the potential of spread of infection.

Emergency repairs were undertaken over the course of this inspection. This was managed well to ensure children's safety and families were informed. We advised all maintenance issues and required repairs be recorded within maintenance log books to ensure there was a clear record of reporting and actions taken. To ensure children, staff and families safety, we highlighted a necessary repair to the carpet in one playroom. We were assured this would be actioned timeously.

Appropriate systems were in place to manage electronic information. This was in line with general data protection requirements and ensured safety and confidentiality. Children's personal plan information was stored securely, but still accessible to staff and individual families. To be more robust, we advised the service to review some current filing systems.

How good is our leadership?**4 - 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 good.

3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The temporary manager and management team worked very closely together. Through their dedication, commitment and strong working relationships with staff, they had created a calm, nurturing play and learning environment. As a result, there were positive outcomes for children and their families.

Supporting this inclusive ethos, families were informed, included and consulted verbally, through the app or email. To respect and value people's views and suggestions, children, families and external professionals had been involved in reviewing and updating the vision, values and aims of the service. This meant everyone was aware of what was important for the service. Currently children and families were involved in designing and voting for a new logo for the service. Parents told us, 'We are always kept well informed of events and in-service days and any information needing shared by the leadership team,' and 'We can talk to staff daily. The parent app is updated regularly with information and newsletters.'

Most parents who responded to our questionnaires agreed they were confident the service was well managed and that they and their child were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service, with their ideas and suggestions used to influence change. Parents told us, 'Warm welcome from day one. Nothing is ever a bother.', 'Staff who have been in acting positions have done a great job in getting to know me and my family. We are asked our views and thanked.' However, a few parents disagreed and one person commented, 'There is no update at handover other than 'had a good day.' In the nearly three years of being at nursery not once have I been invited to take part in anything. No parent activities or nativity which is completely disheartening.'

We shared a summary of the questionnaire results and were reassured about the plans for increased parental participation, opportunities for families to visit the service to participate in play sessions and to be more involved in the overall development of the service.

An improvement plan with key priorities was displayed within corridor areas. This informed and included families. The management team were very clear about the progress and development needs of the service. Informal monitoring took place daily as the manager and management team worked within playrooms every day. This contributed to management knowing children, their families and staff very well. Through the well-considered prioritisation of the needs of the service, some formal monitoring, self-evaluation and evidence recording had not been undertaken or kept up-to-date. (See Area for Improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To support an ethos of continuous improvement and ensure positive outcomes for children and their families, the provider and management team should ensure more robust monitoring systems are in place.

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

4 - Good

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

4.3: Staff deployment

The management team ensured the service was appropriately staffed throughout the day, re-deploying staff as required. This included management covering children's lunchtimes to support staff absence and to enable staff to have their own lunchbreaks with time to rest and refresh.

Staff worked well as a team. They knew children and families well and communicated with each other if a task took them away for a time or to pass on information. Communication books and display boards with key information ensured consistency for children over staff breaks or work patterns.

Good use was made of the different experience, knowledge and skills of the staff team to ensure children's experiences remained positive throughout the day. Consideration was given to the skills and experience of individual staff to offer support and role modelling within playrooms supporting less experienced members of staff.

Staff told us they felt supported by management and their peers. They were committed and passionate about their work. This positivity created a happy and secure environment for children. Staff shared their individual experiences, strengths, challenges, roles and responsibilities and how they planned to take specific areas forward. Staff told us, 'The staff team are strong and support each other. We all work to the best of our ability to meet children's needs,' and 'We all can play on our strengths which helps the room to run.'

All parents we consulted with agreed they were confident staff had the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to care for their child and support their learning. Most agreed there was always enough staff in the setting. Comments included, 'The team are always welcoming, always friendly' and 'Everyone is always so professional and attentive and they really seem to care.'

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?	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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.