

# Hillbank Early Childhood Centre Day Care of Children

North West Kilmarnock Area Centre  
Western Road  
Kilmarnock  
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Telephone: 01563 521 064

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
5 September 2024

**Service provided by:**  
East Ayrshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000142

**Service no:**  
CS2003039259

## About the service

Hillbank Early Childhood Centre is a daycare for children service situated in Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire. The service is provided by East Ayrshire Council. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 52 children not yet attending primary school at any one time.

No more than a maximum of 20 children aged two years to those not yet attending primary school: of whom no more than a maximum of 20 children are aged two to under three years. On the day of inspection, 18 children were present, all between the ages of 2 and to not yet attending primary school.

The service has sole use of the premises and outdoor play area. Children can move freely between indoors and a secure outdoor area. The centre is within walking distance of local amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate on Monday, 2 September 2024, between 09:00 and 17:00 and Thursday, 5 September 2024, between 09:00 and 13:15.

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

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Observed practice and daily life
- Spoke with five children using the service
- Reviewed documents
- Spoke with the manager and staff; and
- Seven completed questionnaires were received from parents/carers to gather their views and feedback.

## Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and secure at the service.
- Children had made friends and enjoyed playing together.
- Children's wellbeing was supported through regular access to outdoor play.
- Children were cared for by a staff team that was nurturing and compassionate.
- Staff were passionate about delivering the best outcomes to children and families.
- To ensure children's safety and wellbeing, management should ensure effective deployment of staff at all times.

## 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 how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Throughout the inspection, children experienced warm, caring, and nurturing approaches. This supported children to be secure, happy, settled, and confident. Children approached staff for cuddles and invited staff to take part in their play and learning. One parent told us about, "My child loves it. Hillbank almost feels like an extension of our family. It is a safe space for her where she feels comfortable to be herself."

Children were actively involved throughout the lunchtime routine. They helped staff to set up for lunch which supported them to develop life skills. Staff had reflected on the lunch experience which resulted in children experiencing an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere. Staff sat alongside children, supporting them when needed. Children were encouraged to serve their own meals. They were supported to pour drinks and clear away their plates after eating. Children were relaxed and enjoyed the food that was provided. After eating, children could choose what they wanted to do, for example, they could access playroom activities or go outdoors. Fresh water was available throughout the day, and children were encouraged to access this. This helped keep children hydrated.

Personal plans supported children's overall wellbeing. 'All About Me' records provided staff with information about children's health, wellbeing, and safety needs in collaboration with parents. Both management and staff were knowledgeable about children's individual needs. They had developed clear strategies to support children in having a positive experience at nursery. This support contributed to the children's resilience and positive outcomes in their development.

Individual support plans had been developed for children when needed. The service had good working relationships with relevant agencies, for example, health visitors and speech and language therapists. As a result, children received the help and support they needed to develop and progress.

Although the children attending the service during our inspection did not require medication, we found that staff and management knew their responsibility regarding the safe administration of medication. This helped keep children safe.

Accidents and incidents were recorded and appropriately shared with parents. These processes supported children's overall wellbeing.

### Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and learning

We observed children who were happy and engaged in leading their own play and learning, with support from staff when needed. Toys and resources had been set up to support children's curiosity, creativity and imagination. There was plenty natural and open-ended resources, as well as real life resources, which supported children's engagement in play. Children had opportunities to take part in model making, stories, and outdoor play including digging in the sand and balancing on logs while being supported to risk assess their actions and activities. As a result, children engaged well with each other and played cooperatively

using their imagination and curiosity to develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy through play-based learning.

To support their learning, staff actively listened to children's voices. Children could influence the experiences offered, and staff planned and implemented opportunities based on children's needs and interests. This was evident in online learning journals and big books, where children's progress and learning was recorded, evaluated, and documented. As a result, children were making progress.

Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. Staff were knowledgeable about child development and used this to support them to provide quality play and learning experiences. As a result, children were progressing well.

Effective use of questioning by staff supported children to regulate their emotions, extend their thinking, widen their skills, and consolidate their learning through play. This supported children's emotional resilience and 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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was extremely comfortable and welcoming, and furnishings were of a high standard, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Children had ample space to play and explore their surroundings. We observed children enjoying a story in the quiet area which was furnished with a comfortable sofa.

Children had access to a sensory room. Sensory toys and resources were provided that supported a calm, quiet space if needed. One parent told us that children had access to a range of experiences, including, "sensory play, water play, sand play, bikes, scooters, balls, hula hoops, climbing, racing, drawing, painting, singing, dancing, crafts, baking, role play, building, counting, interactive activities, taking turns, meeting animals, growing things, learning about rights and values."

Play spaces reflected children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate resources and materials to support learning. For example, the children were interested in aeroplanes and books provided indoors and outdoors. The environment was sensitively structured to take account of all children's interests and stages of development.

Real-life resources such as pots, pans, and gardening tools supported children's imagination, curiosity, and critical thinking skills. Open ended materials and 'loose parts' were available indoors and outdoors. For example, we observed children using large cardboard tubes inside to make a broomstick and pretend to fly around. This supported children's imaginative play and learning.

Infection control measures were in place throughout the service to minimise the spread of infection. Children were reminded and supported to wash their hands. Staff washed their hands often, role modelling for children and sharing the importance of good hygiene. This helped keep children safe and well.

Information about children was stored securely. Management was aware of their responsibilities to ensure confidential information was stored safely.

## 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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator 3.1 - Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Throughout the inspection, management and staff engaged well and responded to advice and encouragement when suggestions were made. We found good relationships within the team, and management and staff were committed to the development of the service. The team worked well together to establish a shared vision to deliver the best outcomes for children and families. As a result, they were well placed to continually develop the service.

Regular team meetings enabled the staff team to reflect together. As a team, they used reflections to make positive changes for children and families. This ensured positive outcomes for children and families.

Children and families' views were regularly sought to inform the development of the service. Daily conversations with children and regular consultation enabled children to express their interests, likes, and dislikes. They also had the opportunity to influence play and learning as their views and opinions were sought. This helped children feel valued and included in the service.

Management and staff had regular contact with parents through online learning journals, emails, and daily chats. The service actively encouraged parental involvement through parent 'stay and play' sessions as well as regular outings and links with the community. This helped create positive relationships where children and families felt heard and respected. One parent commented, "My views are always taken into consideration. Chats at drop off and pick up."

Staff reflected well on their practice, using the Care Inspectorate's 'Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare.' This gave them the opportunity to identify what was going well and what could be improved. Identified areas for improvement were recorded in a realistic and achievable improvement plan which was regularly reviewed and evaluated. This supported the manager and staff to deliver high-quality care, play and learning, tailored to the needs of the children and families using the service.

Quality assurance processes, such as regular monitoring and self-evaluation, ensured any issues were quickly identified and improved. The manager and senior practitioners worked alongside staff to role-model good practice and reflect on the environment, children's experiences, and staff practice. This ensured positive outcomes for children and families.

## 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

Staff were warm, welcoming, and caring, which helped create a positive ethos within the nursery. Children and staff developed happy and respectful relationships with each other and there was a strong sense of togetherness throughout the setting. A key worker system was in place, and it was evident that all staff knew children very well. Children were comfortable approaching all staff including support staff. There was a

positive team culture which fostered a strong sense of teamwork and staff wellbeing. This supported children's overall wellbeing.

Staff were appropriately deployed at most times of the day to meet children's needs. However, supervision was reduced when staff were preparing for lunch. Management and staff should review this to ensure that children are appropriately supervised at all times. This would help keep children safe.

Staff worked well together as a team, and their different skills and knowledge complimented each other. One parent told us, "Hillbank staff have created an environment that allows my child to be themselves and do her own thing while still enabling her to develop social skills and form relationships with her peers." This resulted in positive outcomes for children.

The management team effectively supported staff by spending regular time on the nursery floor. This helped to build positive working relationships and allowed time for role-modelling and professional discussion. Staff were happy, engaged, and shared tasks through working as a team. Staff shared with us, "There have been many changes in the past year in terms of the management and wider team. There is a clear leadership vision for the centre." This supported staff to deliver high quality experiences for children.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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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