

# Craighead Country Nursery School Day Care of Children

Craighead Farm  
Mauchline  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
21 August 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Craighead Nurseries Ltd

**Service provider number:**  
SP2016012660

**Service no:**  
CS2016344871

## About the service

Craighead Country Nursery School is based in a rural location on the Craighead farmstead in Mauchline, East Ayrshire. The setting offers both a premise based and a fully outdoor daycare of children service and is registered to provide a service to a maximum of 82 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. Of those 82, no more than 62 may be accommodated in the indoor nursery building. At the time of the inspection, 104 children were registered with the service.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 13 and 21 August 2024. The inspection was carried out by three 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 children using the service and reviewed feedback from 36 of their family members using an electronic questionnaire;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

Children were very well supported by patient, nurturing and skilled staff.

Children benefitted from a purpose built environment that was interesting, inviting and safe.

Children's health and wellbeing was enhanced through daily access to outdoor play spaces that were well-equipped to support play and learning.

Management and staff had successfully created an ethos where children were at the heart, supporting their overall wellbeing.

Children benefited from a skilled and experienced staff team who worked effectively together, were passionate, motivated and reflective.

The management team should continue with their plans to develop a process for distributed leadership, building leadership skills within the team.

## 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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

We evaluated different parts of this key question as good and very good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for young people and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind and compassionate care. Staff interactions respected children's rights and promoted their dignity. Children were happy, settled and approached staff for comfort, reassurance and cuddles. As a result of staffs' nurturing approach, children felt valued, safe and secure.

Staff had developed very positive connections with children and their families. Families who responded to our MS forms survey, agreed or strongly agreed that they had developed a strong connection with staff caring for their child. Comments made included: "All staff go above and beyond to let the parents get involved in their child's nursery journey," "All the staff are very friendly and know my child well" and "Staff are always welcoming and genuinely care for my family."

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Staff knew children very well and were responsive to their changing needs. Each child's personal plan was created in collaboration with families and where relevant, with supporting professionals to promote continuity of care. However, we discussed with management that it could be more clearly recorded where parents have been involved in identifying and reviewing children's individual targets and next steps. This would ensure parents were fully consulted in their child's care and learning opportunities. Effective use of chronologies ensured that key information about children was detailed and relevant to their current needs. This approach ensured that children received the right care at the right time.

Mealtimes were unhurried and relaxed with staff sitting with children to encourage them to eat well and safely. Lunches were freshly prepared within the service, ensuring children's allergies and dietary preferences were managed safely. Food choices were nutritious and supported children to develop a healthy relationship with food. During lunch children were supported to pour their own drinks, self-serve foods and clear away their own plates when finished. However, these opportunities to support independence were not always provided during snack. We asked the service to promote consistency with children's involvement in preparation and serving at all mealtimes to ensure all children have the opportunities to develop key life skills.

Staff were responsive to children's individual cues for rest and sleep. Staff recognised when children were tired and provided individual comforters from home to ensure they felt secure. Regular sleep checks were undertaken to ensure children's safety. We asked staff team to review the use of sheets when using buggies as they did not always fit securely and may become loose and present a risk to sleeping children. An alternative infection prevention and control measure was suggested to ensure children's safety at all times.

Children's personal care needs were carried out discreetly and sensitively, supporting their privacy and dignity. Skilled staff used these opportunities to further build positive trusting relationships with children.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

There were sounds of giggles and laughter from children who were enjoying being together and taking part in the play opportunities provided. Some children sustained their engagement in some aspects of play for short periods of time. For example, children attending the forest experience were supported to make their own paint which captured their interest and enjoyment. Staff provided good support for learning through encouraging children to persevere with tasks, asking appropriate questions and providing children with information that could help them direct their own play. This approach builds children's confidence and resilience.

Children had fun as they experienced play, learning and development opportunities. Staff told us that the planning for children's play and learning was based on children's interests and intentional promotions such as seasons and celebrations. Staff understood their planning process well and had protected time to record and discuss planning for play. Staff should now introduce ways demonstrate how children's interests are considered across all curricular areas. This will help secure breadth and depth of learning and ensure children's idea's and curiosities are supported, and aid in extending learning to help them achieve their full potential.

Observations and developmental progress and learning was shared regularly with parents using online platform, 'Family App'. Parents were encouraged to share their child's current interests to inform targeted observations which informs the responsive planning approach. This approach supported staff to undertake focused observations of individual children during child led play and enabled staff to assess children's progress and development. Tracking and assessment of children's learning had recently been reviewed and a new process introduced. We encouraged the staff to continue to imbed this approach. This will support staff to identify where children are progressing well and where they may require additional support or challenge to meet their individual developmental needs.

As the result of some children attending the fully outdoor aspect of the service and many children choosing to spend large periods of time within the vast outdoor space, the outdoors had been adapted to ensure play and learning experiences supported skill development in literacy and numeracy. However, we found that there was scope for this to be further improved indoors. This would ensure that should children choose to play indoors they consistently experience high-quality play and learning opportunities.

## 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

Children were cared for in an environment that was clean, bright, welcoming and well ventilated. The premises were very well maintained and careful consideration had been given to resources and furniture. This created an inviting and homely atmosphere. The play spaces were comfortably furnished and all play materials were appropriate to children's needs and stages of development. This gave children the clear message that they mattered.

In addition to premise based provision, the service offered a fully outdoors experience where families could enroll children for full day woodland experiences. The areas used for this aspect of service delivery included natural woodlands, well equipped shelters which provided a homely space for children to be welcomed in to the setting and where they could rest or relax and personal care facilities. These were well maintained to ensure children's safety and comfort.

The service had been focusing on establishing 'free flow' access to the large outdoor space and were making good progress with this. 'Free flow' is where children can freely choose to access outdoors at a time that suits their individual preferences. The sheltered decking areas and large garden space supported children's development of physical skills, exploration and creativity. Children's regular access to outdoors enabled them to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy.

Due to the rural location of the setting, children had limited opportunities to explore their wider communities. However, management and staff were proactive in identifying ways to bring families together to build friendships and to be involved in the life of the wider community. This included planned family fun days and participating in local fund raising events. This ensured children felt a sense of belonging and included within their local community.

Risk assessments were in place and were regularly reviewed these to ensure they were relevant to the service. Children were supported to identify and manage risks within their play environments. This meant children were cared for by staff who understood how best to keep them safe and children were encouraged to develop life skills.

Staff implemented robust infection prevention and control practices and children were supported to understand the need for good hygiene to minimise the potential spread of infection. This contributed to keeping children safe and healthy.

## How good is our leadership?

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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children benefitted from a service that placed improving outcomes for children at the heart of their work. The vision, values and aims of the service were embedded. Staff, children and families had a shared understanding of this, which contributed to the nurturing ethos families experienced.

Effective policies and procedures were in place to support the development and improvement of the service. A relevant improvement plan was in place which was created with staff to enable a shared vision for the service. This meant that management and staff were clear on their role in supporting the ongoing development of the service.

Parents commented to us that they were often asked for their views and felt that communication with staff was a particular strength of the service. Comments made included: "We are always asked our opinions and have regular opportunities to talk to management about anything" and "Management are very open to feedback and request this with questionnaires and secret shopper type surveys." However, we identified that where consultation had taken place, it was not always clear where suggestions had led to improvements. We discussed this with the management team who were keen to improve this.

Quality assurance processes including self-evaluation through regular team reflections and monitoring the quality of service delivery were embedded within the setting. We discussed with the management team ways these processes could be strengthened and we suggested using an evaluative framework such as the Care Inspectorate's, 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' to support self-evaluation for improvement. This would help focus self-evaluation and add depth to reflections and as a result improve outcomes for children and families.

Staff benefitted from protected time and had completed a variety of core training. Staff told us they had taken part in a range of additional training to further support their own professional development and were keen to extend their skills and knowledge. They were reflective in their practice and committed to improving outcomes for children and their families. Staff were confident in sharing their learning with us and identified how it had developed and improved their practice.

## 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

Children benefited from a passionate and nurturing staff team that knew them and their families well. Staff had clearly defined roles and responsibilities and communicated very well as a large team. Staff were respectful and very supportive of each other. They were very warm, caring and sensitive in their approach and demonstrated positive team working. This promoted a happy and secure environment for children.

Staff spoke positively about teamwork and felt that the relationships between team members and management were strong. Staff professional development reviews and wellbeing check-ins were imbedded which resulted in staff feeling that their wellbeing was prioritised and they were a valued member of the team.

Staff deployment had been carefully considered and took into account the differing experience, knowledge and skills of the staff team. This ensured that children received consistently responsive care. Staff were responsive to children's needs and provided support when needed. For example, when children were transitioning to a new playroom, they were accompanied by their keyworker to support their emotional wellbeing. This meant that children's needs were consistently met.

The management team shared with us their plans to re-establish a model of distributed leadership. This is where staff take responsibility for specific areas and develop leadership skills. We encouraged the service to take action and initiate this as leadership at all levels supports staff to share their skills and knowledge within the team, empower staff and builds confidence and resilience within the team.

Staff were committed to their own professional development using training, good practice publications and professional discussions to share practice and ideas. They understood their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children and spoke confidently of the steps they would take should a concern arise for a child or family. This meant children were cared for by confident, skilled staff.

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

Craighead Country Nursery should review their medication policy and procedures and ensure that they consider the best practice guidance document 'Management of Medication in Daycare and Childminding Services'.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice (HSCS 4.11).

**This area for improvement was made on 8 June 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

Satisfactory improvements had been made to the medication policy and procedures to ensure they were in line with the relevant best practice guidance. We discussed with the management team how further monitoring should be undertaken to ensure that permission and administration forms are consistently fully completed. This area for improvement was met.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

Craighead Country Nursery should have drinking water readily available to children whilst they are playing outdoors.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, I can drink fresh water at all times (HSCS 1.39).

**This area for improvement was made on 8 June 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

Children had access to fresh drinking water throughout the day both indoors and outdoors. This area for improvement was met.

### 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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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