

Struthers Early Years Centre Day Care of Children

Castle Stuart Walk
Troon
KA10 7LH

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 September 2024

Service provided by:
South Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003269

Service no:
CS2014325237

About the service

Struthers Early Years Centre is located in Troon, South Ayrshire. It is located in a purpose-built building in a site adjacent to Struthers Primary School. The service is provided by South Ayrshire Council.

The service is registered to provide a daycare of children service to a maximum of 110 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 110 are aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school full time with no more than 20 aged 2 to under 3.

Children aged 3-5 years have access to two playrooms which can be joined through an indoor sliding partition and are joined by a secure outdoor space. Children aged 2-3 years have access to a smaller playroom with access to a section of the outdoor area. Older children can at times throughout the day freely move between indoors and outdoors. The centre is located within walking distance of local shops, parks and amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 10 September 2024 between 09:30 and 17:00. We gave feedback to the service onsite on 13 September 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector and one team manager from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this 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 and spoke with numerous children using the service
- sent out a family questionnaire and received 11 responses
- spoke with three families face-to-face or by telephone call
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy, confident and secure in the bright environment.
- Staff were friendly and welcoming.
- Staff were building respectful relationships.
- Children had regular access to outdoor play to support their wellbeing.
- Children should be meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning.
- The service had recently undergone significant increase in size and numbers of children and staff, at the same time had moved premises.
- Personal plans require to be put in place to ensure all staff know the needs of all children.
- To support children's health and wellbeing processes for supervision and monitoring the quality of the service must be improved.

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?	4 - Good
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?

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 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff knew most children well and were building trusting relationships with them. We observed some warm interactions between staff and children which helped them to feel included. Staff spoke in a kind and respectful way which showed children they were valued. We highlighted the importance of nurturing and respectful interactions by staff to ensure all children feel fully included, cherished and unique.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported. Most children had information collated about them. This included information about some of their care and support needs including personal care, dietary requirements, allergies and any medical needs. However, there was evidence that these were not effectively and timeously reviewed and updated. This meant staff did not have the most up-to-date information about children (see area for improvement 1). Managers must ensure that appropriate supervision and monitoring of this is in place (see requirement 1 under How good is our leadership?) This will assist to promote positive outcomes through reflection of children's individual changing needs.

Children who required additional support had some effective strategies used to ensure their individual care and support needs were being met. For example, some items of reference were being used to support children's understanding of routines. These should continue to be developed, particularly to support younger children with sharing resources and understanding the world around them. The service had established good working relationships with agencies. Staff were proactive in seeking advice from professionals to support meeting the needs of children and their families. Children benefited from a service that valued the importance of partnership working and good relationships had been formed with outside agencies. The service should continue to develop meaningful relationships with parents. Some parents told us they did not feel fully included in their child's early years service.

Staff were confident about child protection procedures. They had attended training and knew what their responsibilities were in terms of reporting concerns. Staff knew who to report any concerns in the absence of the child protection coordinator. This helped to ensure that children were monitored and kept safe.

We observed the children's lunchtime experience. Staff sat with children and encouraged social skills and conversation, however, at times staff were task focussed and missed opportunities to promote and enrich the social learning and independence experience for each child. We discussed ways to further develop and enrich the lunch time experience.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were engaged and having fun with the resources available to them. We found that there were some opportunities for children to lead their own play and learning. Planning approaches to play and learning were sometimes adult directed, and there were some missed opportunities for staff to support and extend children's creativity, curiosity and enquiry skills. Staff should be mindful that children's interests are at the centre of their play and learning.

There were opportunities for children to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills. For example, children were listening to stories, singing songs and were exploring colours through mixing paints. However, this continues to be developed through playful pedagogy which focuses on integrating children's play experiences with curricular learning. This impacted on the quality of children's experiences.

Most children's learning and experiences were recorded through observations and photographs. Online e-learning journals held observations for most children that linked to interests within the playrooms. These demonstrated a variety of planned activities. Some parents told us they were happy with the information they received on their child's day and one parent told us they "get updates via learning journal and have meetings to discuss their [child's] plan".

Staff showed enthusiasm in their interactions with children. We suggested ways that children's play experiences could be enriched and extended. For example, more effective use of questioning to extend children's play and learning should be promoted. We spoke with the management team about ensuring monitoring increased attention to detail, for example where role play is focused on baking activities that items similar to bowls, whisks, cupcake trays are available, and provocations to encourage language and literacy were evident and supporting enriched experiences for all children (see area for improvement 2).

The service had established good relationships with the local community, this ensured children were making connections with their community. The nursery class was a valuable part of the primary school. We heard about children taking local walks and saw joint newsletters with the primary school community.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's health and wellbeing needs are met, there should be personal plans for every child attending the service. In order to achieve this, the management team should ensure that every child has a fully completed personal plan, created in partnership with children and parents/carers. These should continue to robustly identify the child's needs and wishes and set out how these will be met. Each individual plan should be reviewed at least once every six months whilst the child is attending the service.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "My personal plan is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices" (HSCS 1.15).

2. To improve the quality of children's experiences, staff should ensure that children are meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences and resources. Children's choice should be promoted, and their learning and development extended through provocations (resources or activities that promote thoughts, creativity and learning) and skilful staff interactions.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors" (HSCS 1.25).

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

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in rooms which were warm and bright. Playrooms were comfortably furnished and had some cosy areas for children to relax and rest. The resources available were appropriate to children's needs and stages of development. The playrooms and outdoors would benefit from organising resources to ensure they fully support children's interests and needs. Staff shared with us that they felt that more suitable resources would help them better meet children's needs.

All rooms had direct access to a secure outdoor area. Older children had access to the outdoor area at times during the day. Whilst outdoors, children enjoyed a variety of experiences, such as filling tubes and guttering with balls, reading books and using gross motor skills to physically count out the numeracy aspects of the story, riding on bikes, and playing in the undercover section of the building. There were some loose parts available to children to support them to develop their curiosity, imagination and problem-solving skills. We suggested how these experiences could be enhanced, for example, by adding mud, water and utensils to the mud kitchen. This would help to further develop children's learning.

Younger children were supported with planned outdoor times. This worked well for them and enabled them to maintain attachment with staff they knew whilst exploring and playing outdoors. As a result, younger children were developing and learning outdoors.

Staff ensured that children were accounted for at all times and used a register and white board to note when children left and entered the service. We spoke with staff about how this could be enriched to allow children to self-register. Some staff were aware of potential risks and worked together to remove these. Formal risk assessments were in place; however, we reminded the management team to ensure dynamic risk assessments were being undertaken. We discussed the benefits of involving children in developing their skills and awareness of staying safe through opportunities to carry out risk assessments of their play spaces and experiences. The service used the Care Inspectorate's SIMOA (Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) campaign, allowing staff to reflect and review safety systems. We suggested using this to support children's understanding of risk. This would ensure all children were cared for in a safe environment. Management should continue to monitor, and risk assess the environments to ensure the safety of children using the service.

Infection prevention and control (IPC) procedures were in place and most staff supported these procedures well. For example, handwashing before meals and after outdoor play. To continue to support children's wellbeing we have asked senior staff to continue to monitor IPC practice.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

There had been considerable change and expansion to the management, staff team and environment since the last inspection in 2018. Whilst we saw some positive aspects to this change, we also identified areas that the service should work on to further ensure positive outcomes for children and their families.

The head teacher and service provider were committed to delivering a quality service for children and families. The head teacher shared their intentions to focus on continuing to build the team, supporting staff relationships and seeking the views of children and their families for future planning. This would help to promote a shared vision and culture of shared responsibility.

The management team was keen to create a positive ethos, however this was at the early stages of progression and requires to be further embedded in practice. The service provider and headteacher had recognised this and were implementing plans to support staff, whilst aiding the service delivered.

Management and staff were working towards the shared aim of 'flourish, belong, achieve'. Staff were mindful and respectful of families' situations and worked together to provide help and support. When children or families needed further support, staff worked with outside agencies when possible. This supported children and their families to get the right support at the right time.

Although some processes to support monitoring, supervision and self-evaluation had been identified, they had not yet been fully implemented. As a result, outcomes for children and families had been affected. For example, monitoring had failed to identify that children's individual support plans were not being fully implemented by staff. Therefore, we have made a requirement about this (see requirement 1).

The service provider and management team engaged effectively and professionally in the inspection process, which gave assurance that there was potential for the capacity for continued improvement in the service moving forward. This will ensure positive outcomes for Struthers Early Years Centre children and their families.

Requirements

1. By 6 January 2025, in order to support children's wellbeing and promote the continued development and improvement of the service, the provider must, at a minimum, ensure robust monitoring and supervision procedures are being undertaken to positively impact experiences for children.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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) and "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed" (HSCS 4.23).

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The management team consisted of the primary school head teacher and two early years depute managers. We acknowledged the recent management, staff and environment changes. We found that staff, in the main, were appropriately deployed to meet the needs of children in the nursery.

Staff had confidence, skills, knowledge and levels of experience that differed. The management team had put processes in place to recognise these and we heard how they were working towards utilising and developing them. We observed occasions where children's needs were not being fully met by staff, and this had not been identified through robust monitoring systems. Therefore, we made a requirement about this (see requirement 1 under How good is our leadership?)

Overall, staff worked well as a team and supported each other warmly. This meant that children were cared for by staff who wanted to be there and who cared about the children and their families.

Some parents told us they felt that communication was good. One parent commented: "All very friendly and happy to chat if any problems." Another told us: "I've only ever had positive interactions with every member of staff at the EYC and my child always speaks so positively about them all." However, some parents told us communication could be improved. One parent told us; "I don't get the opportunity to really speak with them", whilst another commented: "I am unsure as the communication is lacking."

The provider and management team recognised that improvements were necessary to achieve better outcomes for children and told us they were willing to be involved in the development of the service.

Staff recognised the key role they played in developing the service. A whole team approach is required to ensure that any improvements are fully implemented and sustained.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
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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