

Gartconner Early Years Centre Day Care of Children

Gartconner Primary School
Gartshore Road
Kirkintilloch
Glasgow
G66 3TH

Telephone: 01419 552 323

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 June 2024

Service provided by:
East Dunbartonshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003380

Service no:
CS2003014686

About the service

Gartconner Early Years Centre is located in Kirkintilloch. The provider of the service is East Dunbartonshire Council.

The service is registered to provide a care service as follows:

To provide a care service to a maximum of 69 children from 2 years old to not yet attending primary school at any one time of whom.

No more than 15 are aged 2 years to under 3 years.

Adult: child ratios will be a minimum of:

2 years to under 3 years - 1:5

3 years and over - 1:8 if the children attend more than 4 hours per day or

1:10 if the children attend for less than 4 hours per day.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 3 June and Tuesday 18 June 2024. The inspection was carried out by two early learning and childcare inspectors 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 service registered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Spoke with and observed children using the service.
- Contacted families and staff through Microsoft forms to gather their views.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced sensitive, respectful caregiving and warm, nurturing support. They were cared for by kind and caring staff who knew them very well.
- We saw children having lots of fun with a good balance of spontaneous and planned play experiences.
- We saw staff helping children to use resources in their own way to develop their play and match their own interests and intentions.
- There was clear evidence of a strong ethos of continuous improvement which enhanced the delivery of high-quality practice, leading to improved outcomes for children.
- Staff were motivated and responsive to meeting the needs of children and worked hard to create a positive ethos.

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?	6 - Excellent
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 people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children experienced sensitive, respectful caregiving and warm, nurturing support. They were cared for by kind and caring staff who knew them very well. We observed staff being responsive to children's changeable interests and needs, for example, when children asked to play outside or asked for help, this was immediately responded to.

Children were spoken to and listened to in ways that encouraged them to feel valued and included. Staff engaged effectively with children using appropriate language and questioning to extend discussion and facilitate learning. Children who were upset were comforted with cuddles and reassurance.

Parents were welcomed into the centre and we could see that they had built good relationships with staff. This enabled staff to support children's care, learning and development in partnership with parents.

Staff had gathered significant information about children which was contained in personal care plans. There were strong relationships with families, and staff worked closely with them to obtain key information about their children. Care plans were reviewed regularly to ensure they reflected children's individual preferences, likes and dislikes.

Children's learning journals were informative and demonstrated next steps for learning. These helped staff to track and monitor a child's progress and were shared with parents to help them to feel engaged with their child's learning journey. Staff were supported to ensure learning journals were routinely updated.

Staff worked hard to develop and implement strategies to care for children with additional support needs by including supplementary information in their care and support plans and engaging with other agencies. Transitions and enhanced transitions were carefully managed to support children and parents and help them to be ready for school.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable with children enjoying chatting with their friends and staff at lunch tables. Children's independence and life skills were promoted through encouraging them to self-serve food, pour drinks and clear their plates away. This created a sense of responsibility and helped children to feel valued.

We also observed very positive engagement between younger children and staff with staff supporting children's social skills and building confidence with feeding skills.

Staff had a good understanding of children's health needs. Several staff were trained in first aid should children require medical assistance. We looked at the service medication policy and procedure. Medication was appropriately stored and reviewed every 4 weeks by a senior member of staff. Medication forms were appropriately completed. There were clear health plans for children who required these. We provided advice in relation to recording when more medication was requested and this was immediately actioned by senior staff.

There were safe sleep and rest arrangements in place for children.

A child protection policy and procedures were in place. There was a designated child protection officer and staff had received training. This ensured they knew how to respond to concerns about a child.

Parents commented:

"Our daughter is so comfortable and has been since the second she walked through the door. It has a great vibe and all the staff work so hard and make the parents and kids feel important".

"My child loves his time in nursery, the staff are always attentive and understanding of his needs. There are always a range of fun and educational activities for him to engage in".

"Consistently great and nurturing environment that clearly promotes social inclusion and well-being of each and every child. Excellent staff team - very supportive and kind. Really like that both parents and children are included and we all have a voice".

"We have formed good relationships with the key workers for both children, who we feel know them very well and we can approach with any concerns. This extends to the wider staff, including management, and the in-nursery teacher".

"The staff are so friendly, approachable and informative".

"Staff have always supported me when I have had difficult and challenging times with my child. They are also great at showcasing what has been done well and helps to support this relationship of trust".

"The personal plan is reviewed regularly with my child's key worker and I'm able to input directly into this".

"Keep up the communication about next learning steps".

"Maybe more notice of upcoming events - more journal updates".

"The nursery complete her learning journal regularly with different outcomes she is meeting but it would be nice to see a few more pictures about more informal daily activities".

1.3 Play and Learning

Children were supported to learn and develop through their play. We observed a range of provocations that were in place to promote numeracy, literacy and wellbeing.

Staff supported children very well and were aware of current best practice guidance in early years. They had completed relevant training to inform quality play and learning for children.

There was a focus on natural and loose parts play across the nursery to promote curiosity and experimentation, to help children to develop creative and critical thinking skills.

We saw children having lots of fun with a good balance of spontaneous and planned play experiences. Children were confident in their play, actively leading and shaping their play with support from staff. Staff responded in a meaningful and engaging way, extending conversations with children about their play. We observed well-timed, open-ended questioning that challenged children's thinking and learning and helped

them to develop and extend their play, for example, children designed their own obstacle course and enjoyed the challenge of completing this. Some children spent extended periods of time in the woodwork area, designing and using wood and tools.

Younger children enjoyed completing a number jigsaw outdoors with very good support from staff.

A group of children visited the nearby nature reserve, where they engaged in lots of discussion about safety, meeting dogs, crossing the road, plants. Children were excited and curious, choosing which paths to take and exploring the natural environment.

Children participated in play on pedals, a programme providing fun and imaginative activities to help children develop their balance and control skills through balance and pedal bikes.

We spoke with several staff who were all very passionate about improving experiences for children.

The family learning/engagement staff champion shared a range of activities to promote partnership with parents. Parents enjoyed 'stay and play' sessions where children enjoyed showing and sharing what they were doing and learning. These sessions also helped staff to strengthen and improve attachments, interactions, home links, transitions and shared learning.

Families participated in 'big chef, little chef' where they enjoyed baking and cooking activities with children in the service.

Children benefitted from intergenerational learning through visiting the local care home for older people.

The eco lead staff champion told us about activities to promote their fairtrade focus, global citizenship and eco school.

The staff champion responsible for 'big book' reviews shared how children's voice and ideas were listened to and responded to. We asked senior staff to consider how this could be extended to further involve children in identifying and assessing their own learning, for example, when adding their evaluations to their big books consider key questions; 'what did we learn', 'what's new', 'what did work', 'what didn't work', 'what's next'.

We asked the management team to continue to support staff to identify and evaluate play experiences that children find engaging and challenging. This would help to further promote children's sense of ownership and leadership of play and would be particularly helpful in supporting children with additional support needs.

Parents commented:

"Our children get lots of new experiences (including learning to cycle), good food and plenty of attention. Our youngest, in particular, had never been in a nursery setting before and has settled fantastically".

"Excellent garden area".

"The nursery continue to be creative in approach and have loved all experiences I have been involved in. My child is always excited to tell me about what she has learned and I love to catch up on the learning portal. My child is able to experience play that she wouldn't get at home".

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 setting was well planned, comfortable and welcoming. Children had lots of space to freely move around indoors and outdoors. There were a range of natural displays on playroom walls and some cosy spaces, particularly for younger children. Furniture and resources were of a good standard and organised to promote free flow play. The layout of the playrooms and resources prompted opportunities for active play and learning.

There was plenty of natural light and ventilation, though at times bright, artificial lighting created a harsher environment. We discussed how lower lighting and cosier spaces could provide more relaxing spaces, helping children to self-regulate.

We observed a very calm, productive environment with all children engaged and busy. There were lots of visual displays to promote outdoor play, children's rights, forest kindergarten, loose parts play. We saw children's learning story and favourite stories in the playroom for younger children.

We saw staff helping children to use resources in their own way to develop their play and match their own interests and intentions. Children were shaping and designing their own play outdoors, supporting imaginative play and problem-solving. Children were settled and confident within their environments, accessing and taking part in the experiences on offer.

Children had forest school opportunities in a nearby nature reserve. Staff had created safe and secure natural spaces with challenge for children and fun experiences. Children enjoyed learning about the natural world, risk and safe play and were carrying out risk assessments with help from staff.

Staff had knowledge of health and safety and risk assessments.

There were playroom quality assurance checklists and risk assessments in place to monitor areas and ensure safety and security for children.

Staff worked well together to identify and minimise risk to children within the setting, both indoors and outdoors. This meant that children's activities were not compromised and they were supported to enjoy challenging, fun experiences.

Children could access toilet facilities within the playrooms. Where younger children needed support, this was carried out in a designated changing area meaning children's dignity and personal preferences were respected. We directed the management team to updated guidance, 'Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders), Publication date: July 2023 (updated February 2024) and discussed how they could meet this best practice guidance to ensure positive outcomes for children. (See area for improvement 1).

Accidents and incidents records were completed and shared with parents. Monthly audits were completed to identify any areas of potential risk or concern. We discussed best practice in relation to accident and incident recording and asked the management team to review their policy and procedures. This was responded to during the course of the inspection.

There were systems in place for reporting repairs and maintenance.

A safe and secure door entry system ensured the safety of children at drop off and collection times.

Effective infection prevention and control practices were observed. These included preparation of food at lunchtime and handwashing.

Children's information was stored securely within the office and children were monitored by staff when using IT equipment. Children's personal information was safe and protected. The premises and resources and equipment were well maintained.

Areas for improvement

1. The provider should take appropriate action to meet best practice guidance, 'Care Inspectorate, Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders), Publication date: July 2023 (updated February 2024) to ensure positive outcomes for children'.

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

'If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed' (HSCS 5.4) and Care Inspectorate; Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders) Publication date: July 2023,(updated February 2024).

How good is our leadership?

6 - Excellent

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

3.1 Quality Assurance and improvement are led well

The management and staff team were highly committed to delivering a quality service for children and families. The service was very well led by a confident, approachable manager who provided strong direction to the senior management team and staff.

The team had developed an ambitious, shared vision which focused on improvements and positive outcomes for children and families. There was clear evidence of a strong ethos of continuous improvement which enhanced the delivery of high-quality practice, leading to improved outcomes.

Staff, children and families were fully involved in self-evaluation which resulted in high quality support tailored towards the needs of children and families.

Very robust quality assurance processes were in place. To support improvement the management team had developed an improvement plan and quality assurance overviews. The service consistently collected feedback from children and their families to plan further development and improvement of the service.

Frequent management team meetings were held with the manager providing very positive support to the depute managers.

Regular full staff meetings were organised and one to one support meetings had been held with staff. A cycle of planning meetings gave staff the opportunity to plan for and ensure children's learning was exciting and progressive.

Staff had a range of opportunities to discuss their work and lead in various areas. This had a very positive impact on outcomes for children, for example, play area observations considering children's interactions with resources, skills they had developed and how these could be enhanced and extended.

A key priority in the service improvement plan was family engagement. We found that parental participation was extremely well organised with scope for parents to lead activities in the service, be involved in their child's play and learning, provide feedback and suggestions, organise events and fundraising. Parent consultation events such as parent involvement in evaluating the service vision, values and aims, parents evenings, parents committee, triple p parenting programme, informative and interactive newsletters and home link activities ensured that parents were fully involved in the life of the centre.

Self-reflection and evaluation processes for staff were clearly defined and very well implemented. Staff used the 'Plan, Do, Study, Act' (PDSA) problem solving model to carry out change and improve processes. Examples of this were clearly illustrated. Staff were encouraged to reflect as individuals and in small groups using 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare' framework. This set of supporting practices helped the service to make positive change. Staff completed 'critical friend' observations with colleagues to support learning and encourage reflective practice.

Monitoring systems ensured that the management team and staff achieved their objectives. Sampling of learning journals and planning overviews, including constructive feedback, helped staff to monitor children's learning and development. Focused environmental audits on literacy and numeracy were completed, including an audit through the eyes of a child, providing an important perspective.

Staff evaluations of continuing professional development and training events were conducted and the impact of these on outcomes for children were assessed. Senior management undertook quality of staff interaction observations.

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

4.3 Staff Deployment

Deployment and staffing levels took account of the skills mix, routines and activities for children. We saw that staff were flexible and worked as a team to benefit children. This ensured that children's needs were addressed through delivery of very good care.

At the time of the inspection the service had a full complement of staff. Support staff provided individualised care for children with additional support needs.

Management worked hard to build and support the staff team and use their knowledge, expertise and experience to fully support children.

Staff welcomed the support from the management team. The provision of leadership roles and consistent involvement in decision making helped to build positive working relationships. Wellbeing support sessions on a one-to-one basis with the depute head of centre and individual staff 'chocolate and chat' sessions ensured that staff had opportunities for personal discussion.

Very good access to training and organised in service days gave staff a very good understanding of their responsibilities and the knowledge and skills they needed to do their jobs. Staff had completed a range of training. Staff wellbeing, team building, curriculum planning and self-evaluation had been discussed during in service days. Staff had opportunities to influence and progress the service improvement plan.

Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensure positive transitions and communication with families. Senior staff and keyworkers were available to chat and exchange information with parents. Parents could contribute to children's learning journals and follow play and learning activities.

Staff communicated well with each other and worked together to ensure supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. We saw staff sharing information about children during the day and working together to support individual children. Staff were motivated and responsive to meeting the needs of children and worked hard to create a positive ethos.

Consequently team morale was very good with staff telling us they felt valued, appreciated and had a sense of belonging. This impacted positively on children's experiences.

Staff comments included:

"The staff team are very hard working, dedicated, caring, friendly and very approachable".

"Staff have formed good relationships with families and children who use the service".

"The main strengths are the staff, their dedication, and adaptability to most situations. The staff are creative and provide high quality, fun experiences for children".

"Management team are hardworking and approachable".

"Environment can be quite busy and noisy due to layout".

"The setting can be overstimulating and overwhelming due to bright artificial lights and noise with no place for children to retreat to or nap".

"Staff work extremely hard and can feel exhausted and under pressure trying to monitor unmanned areas, provide experiences and support challenging behaviour".

Parents comments included:

"Excellent skilled and experienced staff".

"The staff are so friendly, approachable and informative".

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?	6 - Excellent
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	6 - Excellent
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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