

Newmilns Early Childhood Centre Day Care of Children

Newmilns Primary School
Gilfoot
Newmilns
KA16 9LP

Telephone: 01560 320 915

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
20 March 2025

Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000142

Service no:
CS2016348008

About the service

This is a daycare service for children provided by East Ayrshire Council. The service is located within Newmilns Primary School and the Early Childhood Centre has its own entrance, toilet facilities and outdoor play area. The service is managed by the head teacher of Newmilns Primary School. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 44 children aged from three years to not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 18 and 19 March 2025 between 09:00 and 15:00. 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 and complaint information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

This inspection was part of a pilot to test the 'Quality improvement framework for early learning and child care sectors' developed jointly with Education Scotland. Because this inspection was part of a pilot, no new evaluations (grades) have been awarded.

During the inspection we:

- received four completed survey responses
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with four staff and management

Key messages

- Regular opportunities to build relationships and engage in professional dialogue supported staff to feel valued.
- Children received continuity of care through effective staff deployment.
- Children's safety was supported by a secure and well maintained building.
- Children were mostly engaged and motivated in their play.
- Children's rights were upheld through regular outdoor play and visits to the local community

Leadership

Quality Indicator - Leadership and management of staff and resources

The management and staff team engaged well during the inspection process and were open to ideas and suggestions we made over the course of our visit. The vision and values were at the centre of the services ethos. These were displayed proudly throughout spaces for children and families. The manager told us these had recently been reviewed in consultation with children and parents. As a result, children and families experienced a service that was reflective of their aspirations.

Leadership roles supported staff to develop and improve aspects of the service they were passionate about. Initiatives, including gardening groups, supported a collaborative approach to learning between the service and home. The manager agreed to further develop and embed these roles. This will continue to promote improved outcomes for children and families.

Communication and parental engagement was a strength of the service. Staff spoke positively about some of the ways parents could be involved. For example, regular book-bug and stay and play sessions allowed parents to come along and spend time with their child. One parent told us: "The nursery invite parents and carers along for stay and play sessions that allow us to interact and get involved with the child's learning." The manager told us gathering feedback after these sessions was an important part of the process. This allowed staff to ensure groups and events were meaningful and reflective of children and family's needs.

Self evaluation and quality assurance systems were in place and took account of relevant guidance and best practice documents. Staff spoke positively about their involvement in these processes and how they were supported to contribute their views and opinions to identify where improvements were needed. We discussed with the manager how small changes to the current systems would support them to monitor the impact of the proposed changes and evaluate effectiveness. This will ensure improvements are sustained across all aspects of the service.

An improvement plan was in place which was reflective of the current aspirations and needs of the service. Staff and parents views were sought to create priorities and actions. The staff team told us they felt involved and it was evident where some priorities were beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes for children and families. For example, the development of leadership roles had led to some improvements in experiences for children.

This supported parents and staff to feel valued and promoted a collaborative approach to improvement.

Quality Indicator – Staff skills, knowledge and deployment

All staff had taken part in training relevant to their role. Staff told us where they had identified gaps in their own professional learning they sought further opportunities to develop their understanding and knowledge. For example, taking part in online courses or professional reading. As a result, staff had a good understanding of how children learn and develop. We discussed with staff how reflecting on training would further support their practice. The manager agreed to audit this moving forward.

Time to meet as a team was prioritised and supported staff in their roles. Staff told us this gave them the opportunity to discuss different aspects of the nursery including planning for children's learning. The manager discussed how recent challenges around time, due to staff absences, had impacted on staff having one to one meetings. We spoke with the management team and asked they give this some consideration. This will ensure staff continue to feel valued and involved.

Children benefitted from being cared for by a staff team with a variety of skills and knowledge. Management had taken into account staff preference, skills and levels of experiences when allocating staff to play rooms. Staff worked well together and were supportive of each other, offering advice and guidance when needed. This meant staff felt valued and respected in their work environment.

The management team recognised and valued the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed throughout the day. Early years assistants were available to ensure minimal disruption to children's play, whilst allowing staff the opportunity for a refreshment break. Children knew the early years assistants well and strong attachments were evident. One parent told us: "Although my child has one key worker for their group, I feel all the staff within the establishment know my child on a personal level..." As a result, children received continuity of care throughout their time in the service.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces

Quality Indicator – Children experience high quality spaces

Children experienced an environment that was welcoming and suited to most children's individual needs and interests. Staff told us observations of children and regular discussions with families supported them in ensuring the environment contained materials and resources to spark creativity and promote engagement. One member of staff commented: "We communicate well as a staff team to ensure the children's interests are at the forefront of our planning as staff members change areas." For example, children spent prolonged periods of time in the role play area which had been set out as a veterinary surgery. This idea had evolved from the original idea of a hospital. Children told us they enjoyed looking after and caring for the animals. As a result, children felt valued and that their views and opinions mattered.

A free flow system to a fully enclosed outdoor garden allowed children the opportunity to choose where they would like to play. During the inspection children enjoyed imaginative play on the pirate ship and using building blocks to make their own horses. Children had regular access to their local woodland area on a rotational basis and outdoor clothing provided ensured this was available in all weathers. One member of staff told us: "Our weekly forest visits have been a success with all children participating and excited for their visits." This enhanced opportunities for children to learn about their local and wider community. We discussed with the management team how development of resources outdoors would further support children's play and learning.

A benefit risk approach to play and learning was encouraged. Children were supported to engage in interesting play opportunities to challenge and extend their learning. Staff supported children by using risk aware language and discussing with children what may happen if they chose a particular action. For example, when building, some children were asked if they felt the tower was too high, and if yes, what could happen next. Children also told us the importance of the boundary in the woods and helped to set this. This meant children were developing their understanding of their responsibility to keep themselves and others safe.

Children were kept safe through various procedures including daily registers and secure door entry systems. Risk assessments were in place and regularly updated to reflect current play spaces and resources for children. Well embedded processes during collection and pick up times supported staff in ensuring children were safe and accounted for.

Good infection prevention and control procedures supported children to be safe and cared for in a clean environment. Hand hygiene practices were promoted and children washed their hands before lunch. We reminded staff the importance of ensuring children used the push pedal when accessing bins. This will help minimise the spread of infection. Where children required personal care this was carried out sensitively. As a result children's privacy and dignity were respected.

Children experienced an environment that was cared for and well maintained. Furniture and resources both indoors and outdoors for children were of a high standard and clean. A reporting system ensured that if needed, repairs were carried out in a timely manner. Children were also involved in checking spaces for hazards before use. For example, checking of the garden and wooded areas. This supported children to be included and feel valued .

Quality Indicator -Children influence and affect change

Children's involvement in the design of their play spaces was evident. Area planners were used to capture children's views. Staff had also used information from some children's personal plans and observations to structure the environment. For example, puzzles and creative materials were available and we could see these highlighted in some children's personal plans as an individual interest. We discussed with the management team how more consultation with children would strengthen the environment into a place where children would continue to be motivated and engaged in their play.

There were good opportunities for children to lead their play and learning, and staff were responsive to children's needs and interest. One parent commented: "My child absolutely loves going to the nursery, they enjoy the wide range of activities that are on offer everyday." Staff promoted children's right to choose and resources were available at children's level. This supported children to be independent and make decisions.

Children benefitted from a variety of multi sensory experiences, including sand, junk modelling and messy play. Children enjoyed learning about planting and growing their own vegetables and herbs. Staff spoke positively about previous successes including growing pumpkins. This encouraged children to develop an understanding of sustainability.

Opportunities for children to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy were encouraged both indoors and outdoors. Well labelled areas and resources supported children to recognise familiar letters and sounds. Staff used mathematical language during experiences with children including supporting them to measure and make their own playdough. This increased children's knowledge and understanding in this area.

Children had also been included in writing comments and words for wall displays. As a result, children were making good progress in these curricular areas.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

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