

# Larkhall Children's Centre

## Day Care of Children

90 Muir Street  
Larkhall  
ML9 2BZ

Telephone: 01698 886560

**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
26 January 2021

**Service provided by:**  
South Lanarkshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003481

**Service no:**  
CS2003015307

## About the service

Larkhall Children's Centre registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

The service is provided from two separate buildings located in nearby streets in Larkhall, South Lanarkshire. All playrooms have access to identified outdoor play areas and plans are in place to extend these areas further. The service is close to the town centre, main roads and public transport links.

The service is provided by South Lanarkshire Council and is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 148 children as follows:

- 9 children aged birth to under 2 years.
- 40 children aged 2 years to under 3 years.
- 99 children aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school.

The aims of the service state:

'Children who are encouraged to develop their knowledge in a safe, nurturing and fun environment, where everyone is equal, valued and included.

Creative children who are nurtured and respected.

Nurturing staff who build trust and positive attachments enabling all children to thrive and provide appropriate support to families.'

We undertook this inspection using virtual methodology which includes the use of technology to inspect services. As part of this process, we undertook the following:

- discussions with the management team;
- discussions with nursery staff;
- discussions with parents;
- observations of the areas children and staff accessed over the course of the inspection;
- observations of the children and staff as they interacted and participated in a variety of activities, both indoors and outdoors; and
- sampled a range of documentation which included a sample of children's personal plans, medication storage and documentation, staff information, registration certificate and insurance certificate and communications with parents.

This was a focussed inspection to evaluate how well children were being supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. We evaluated the service based on key areas that are vital to the support and wellbeing of children experiencing care during the pandemic.

This inspection took place between 19 and 22 January 2020. Feedback was given to the service on 26 January 2020. This inspection was undertaken during the second period of lockdown. This meant that the numbers of children in attendance were greatly reduced and all children were cared for within separate playrooms/play areas, but within one building.

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

## What people told us

We observed children to be happy and settled within the service. Children were participating in a variety of activities, both indoors and outdoors to meet their interests and stage of development. Some children were keen to show us what they were drawing or playing with and others told us about the activities they were going to do outside. One child also spoke to us with their parent on the phone. Children's comments included:

'I'm going to build my bridge again.'

'Play in the snow'

'Looking for a worm.'

'I like yoga, welcome time and Jack Frost story.'

The manager shared our contact details with parents/carers. Eight parents/carers either telephoned or emailed us with their comments. All comments were very positive. They spoke very highly of the support, commitment and reassurance of the management and staff team in meeting the needs of children and families, particularly over the pandemic. Some comments included:

'Really impressed with the remote learning. There is a welcome time, yoga, a story and pre-recorded activities which offers routine and structure for the children. It offers breadth and balance across the curriculum. The way it is delivered helps me in my busy household. My child really looks forward to it everyday. They love seeing their keyworker and not everything needs an adult to sit with the child, which helps me with working from home and home-schooling too. All staff are very caring and loving.'

'It is excellent. Everything is tailored to the individual child and activities are planned in response to their interests. Online learning has been so engaging for my child just now. Staff have gone above and beyond both now and when they are at nursery. I feel they make very good use of the outdoors, which my child loves.'

'My child is just settling-in over this pandemic. It is amazing, I cannot fault the staff or the facilities. As I can't come inside, staff have shared all the information about the nursery, answered all our questions and let us look through the windows. They made time to speak with me on the phone on my child's first day to reassure me. Knowing how busy they are, I really appreciated this.'

'Pods are a great idea and their COVID-19 procedures are very good. I couldn't speak more highly of how they've handled this situation. I really appreciate staff working to look after our children over this difficult time.'

## 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 and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	5 - Very Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?

5 - Very Good

### Quality Indicator 5.1: Children's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during COVID-19.

Management and staff were aware of current national and local authority guidance in relation to COVID-19 in early learning and childcare settings. This inspection took place when the majority of children were accessing play and learning activities through remote learning, with only a small number of children attending the service each day. We saw that staff had ensured there was continuity and consistency for all children by providing similar routine experiences both online and for the children in nursery, with health and wellbeing prioritised. This included 'welcome time' sessions, yoga and storytelling. This offered all children contact with familiar staff and friends. Parents we spoke to confirmed that this had been a valuable support for their children and family over this period and contributed to maintaining some structure to their child's day and their overall health and wellbeing.

We observed interactions between staff and children both indoors and outdoors. Their positive interactions created a relaxed, responsive and caring environment for children. This nurturing approach had supported children during the several changes in their experiences at nursery due to the pandemic. Sensitive and reassuring settling-in arrangements supported children and families who were new to the service over this period. These procedures included and respected parents' views and contributed to the children feeling valued, safe and secure.

Effective communication methods were in place to support individual children and families. This included 'All About Me Now' booklets which had been completed by parents and the child prior to their return to support a smooth transition and responsive care. Learning journals and monthly telephone calls were now used more successfully as a two-way link between the nursery and home to share children's experiences, feedback on activities and identify and agree their child's next steps in learning. All parents who contacted us spoke highly of the revised communication and consultation opportunities in place. This contributed to parents feeling included, respected and valued within the service, with their child's wellbeing at the centre.

Management and staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in protecting children by identifying, recording and reporting any concerns. Effective communication links had been maintained with external agencies. This contributed towards children's health, safety and wellbeing and ensured continued support for families during COVID-19.

### Quality Indicator 5.2: Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff.

Risk assessments had been undertaken by management and staff prior to all children being cared for in the one building during this period of lockdown. Familiar furniture and resources had been transferred and layouts adapted to assist children to settle into their new environment. We saw that suitable nappy changing and toilet facilities were in place to support this age group, with all associated resources stored hygienically and clearly labelled. This contributed towards maintaining a safe and secure environment for children.

Clear signage was in place to support adults in dropping children off and collecting them at separate external doors, while maintaining required social distancing. Relevant information regarding COVID-19 was

displayed at each entrance for parents. Hand sanitisers were in place at all main doors for adults to use, and a one-way system in the main foyer and cloakroom areas further supported infection prevention and control procedures.

We observed all staff and children washing their hands as children arrived and when required throughout the session. Separate handwashing sinks were accessible for both children and adults in each playroom. We advised where the positioning of an additional paper towel dispenser would improve handwashing within two playrooms. This was acknowledged by the service as a point for action.

PPE (personal protective equipment) such as face masks, gloves and aprons were stored appropriately in all areas to enable easy access for staff, if required. Staff kept their own resources of face masks, pens and hand sanitiser separate for their own personal use. Any shared resources were cleaned prior to passing over to another member of staff. This assisted with the potential of any cross-infection.

From our observations, we saw all areas to be visibly clean. Clear systems were in place for the cleaning of areas, resources and frequent touch point areas which supported the maintenance of a safe, clean environment. Windows were open throughout the building to ensure adequate ventilation and flow of fresh air.

Management and staff were aware of the importance of maximising the use of the outdoors and the benefits this had in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Each group of children had access to a separate outdoor play area throughout their session. This assisted with infection prevention and control, but also offered an opportunity for children to re-visit, continue and extend their play each day. Plans were underway to expand the outdoor play areas which would further extend learning opportunities for the children.

### **Quality Indicator 5.3: Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19.**

Through our observations and discussions with management and a high percentage of the staff team, we acknowledged that all staff were very clear and flexible about their roles and responsibilities. All staff spoke of the management and provider support, both personally and professionally, which had supported them in meeting the care and support needs of children and families. Staff demonstrated a positive ethos which contributed to a happy and secure environment for children.

Staff had completed core training; for example, infection prevention and control and child protection. They had each researched further training which had improved outcomes for children. Some examples included the introduction of Makaton for all children and the development of the outdoor areas for all age groups in consultation with children and families. Some staff spoke of the benefits of working with small set groups/pods of children with identified keyworkers. They had now developed close relationships with the child and their family, had observed children becoming more confident and engaged in play and felt they could be much more responsive and attuned to their changing needs. This had improved outcomes for children.

We saw that staff had been deployed effectively to support children's learning at nursery or remotely from home. All parents spoke of their appreciation of staff's commitment, support and enthusiasm in ensuring their children's health, wellbeing, play and learning continued over the pandemic.

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	5 - Very Good
5.1 Children's health and well being are supported and safeguarded during COVID-19	5 - Very Good
5.2 Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff	5 - Very Good
5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19	5 - Very Good

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