

Netherthird Early Childhood Centre Day Care of Children

Craigens Road
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Unannounced

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Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003014090

About the service

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at www.careinspectorate.com. This service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

Netherthird Early Childhood Centre is registered as a day care for children and provides a service to 83 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. Of those 83 no more than nine are aged under two years; no more than 10 are aged two years to under three years and; no more than 64 are aged three years to those not yet attending primary school full time. The outdoor space has been taken into account when agreeing the maximum number of children. Children must have access to the outdoor space at all times.

This was a focused 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.

During this inspection we carried out an unannounced visit to the service on Monday 18 May 2021. Following that we used virtual technology to meet with the staff and management team. We also sought the views of parents and carers through telephone discussions.

What people told us

We spoke with eight parents/carers by telephone call as part of this inspection process. All parents/carers spoke very positively about the quality of care and support their children received and gave examples of how they were supported by the service during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

5.1 Children's health and well being are supported and safeguarded during Covid-19.

Children are nurtured and supported throughout their changed experience in their early learning and childcare setting.

Effective communication with families enables responsive care to support children through changing circumstances.

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from staff who ensured their personal care needs were met. Where children required reassurance or support with their emotional wellbeing due to the changes as the result of Covid-19, staff are responsive to this and worked closely with families to promote children's security within the setting.

On-going effective communication with parents helped to maintain positive relationships. Parents told us they were well-informed and felt listened to by the service. They received frequent information about changes to practice, routines and the completion of building works over the past year. Parents placed value in the use of regular telephone calls, emails, daily diaries and social media in keeping them updated with their child's progress. We found that communication with families during the pandemic had been prioritised to support wider family wellbeing and found that the service had been innovative with implemented SWAY and the use of QR codes to share children's experiences and learning through social media platforms on a weekly basis. Parents also told us that they felt communication had improved as a result of new virtual information sharing initiatives.

Following temporary closures and service restrictions as the result of Covid-19, children were supported to have a positive return to the service. Clear information was shared with parents about changes to service delivery prior to re-opening. Transitions for children throughout the service and for those children starting primary school during the Covid-19 pandemic were well planned to offer children opportunities to get to know staff who may be new to them, develop awareness of new premise layouts and to form new friendships. Children benefitted from outdoor introductions with staff and peer groups and a variety of well planned approaches such as feel good Friday and mindful Monday supported children's emotional well-being and resilience supporting them to feel safe during significant changes to their childcare experiences.

Children were protected from harm by staff who understood their roles and responsibilities relating to child protection. Regular child protection training and updates ensured staff felt confident about addressing any areas of concern and staff recognised the additional stresses that the Covid-19 pandemic placed on some families. The service had good arrangements to work with external agencies to support children and it was clear that the team had worked hard to support families in times of need.

There were procedures in place to check and update children's contact details and general information. This helped staff to understand and plan for children's changeable needs. However, there was scope for clearer recording of children's medical needs. The management and staff should ensure that children's medication permissions are completed fully and for children requiring multiple forms of medication, each medication and the signs and symptoms of when this is required are recorded individually to ensure that it is clear what steps staff should take if medication is required to be administered.

Staff were very familiar with children's individual personalities, interests and abilities and used this for planning for their learning. We sampled children's personal plans and personal books found these had been developed in consultation with parents, giving a very good overview of children's individual needs. However we found some inconsistencies in the quality of recordings in children's personal plans and have suggested that the management team extend their monitoring arrangements to include monitoring the quality of information contained within these to ensure all recordings are child focused.

5.2 Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff.

Children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Children were protected as staff took necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection. Clear policies, procedures and risk assessments were in place and were regularly reviewed to ensure a consistent approach to infection control. Visual prompts and posters were clearly displayed around the premises to direct staff and parents to further information and support relating to Covid-19.

We found that the service had recently started operating from purpose built premises which were bright, welcoming and hygienic. Most staff we spoke to had received training on infection prevention and control which adhered to Covid-19 guidance and staff demonstrated some knowledge of this in practice to keep children safe. For example; windows were open where possible to increase natural ventilation, children were cared for in small groups to limit children's overall contacts and cleaning of frequently touched areas, surfaces and toys were undertaken when needed. This helped to prevent the spread of infection.

The staff team were undertaking asymptomatic testing which alerted them to any possible cases of Covid-19 so that prompt action could be taken to prevent the spread. Consideration had been given to the anxieties of parents, children and staff who had medical needs or characteristics that made them more susceptible to the virus. Procedures were in place, such as individual risk assessments and different drop off and collection points for children. This helped to protect children, staff and parents from virus transmission.

Children were cared for in smaller consistent groups, which helped minimise contacts and further reduced the risk of infection. We observed that children spent a lot of their day outdoors and we saw them having fun with their friends in the well equipped and stimulating outdoor space.

Children and staff were prompted to wash their hands often. Posters and check lists indicated that this should be regular to be effective in minimising the risk of the spread of Covid-19 and we observed children to be supported to wash their hands where appropriate. However, there was missed opportunities where effective hand washing should have been undertaken by staff and the routine use of hand gel should be discouraged. In addition, we observed times where staff did not follow appropriate wear and care instructions for the safe use of face coverings. We have asked that the management team undertake further monitoring of staff practice to ensure staff are consistently implementing Covid-19 guidance (area for improvement 1).

We observed that the laundry room and cleaning cupboard required to be decluttered and reorganised to reduce the risk of clean linen becoming contaminated and to prevent any possible spread if infection. We received assurances from that management team that this was actioned immediately.

5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during Covid-19.

Staff felt well supported by the management team and they told us that they felt able to approach them with any concerns. The staff team were supported and included in the life of the service even though they had been through a period of substantial change in the past year. Staff confirmed that they were pleased to be in their new premises and felt that the team was working well together. Newly employed and supply staff were welcomed and participated in staff consultations and meetings which helped them feel valued. Staff benefitted from wellbeing consultations with the management team and the individual support arrangements put in place for their health, wellbeing and safety due to Covid-19. Staff gave examples of how they had become strong supports for each other and reduced anxieties by sharing concerns and discussing them. The role of the Covid-19 recovery champion ensured staff had someone they could contact to discuss any concerns or worries and staff told us they highly valued this role. We concluded that staff wellbeing and safety was prioritised during the pandemic.

Staffing arrangements were regularly reviewed and we observed that the staff team contained the right mix of knowledge, skills and competence to support children and families throughout their shared experience of the coronavirus pandemic. This ensured that staffing arrangements were responsive to the changing needs of children and families. Parents spoke highly of the invaluable support offered by the staff and management team during the pandemic and they felt that the team were always approachable and friendly which promoted an inclusive ethos within the service.

We found staff to be motivated, enthusiastic and interested in their role in supporting children. Staff engaged well with their shared leadership opportunities and took ownership and responsibility to plan and deliver at home learning experiences and to provide home learning packs for children who could not attend the service during periods of closure or during Scottish Government restrictions. Examples of the home learning were sensory experiences, book bug sessions and physical activity. Staff worked closely with external providers including local supermarkets to ensure families could receive materials without cost to them which reduced barriers to participation and supported families to feel included within the service.

Although training had taken place which helped staff to develop an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe during the Covid-19 pandemic, we observed that staff were not consistently implementing what they had learned from training in their daily practice. Staff should remain aware and remind each other of the safety measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19. We have reported our findings relating to staff practice within 5.2 "Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff".

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure Covid-19 guidance relating to infection, prevention and control practice is adhered to at all times throughout the service, the management team should;

(a) Monitor staff practice to ensure staff are implementing Covid-19 best practice guidance within the service, and

(b) Carry out a detailed audit, reviewing infection control practice across the service to ensure compliance with Health Protection Scotland guidance "Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day care and childminding settings)".

This is to ensure that the service complies 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).

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

Netherthird Early Childhood Centre should review infection control procedures to ensure they are consistent with current best practice.

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) and Health and Social Care Standards which state that, "My environment is safe and secure" (HSCS 5.17).

This area for improvement was made on 18 May 2018.

Action taken since then

Our findings from this inspection found that this area for improvement has not been fully met. We have made an area for improvement within this report which reflects infection prevention and control practices relating to COVID-19.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	4 - 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	4 - Good
5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19	4 - Good

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