

Blacklands Early Years Class Day Care of Children

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Unannounced

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North Ayrshire Council

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About the service

Blackland's Early years Class operates from Blacklands Primary School in Kilwinning, North Ayrshire, to provide a daycare of children service to a maximum of 16 children aged 3 years, to those not yet attending primary school. The accommodation children access consists of a cloakroom, multi purpose room, toilets and main playroom, with direct access to a canopied area leading to two outdoor play areas.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 January 2023 between 09:30 and 15:45. A further visit took place on 12 January 2023 between 13.30 and 17.30. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation we:

- Spoke with children using the service and five of their family members
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice and the environment
- Reviewed a sample of relevant documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and confident in the nursery routines.
- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from staff.
- Children enjoyed spending time in their nursery and had fun playing with their friends and with staff.
- Snack and mealtimes should be improved for children.
- Ongoing plans to review the environment should continue.
- Good leadership was key to children receiving quality experiences.
- Staff deployment should continue to be monitored as part of the service quality assurance systems.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

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

Children were happy, settled and confident in the setting. Staff approached children in a kind and gentle manner helping them to feel safe and secure. Interactions between staff and children were warm, calm and caring, with children seeking and receiving reassurance and affection throughout the day. This helped create a caring, nurturing environment for children.

Each child had a personal plan. From the plans we viewed, these demonstrated staff had gathered important information about children's health and wellbeing needs, and how their learning and development needs were being met. Where children had additional support needs, plans detailed the strategies that were in place to support them and these were mostly applied consistently.

Families were welcomed into the service and supported to be a key partner in their children's nursery experience. For example, through book bug, stay and play sessions and cooking. Parents told us they felt 'welcomed , at home' coming into the service.

We considered how children's mealtimes promoted children's health and wellbeing and found some areas for improvement. Children have lunch within a separate multi-purpose room, served by a kitchen assistant. Not all children appeared to enjoy their lunch and those who did not wish what was on offer had not been offered an alternative.

Staff sat with children to offer support and engage in simple conversations and be responsive to prevent any potential choking incidents. However, this could have been better organised by using both tables available to give children space and help to offer a more relaxed experience. There was limited opportunity for children to be responsible or included, with food and drinks set out for them. Children would benefit from having opportunity to develop independence and self-help skills, by setting their own place and pouring their own water. To support children to have a positive relationship with food, lunch time practice should be reviewed. (see area for improvement 1)

1.3 Play and Learning

Play and learning experiences were planned using information from children's interests and personal plan targets. Children could independently choose where they wanted to play and engage in activities that were of interest to them.

Staff joined in with children's play providing a balance of child initiated, and adult directed play experiences. Children had fun as they played sometimes with friends, sometimes on their own exploring the activities on offer. Children who required more adult support to play positively were supported by core staff.

A few children were developing skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. For example, children demonstrated to us how they would self register by counting the number of children in each key group. Staff led children in simple singing and counting songs using practical meaningful contexts for children, where they could make sense of the world about them helping to develop early numeracy. However, children would benefit from more experiences to consistently develop children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy through play. Further staff development on responsive planning should continue. This will help to support children's achievement.

Children benefitted from having direct access to a canopied area and two outdoor play areas. Suitable clothing provided meant children were developing independence and self-help skills, to get changed to play outdoors in all weathers. Children enjoyed being outdoors as they engaged in physical and energetic play.

Overall, children were engaged and seen to be busy and purposeful at play. They had some good opportunities to lead their own play and learning which impacted positively on their development and wellbeing. However, children were observed leading their own play, there were missed opportunities to extend some children's play and learning to help them reach their potential. (see area for improvement 2)

Areas for improvement

1. To improve the overall quality of snack and lunch time experiences for children, staff should review current practice to ensure;

- Mealtime routines meet the needs of all children
- Children are supported to develop a positive relationship with food.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state; 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35) and 'I take part in daily routines, such as setting up activities and mealtimes, if this is what I want'. (HSCS 2.21)

2. To allow all children to reach their potential, play and learning experiences offered should offer children challenge. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state; 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me'. (HSCS1.7)

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 any areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a welcoming and hygienic environment. Access to the service was via a secure door entry, operated by staff which helped to ensure no unauthorised entry or any child leaving the service unnoticed. Children benefited from having their own cloakroom space with information available for families. This helped to create a welcoming community space for children and their families.

Almost all children had a sense of ownership within the setting and had the opportunity to play on their own, in small groups or in larger groups. Children moved freely between the indoor and outdoor spaces.

Children were confident in the routines created by staff to ensure their safety going between indoors and outdoors. Staff should review how this is managed taking account of the improvements made by the provider to staff deployment, during the inspection process.

Regular audits and checklists carried out by both management and staff resulted in good infection prevention and control practice, helping to keep children safe and healthy. There are clear policies and procedures in place to ensure consistent approaches across the setting. Children are protected as staff took all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection

An environment audit had been carried out by both the service and the local authority resulting in an action plan identifying key areas for improvement. Some progress had been made. This should continue to be prioritised with regular review and evaluation to improve children's overall experiences.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1 Quality assurance is well led

Leaders had ensured the vision values and aims is evident in the service . This had been sustained and helped all staff know what is important for the setting to meet the needs of children and families.

Effective policies, procedures and quality assurance processes were in place to support the development and improvement of the service. Working as a team the head teacher, depute head teacher and staff demonstrated motivation and commitment to the ongoing development of the service to secure positive outcomes for the children.

Management knew staff, children and families very well. A strong visible presence from management who operated with an open door policy ,supported the whole school community to share their views to influence improvement. Parents we spoke to felt strongly they could speak to staff and management at any time confident their views would be heard.

Families feedback gathered on children's progress at personal plan meetings and learning week/stay and play meetings provided parents with the opportunity to share their ideas and views to influence improvement.

Regular reviewing and evaluating the improvement plan took place as part of the whole school development days. This meant that everyone working in the service was aware of areas for development and created a sense of shared purpose and vision. Improvement plan progress was shared with families termly. We suggested this could be shared visually within the early years class for parents and children to view at a glance.

Leaders acknowledged the pace of continuous improvement had been significantly impacted on by staff absence. The service used a variety of documents to support this process; 'Quality Framework for day care of children, childminding and school aged childcare', 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare' and good practice documents. As a team, staff should fully familiarise themselves with the quality framework as an additional self-evaluation tool linked to the Health and Social Care Standards to help plan for improvement.

How good is our staff team?**4 - Good**

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

Quality indicator 4.3 Staff deployment

The model of provision within the early years class offered children either a morning or afternoon session. This meant staff worked set shifts, resulting in shared breaks which allowed them to refresh and supported team work. There was sufficient staff to meet minimum ratios throughout the day to meet children's care and support needs.

The importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed during the day was recognised by leaders as essential to the wellbeing of children in the service. However, staff deployment had been planned on a weekly basis due to staff absence. Discussions with the provider during the inspection process resulted in immediate improvements being made to staffing absence cover, to enable continuity of care over the day. This should continue to be monitored by the provider with any action taken as needed.

Staff were caring and nurturing. They understood the importance of developing close attachments with children respectfully, responding to them to meet children's individual needs. As a result, we observed happy, settled children. Parents spoke highly of core staff as the consistent member of the staff team.

Staff communicated well with each other when a task took them away from their designated area. They informed each other when leaving the room for something or attending to a child's needs. Staff and leaders were flexible and supported each other to work as a team to benefit children. This helped to create a positive atmosphere for both staff and children to feel comfortable and secure in.

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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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