

Drongan Early Childhood Centre Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003016948

About the service

Drongan Early Childhood Centre is a daycare for children service provided by East Ayrshire Council. It is situated within Drongan primary school and is managed by the Head teacher.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 74 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 74 are aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school full time, with no more than 10 aged 2 to under 3.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 August 2023. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with people using the service and four of their family representatives
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Supportive interactions where staff showed kindness and understanding helped children to feel safe and secure.
- Children were spoken and listened to in ways that encouraged them to feel valued and included.
- The premises were safe and well maintained to ensure children's safety.
- Quality assurance processes had recently been reviewed and improved to support positive outcomes for children and families.
- The management and staff remained receptive to our feedback and continued to show a commitment to the ongoing development of the service.
- The management and staff should ensure that children consistently receive play experiences which support their natural curiosity, creativity and inquiry.
- Increasing opportunities for family participation in the life of the setting should be prioritised.
- Widening opportunities for outdoor play beyond the setting should be considered in future improvement and professional development planning.

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

We evaluated this key question as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Supportive interactions where staff showed children kindness, respect and understanding helped children to feel safe and settled. Staff were responsive to children's cues if they were tired, hungry or upset. Eighty-three per cent of parents who responded to our survey strongly agreed or agreed that staff know their child well, including what they like and what is important for their care. We observed staff showing a genuine interest in children, asking about their home lives supporting children to feel listened to and respected.

Children's wellbeing was prioritised, and the deployment of staff champion roles ensured a team approach to raising awareness of health and wellbeing. Careful consideration to transition processes meant that children who were joining the service or moving to a new playroom were given the time and support to build their confidence before moving permanently. This helped children to remain happy and develop relationships, supporting their emotional wellbeing.

Children's personal care needs were mostly carried out in a sensitive way which helped children feel safe and supported their wellbeing. For example, children's nappies were changed in response to their needs to help ensure their comfort. However, we observed some children with food residue on their face when collected for home and for one child who enjoyed jumping in puddles, they remained in wet footwear during lunch. One parent told us that their child often comes home wet from water play although dry clothing is provided. Staff should ensure children's dignity and comfort is consistently supported by staff providing responsive care and support.

We sampled children's medication stored within the premises and found that medication processes were mostly in line with best practice guidance. However, on the second day of inspection we found that for children settling at the service, procedures were not robust and for two children, medication was not available and permission to administer medication had not been sought. Management should ensure that where children require emergency medical treatment, such as treatment for asthma or allergies, medication is available when children attend to enable their health needs to be met.

Staff involved families in decisions about their child's care and children's plans were updated responsively to reflect these discussions. Since the last inspection, the service had worked hard to develop their approach to personal planning. Detailed chronologies and Individual support plans were in place to ensure significant events or developmental progress was tracked. However, we found that not all children's plans contained targets and strategies that reflected their current needs. We have asked that the management team extend the monitoring of children's plans to ensure consistency in quality and to ensure that it is clear what support children require to meet their daily care needs.

We identified a number of adaptations to staffing arrangements and practices during lunchtime routines which would increase opportunities for staff to be more responsive to children's individual needs and to support children to develop positive attachments with key adults. For example, children who are transitioning between playrooms would benefit from sitting with familiar or consistent staff and some children would have benefitted from support from their key worker to help them relax. We observed that a high number of staff breaks took place during children's lunch and we asked that the management team

consider increasing staff supervision at this time due to the increased risks to children involving foods. We signposted the manager to our practice note "Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC)" to support professional reflection on mealtime improvements within the staff team. The management team had put plans in place to improve staff supervision prior to the completion of this inspection which demonstrated a commitment to providing calm and sociable mealtimes for all children.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun throughout the day. They were happy and approached familiar staff for assistance or to include them in their play. Children returning for their second year were confident and able to lead their own play and could access resources independently and choose where and how to play.

Processes for planning for play and learning were in place to support children to progress and develop skills. Staff demonstrated an awareness of curriculums to follow and best practice guidance enabling them to have appropriate knowledge of how to support children's play and learning.

On the first day of our inspection, we observed missed opportunities for children to be curious within their environment by exploring creative and sensory play and missed opportunities to support the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and problem solving. However, this had much improved on the second day of our inspection. We discussed with the management team the importance of ensuring children consistently access high-quality play and learning experiences every day and have asked that monitoring playroom environments is included in the service monitoring arrangements (area for improvement 1).

Staff took time to engage in conversations with children about their play and we observed that some staff recognised when to intervene to enhance children's experience. On the second day of our inspection, we saw some well-timed open-ended questioning that further extended children's thinking and learning. The improved set up to the environment encouraged children to be creative and develop motor skills. As a result, we observed children play independently at their own pace in a manner that encouraged perseverance and concentration supporting deeper engagement in play.

We observed times where children were required to participate in large group experiences and found that these were not provided in a manner which suited children's stages of development. We observed many children displaying behaviours which demonstrated they were not sufficiently stimulated or challenged and were disengaged. We have asked the management team to review and monitor the pace of the day to ensure this meets the needs of children and limits disruptions to freely chosen play and learning experiences (area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children consistently receive high quality play and learning experiences, the provider and management team should, at a minimum:

- a) ensure that all registered play spaces are accessible to children throughout their session
- b) ensure play areas are sufficiently resourced with high-quality materials to ensure children are provided with sufficient opportunities to engage meaningfully with their play environment
- c) review the arrangements for large group planned activities to ensure this meets the needs of children

d) continue with their plans to further develop the outdoor play space available to children attending the 2-3 playroom

e) monitor the quality of children play and learning environments and how the routines of the day impact or support children's needs to be met

f) monitor the quality of children's personal plans and learning journals to ensure planned play and learning experiences are provided in response to children's individualised targets and next steps.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open-ended and natural materials' (HSCS 1.31).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children's information was stored securely, and children were kept safe through a variety of measures. For example, a secure front entrance and safe storage of hazardous materials. Staff carried out daily visual checks which were supported by regularly reviewed risk assessments which ensured children's safety was paramount. We discussed with the management team how the introduction of perimeter checks to ensure external gates are closed could further enhance the existing safety measures. The newly formed team would benefit from reviewing Care Inspectorate's SIMOA practice guidance to refresh their awareness of current safety advice and how this could be applied in practice.

Children benefitted from an environment which was safe, clean and free from clutter. All areas throughout the service were well ventilated and maintained to a good standard. Furnishings were comfortable and in a good state of repair.

Children could choose from a selection of play materials which were easily accessible and organised to allow children to reach resources and explore independently. However, on our first day of inspection we found that some play areas lacked sufficient resources to engage children in play. For example, there were no water play resources which supported children to pour, fill and measure developing mathematical concepts. We have asked that play areas are monitored to ensure they are consistently well resourced (see Key Question 1, area for improvement 1).

We found that the service had prioritised improving the quality of the outdoor play environments and had made recognisable improvements to the 3-5 spaces to enable children to benefit from high quality play and learning resources which encouraged children's natural curiosity, inquiry and creativity. Further improvements should continue to be made to the 2-3 outdoor play space to ensure all children are provided with high-quality outdoor resources and experiences.

Staff told us that due to the inspection being undertaken on the first week of the new term, they had not yet had the opportunity to display children's artwork and photographs. As the service remained open during the summer, our expectations would have been that the playroom environment would have included some wall coverings which supported children's transition and promoted a sense of belonging and inclusion.

To further develop children's confidence within their wider community, play and learning opportunities outwith the setting could be enhanced. We have asked the management team to consider providing more opportunities for community experiences and consider offering a natural woodlands play experience for children as this would increase exposure to manageable risks, encouraging children to solve problems and would further develop children's interest in their world around them.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Staff and the management team demonstrated a commitment to developing the service to promote outcomes for children. Where we made suggestions for improvements as part of this inspection, where possible, the management team took immediate action.

The management team were welcoming and approachable, and staff told us they felt supported which helped promote team morale. Staff commented that, "The staff on the floor are very good at supporting each other" and "We are a nurturing team".

Families' views were valued, and the management team had developed systems for communication and to gather feedback. This included newsletters, emails, Microsoft forms and informal discussion drop off and collection times. We observed that families were permitted access into the playroom to ensure they could be involved in their child's play and learning environment. This told us family engagement was valued. The management team spoke of their plans to restart some parental involvement initiatives and we encouraged them to continue with this.

A clear improvement plan was in place which outlined priorities for the service to improve outcomes for children and families. The management team passionately shared detailed views of how they planned to lead improvements and staff told us that they were involved in deciding future priorities.

Monitoring processes in place helped the management team track quality and identify areas for improvement. Some monitoring was having a positive impact within the service, for example, the robust monitoring of accidents and incidents had led to a decrease in reoccurrences. The management team should ensure that areas identified for improvement as part of this inspection process are added to their monitoring arrangements to ensure children consistently receive high-quality care, play and learning.

Some self-evaluation had been undertaken using Care Inspectorate's guidance 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare'. Staff were at the early stages of becoming familiar with the document to support reflection and identifying good practice. The management team should continue with their plans to strengthen the cycle of self-evaluation and measuring impact to help influence changes to secure positive outcomes for children and families.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

All staff were safely recruited and registered with Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to support a safe environment for children. Staff demonstrated genuine kindness and interest to the children in their care. This resulted in confident and happy children.

Staff were aware of how many children attended at any time during the day. Staff used a whiteboard to update when children arrived or departed from nursery. They worked well together to communicate and update this information and we observed staff delegated well, communicated effectively, and offered support to each other. This helped to keep children safe.

The ratio of staff to children met, and exceeded, requirements set by conditions of the service's registration. The service had recently successfully recruited several new staff members and an induction process had been undertaken to ensure staff knew what was expected of them in their role.

Whilst we recognised that there were sufficient numbers of staff in place, we found that the deployment of staff at key times throughout the day negatively impacted on children's experiences. For example, on the first day of our inspection, we observed that the social area was not accessible to children and this limited children's opportunities to access quiet spaces for play and learning. On the second day of our inspection, children accessed this space which reduced noise level within the playroom, provided more opportunities to rest and supported children to develop skills in self-regulation. Twenty per cent of parents who completed our survey disagreed that their child had opportunities to rest and sleep when they need to. Management should ensure that where possible, all playroom areas are accessible to children and experiences and opportunities are not restricted (see Key Question 1, area for improvement 1).

Long term staff told us they were supported to develop their skills and knowledge and spoke positively of the opportunities available to them to request and access training. Professional Development Review meetings with staff helped them to reflect on their training needs and the impact on their practice which promoted their professional development. We saw that reviews were scheduled for the first term, allowing new staff time to complete induction and adapt to their role.

Staff leadership roles were in place, however due to a significant change in the staff team, the management team planned to revisit team members responsibilities. Staff told us, "Staff on the floor have not had ownership of the playroom recently." As part of this review process, we asked the management team to consider how long staff spend in play areas to ensure that staff are deployed based on their interests and skills as this would support staff ownership of the play and learning environments.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 4 October 2019, the management team should devise a reporting structure for child protection concerns that clearly identifies staff roles and responsibilities.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that "I am protected from harm because people are alert and respond to signs of significant deterioration in my health and wellbeing, that I may be unhappy or may be at risk of harm." (HSCS 3.21) and in order to comply with Regulation 4 (1) (a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This requirement was made on 11 September 2019.

Action taken on previous requirement

Sufficient action was taken by the provider to demonstrate that child protection and safeguarding procedures and practices were improved with management and staff clear on their roles and responsibilities.

Met - within timescales

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

Personal plans should be developed and the information gathered should be meaningful and used in a way that supports children's health, welfare and safety needs.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that "My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices" (HSCS 1.15), and in order to comply with Regulation 5 of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This area for improvement was made on 11 September 2019.

Action taken since then

Sufficient action was taken by the provider to demonstrate that personal plans had been developed and that meaningful information was gathered from families and used in a way to ensure children's health, welfare and safety needs could be met. We therefore conclude that this area for improvement is met.

Previous area for improvement 2

More robust and effective procedures should be implemented by management to monitor all aspects of the centre and identify areas of improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that; "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes." (HSCS 4.19)

This area for improvement was made on 11 September 2019.

Action taken since then

Sufficient action was taken by the provider to demonstrate that robust and effective monitoring processes were in place to support a culture of continuous improvement. We therefore conclude that this area for improvement is met.

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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