

Monkton Early Years Centre Day Care of Children

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Monkton
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 November 2025

Service provided by:
South Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003269

Service no:
CS2003043779

About the service

Monkton Early Years Centre is provided by South Ayrshire Council. The service is located within Monkton Primary School and is registered to provide a daycare service for 32 children from three years to children not yet attending primary school. There were 27 children attending the service at the time of the inspection.

Children have access to a playroom, a quiet room and a large, enclosed outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 and 12 November 2025. This 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 information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation we:

- Spoke with children during their play
- spoke with 3 parent/carers
- received 13 completed questionnaires from parent/carers and 5 from staff
- spoke with staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- Staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children experienced kind, nurturing and respectful interactions from staff who knew them well.
- Staff were highly skilled and worked very well as a team to provide high quality outcomes to children and families.
- Children were learning and making progress through well planned experiences.
- The headteacher was supportive to families and staff and was highly regarded as a result.
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning were having a positive impact on children's experiences.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service had a warm, nurturing ethos. This was evident by the welcome we received on arrival from all staff, and the kind, caring relationships we saw between practitioners, children and families. Parents provided very positive feedback. Comments included "the nursery very much has a team feel. Both amongst the staff and between the staff and ourselves". Another said, "I can honestly not praise the staff enough. The headteacher and her staff are exceptional." This contributed to children and families feeling a sense of belonging and trust, which supported positive relationships.

Children experienced a nurturing and inclusive environment through the nursery's vision and values. These were embedded in daily practice. The service had shared values with the local cluster but had created its own motto to make these personal and meaningful. Practitioners actively promoted these values by supporting children to understand their responsibilities, such as including others in play. One of the service's aims was to foster pride in the setting, and this was evident in the well-maintained, thoughtfully presented environment that enhanced children's experiences each day. This approach resulted in children feeling valued and strengthened engagement. The headteacher shared they intended to involve children in the next review of the vision, values and aims.

Ongoing self-evaluation was taking place against national frameworks and guidance. This process created opportunities for staff to reflect on practice, identify meaningful areas for development, and establish clear priorities. Prior to our visit, the service had reviewed the environment and had made improvements as a result. These changes were having a positive effect on experiences for children. Plans were in place to monitor and audit changes. This demonstrated how staff were reflective and strove to continuously improve.

There was a clear and manageable improvement plan in place, which reflected the service's priorities. Parents had been consulted, and children were involved in shaping improvement plans, alongside staff. This collaborative approach ensured that everyone's views were considered. As a result, improvements were relevant and child centred. Improvements to planning processes and observations had led to positive changes in practice.

Leadership was encouraged at all levels, creating a culture where staff felt included and empowered. They had opportunities to lead projects, which resulted in positive outcomes for children and families. For example, staff members led on a variety of themes, including Forest Kindergarten, family engagement and 'attention and listening' groups. These groups ensured that high-quality learning through play was in place, and children were being supported to achieve.

New staff felt well supported through a thorough induction process and quickly became part of the team. All staff described the headteacher as approachable and actively involved in day-to-day practice, often stepping in to help when needed. Staff spoke positively about the leadership team's openness and accessibility. As a result, staff felt valued and confident in their roles, which contributed to a strong, collaborative culture and consistent quality experiences for children.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children were happy, confident and having fun, with each other and with staff. We observed children chatting and laughing, and they demonstrated high levels of engagement and curiosity. Children were leading their own play. The service was set up to allow children to access resources, choose where they wanted to play and seek help when needed. This encouraged children to be independent and learn through their own interests.

A well-balanced mix of planned experiences and free play offered freedom and choice while providing challenge and support. For example, an activity was set up to develop fine motor skills through a threading activity. Another included a pattern game on the interactive whiteboard which, with skilled intervention from a practitioner, supported and extended learning. There were opportunities for children to develop their curiosity and problem-solving skills, both indoors and outdoors. These included water play, woodwork, sensory experiences in the den, painting, climbing apparatus and a forest school. This approach enabled children to engage in physical exercise, develop creativity and a broad range of skills for life and learning. We suggested the service continued to develop resources and enrichen play experiences. This could include further resources to support the development of early literacy skills.

The service planned well for the development of children's language and numeracy skills. Experiences were offered to children that helped them meet their targets. For example, to support children learning about patterns there were pattern games and tracing patterns. These experiences were enhanced through a balance of child and adult led interactions. Other experiences included maths activities, singing and listening to stories. Children were enthusiastic about their experiences, with one telling us, "I like to be with the ladies drawing and painting." This gave children the opportunity to deepen their learning and feel supported.

Practitioners supported and extended children's learning with quality interactions. When building at the woodwork area, children were prompted with safety reminders but they were allowed to be independent and creative. Practitioners were skilled at knowing how and when to support children, observing children first and tailoring support accordingly. Staff consolidated and embedded previous learning by modelling new vocabulary. We heard practitioners use positional language such as 'over' and 'under', and asking open ended questions.

A new planning format recently implemented was effective. Children's needs were being met by well-planned experiences that were catering for individual needs. Practitioners met regularly to evaluate learning and identify areas of interest to capture children's interests. Children were actively involved in their own learning and could express what they wanted to learn. This supported engagement and ownership of their experiences.

Practitioners observed children and used these observations to assess children's learning and plan for children's next steps. Staff recorded observations of children's learning on an online profile, Seesaw. This enabled families to see the progression of their child, ensuring they were part of their learning journey. We encouraged the service to embed planning and assessment processes to ensure children continue to make progress.

Children were well supported during transitions through a carefully planned programme that helped them feel confident and prepared for starting school. Informal sessions with the Primary 1 teacher, opportunities to use the school gym and dining hall, and visits from older pupils created familiarity with the school environment and built positive relationships. As a result, children experienced a smooth, reassuring transition and developed a sense of belonging before moving on.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced warm, nurturing, responsive care. Staff were highly attuned to children's cues, offering cuddles for comfort, and reassurance, when needed. Staff also gave praise and used stickers to build children's confidence. This promoted their wellbeing and sense of security, helping them feel valued and loved.

Mealtimes supported a positive learning experience for children. Staff and children chatted together, including discussing the new tastes offered. This gave children the opportunity to develop their social skills. It also developed children's independence as they helped choose and prepare snack; as well as through self-serving and clearing away. Staff ensured they catered for individual needs by supporting dietary requirements in a sensitive and inclusive way. The leadership team agreed to further develop lunch experiences for children to support their comfort and wellbeing.

Children's privacy and dignity were respected when they experienced personal care. Staff were nurturing when supporting children, putting them at ease by talking to them and singing songs. This created an environment that ensured children felt relaxed and calm.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported by effective personal planning. Personal plans recorded children's progress very positively, and celebrated individual children's successes. Plans were developed in consultation with parents and as a result, all staff had a very good understanding of children's needs. Plans recorded any support and strategies children required and we observed these strategies in practice. The link between children's targets, their achievements and their next steps was clear, meaning children were making progress. The plans supported children to achieve their full potential and enabled staff to provide individualised care and support.

The service had strong partnerships with families. Families spoke positively about the relationship between staff and children, telling us, "the staff take time to not only get to know our child, but us as a family." Connections were built and sustained through successful PEEP (Parents Early Education Partnership) family learning sessions which were very well attended. These sessions included food tasting and storytelling and were well received by families. Parents were kept well informed by newsletters and a social media page, in addition to the online platform Seesaw. These approaches supported families to feel valued and included, and fostered strong, collaborative relationships with families.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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