

# Riccarton Early Childhood Centre Day Care of Children

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
13 November 2025

**Service provided by:**  
East Ayrshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000142

**Service no:**  
CS2003015806

## About the service

Riccarton Early Childhood Centre provides a daycare of children's service to a maximum of 64 children at any one time aged 3 years to those not attending primary school. The service operates from its own building in the town of Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire.

The centre is situated close to local amenities, including shops, schools, and bus routes.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 12 November 2025 between 09:30 and 15:45 and Thursday 13 November 2025 between 08:45 and 17:00. The 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received 15 completed Microsoft Forms questionnaires
- spoke with staff and the senior leadership 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement was necessary within the Leadership heading of this report.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have 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 benefited from responsive care, respectful relationships, and predictable routines that promoted wellbeing and emotional security.
- Positive family engagement and collaborative approaches supported children's continuity of care, experiences, and development.
- The service demonstrated a commitment to inclusion and shared values, with staff interactions reflecting respect and empowerment.
- Children experienced some engaging opportunities, such as outdoor provocations; however, the overall learning environment lacked depth and variety.
- Missed opportunities to embed literacy, numeracy, and digital skills across play experiences reduced coherence and progression in learning.
- Systematic monitoring and self-evaluation processes lacked consistency, limiting the impact of improvement planning on children's outcomes.

## 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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

## Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

### Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service recently updated its values with staff, children, and families, showing a shared commitment to inclusion. Values of respect, empowerment, and confidence promoted a child-centred approach. Staff interactions reflected these values and supported wellbeing. One parent said, "The staff and the management have made me feel at ease. They go above and beyond to help my child." Another commented, "All staff are friendly and happy to answer any questions when we ask." While positive relationships were evident, stronger monitoring and evaluation of practices could enhance overall quality of experiences.

An improvement plan aligned with national and local priorities focused on monitoring, self-evaluation, literacy, wellbeing, and targeted interventions. Although it supported wellbeing, progress in monitoring and self-evaluation was slow and inconsistent, disrupting the improvement cycle. This limited evidence of sustained progress.

Views from children, families, and staff were gathered and provided helpful insights. More structured self-evaluation, including peer reflection and moderation, could strengthen learning and build staff confidence. While the service had a foundation for improvement, clear processes were needed to turn feedback and data into action. This could consider how contributions from children, families, and staff inform meaningful and achievable improvements.

Quality assurance processes needed further development to support consistently high standards of care. Auditing and monitoring systems were introduced to measure quality. Accident audits recorded patterns since the playroom was adapted, and positive steps addressed risks, showing responsiveness to safety. Systems monitored medication and infection prevention practices, which could be further explored to support children's safety. Staff practice to support play and learning could also be strengthened. Strengths were noted at staff level; however, their impact on children's outcomes was not evaluated.

The service should ensure data collection and agreed standards track improvement effectively. Enhancing these processes should make children's experiences and learning outcomes consistent and measurable, supporting continuous improvement (see area for improvement 1).

Staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), showing commitment to professional standards. An induction policy, mentoring process, and handbook supported staff expectations. Staff felt supported by the manager, which contributed to a positive working environment. Greater stability and ongoing development within the team were needed to build shared understanding of priorities and practice.

The manager demonstrated commitment to developing the service and engaged positively with the inspection process, showing openness to feedback and improvement.

## Areas for improvement

1. The service should implement a structured improvement approach with robust self-evaluation, effective quality assurance, and consistent monitoring. This should include but is not limited to, monitoring health, safety, staff practice, and children's experiences. These measures would ensure feedback and data drive meaningful, sustained improvements in children's learning outcomes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

## Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

### Playing, learning and developing

Provocations using woodwork tools in the garden encouraged investigation and supported children's understanding of cause and effect. These experiences also promoted imagination, creativity, and the ability to manage risks while following safety rules. Staff could include additional intentional play zones indoors to enhance curiosity and encourage exploration and creativity, making the environment richer and more dynamic.

Indoor and outdoor spaces engaged most children; however, they lacked richness and variety. Parents commented on outdoor experiences. "There is always lots of fun things planned over the year for my child to take part in." Another said, "My child plays in the sandbox, in the mud kitchen, on the swing and slide." Opportunities exist to enrich play by adding literacy, sensory, and mathematical props to the mud kitchen, for example recipe cards, herbs, and measuring utensils. Staff could also provide mathematical resources alongside building blocks to support early numeracy skills. There was scope to expand fiction and non-fiction books to enhance literacy. Further development could include introducing digital tools to support digital skills. These changes could create richer, integrated learning experiences and help children make connections across different areas of learning (see area for improvement 1).

Positive examples of praise and extended conversations were observed; however, they were not consistently applied. Some staff used open-ended questioning to enhance children's higher-order thinking and language development. Experienced staff could role model effective questioning techniques. This approach could help move beyond surface-level engagement and enable children to develop prediction and reasoning skills through shared thinking.

Core experiences were not consistently integrated across learning opportunities such as literacy, although children's views were represented in planning. Documentation and displays did not consistently reflect this responsiveness, making it difficult to track progression and ensure breadth and depth of learning.

Assessment approaches showed strengths, particularly through the use of an online app that shared updates with families. Despite this, observation quality varied among staff. Some observations were evaluative and identified next steps in learning, while others were descriptive and lacked developmental insight. Consistency and depth of observations could capture accurate identification of next steps, support progression, and strengthen learning experiences.

While engagement and positive interactions were observed, the learning environment and planning processes needed greater depth, variety, and coherence. Opportunities to embed literacy, numeracy, and digital learning across play experiences were missed. Strengthening these areas could create richer, more integrated learning experiences and support children's progression in key developmental areas.

## Areas for improvement

1. Staff should enhance the range and purposeful design of play experiences. This should include, but is not limited to, adding provocations and well-planned play zones indoors and outdoors. This would ensure children develop key skills across all curriculum areas and support breadth and depth of learning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem-solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling' (HSCS 1.30).

## Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

### Nurturing care and support

Children experienced responsive care that supported wellbeing. They were offered activity choices and supported to express preferences using verbal and pre-verbal means. This fostered a sense of belonging and promoted secure attachments, creating an environment where children felt valued and respected.

Respectful relationships were evident throughout the setting, helping children feel emotionally secure. Staff interactions upheld children's rights and prioritised wellbeing, contributing to emotional growth and social interaction.

Personal care routines maintained dignity, privacy, and reassurance. Staff used knowledge of each child to tailor routines. Transitions between activities, such as welcome time and mealtimes, were calm and predictable. One parent commented, "The nursery head is always there to welcome you most mornings, and I really think this is lovely to see. All that matters to me is if my child is happy and thriving." Another said, "Staff always greet the children by name in the mornings; they all know my child's name." These practices reduced anxiety and built confidence.

Mealtimes followed Setting the Table nutritional guidance. Fresh water and milk were available. Lunchtime routines promoted independence, healthy choices, and social development. These practices supported confidence and contributed to positive health outcomes, helping children develop healthy eating habits and social skills.

Personal planning for children was reviewed regularly with families and linked to SHANARRI wellbeing indicators. Including these indicators supported strategies and contributed to safety, health, achievement, and overall development. This ensured consistent care through a shared understanding of approaches. Staff worked with external partners and families to provide additional support for children. This improved collaboration and consistency in care, strengthening children's progress and wellbeing.

Family engagement was supported through events and newsletters. Initiatives such as stay-and-play sessions and home visits demonstrated a dedicated approach to involve families in children's experiences and transitions. These initiatives strengthened staff leadership through event coordination and built on family strengths, helping families feel involved and supported continuity of learning between home and the setting.

Community experiences enriched learning and wider world connections. One parent commented, "My child loves exploring all the different play activities and always tells us something new. The opportunity to explore the community with the fire station visit was fab." Children gained road safety skills and appreciation of people who help them through these activities.

Overall, the service provided a nurturing environment where children felt respected and supported. Relationships, consistent routines, and family engagement promoted wellbeing and learning. To improve further, the service could strengthen family involvement in improvement planning and feedback, and continue sharing children's experiences effectively to enrich outcomes.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Playing, learning and developing	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good



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