

Ardeer Primary School Nursery Class Day Care of Children

Clark Crescent
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 May 2025

Service provided by:
North Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003327

Service no:
CS2003016035

About the service

Ardeer Primary School Nursery Class operates out of Ardeer Primary School in the town of Stevenston, North Ayrshire. The service is provided by North Ayrshire Council and is registered to provide care and education to a maximum of 30 children aged three years and over per session.

The service is situated close to public transport routes and local amenities. Children are cared for in a playroom with direct access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area and separate lunch room.

There were 32 children registered with the service at the time of our inspection. There were 21 children aged between three and five using the service on the first day of our inspection, and 23 children aged between three and five using the service on the second day.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 20 and 21 May 2025 between the hours of 09:30 and 17:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector 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:

- observed and spoke with children using the service
- received electronic questionnaires from five families and seven staff
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

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.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm and nurturing interactions from staff who knew them well.
- Staff were responsive to children's play cues and showed a genuine interest in their experiences.
- Children felt an ownership of their environment and were confident in leading their own play.
- The service had undergone a period of significant change. They were realistic about their improvement journey and were in the early stages of developing robust quality assurance processes.
- Staff were keen to provide a high quality service with children and families at the heart.

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 where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm and nurturing interactions from staff who knew them well. Staff respected children's choices and could discuss their needs and preferences confidently. One parent told us, "It's really excellent and I do feel like the staff there care about the children and their wellbeing." This ensured children were happy and helped them to form strong attachments.

Overall, most children experienced a positive mealtime. They enjoyed a nutritious meal with opportunities to promote their independence. This supported their health and the development of life skills. All children had lunch in a small lunch room together. This space was quite busy and meant that some children waited for long periods of time. We also observed short periods of time where some children were eating alone and inconsistencies in the quality of staff interactions. The service were reviewing their mealtime processes to improve children's experiences. We discussed areas for development and signposted them to the practice note, 'Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC).' This would help to ensure a quality mealtime for all children.

All children had a personal plan in place that had recently been developed by leadership team. These clearly detailed children's health, care and wellbeing needs to help staff support them. Whilst we could see that families had been involved in developing these, it was not always clear if they had read and reviewed children's full plans. Some staff told us they would like to have more involvement in personal planning and more opportunities to share daily information with families. Some families also stated they would like better communication and more opportunities to be involved in the service. We discussed plans with the management to develop opportunities to promote family engagement, and suggested providing daily opportunities for families to come informally into playrooms. This would help all families to develop meaningful relationships and feel included in their children's day.

Some children had irregular patterns of attendance. Whilst absences were followed up, this was not always done within a clear timescale. We advised the service to develop a robust absence policy. This would ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were happy and engaged in a variety of play experiences throughout our visit. They confidently moved around the playroom accessing resources to lead their own play. As a result, they were extending their own learning and having fun. One parent told us, "Ardeer nursery is very nurturing and gives my child the nurturing support they need at such a young age. The nursery work hard to incorporate my child's likes and hobbies into their learning to make it as fun as possible for them."

Children benefitted from some real life resources and loose parts that sparked their curiosity. We saw children engaged in imaginative play in the home corner, creating models with different materials and making birthday cakes with play doh ingredients and buttons. As a result, children were well supported to develop their imagination and creativity. Outdoors, children experienced free flow play through most of our

inspection. They enjoyed digging, making mud cakes, painting and making potions using water, food colouring and glitter. This helped children to be creative outdoors and promoted their health and wellbeing.

Staff were responsive to children's play cues and showed a genuine interest in their experiences. Interactions were positive and we observed some examples of effective questioning. These are open ended questions that encourage children to form ideas. This helped children to develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills. There were some missed opportunities to support children to extend their learning. This was due to a mix of staff skills and experience. The management agreed that some staff would benefit from support to develop their knowledge and skills in effective questioning and child development. This would help to add depth to children's play.

Planning for play experiences had been reviewed and a new approach was in the early stages of implementation. We advised the service to continue to monitor these processes to capture responsive planning and develop clearer links between children's interests, observations and their next steps. This would support all children to reach their full potential.

Children had fun developing their literacy and numeracy skills. We saw children singing, counting and identifying numbers, shapes and colours. This supported them to learn knowledge and skills through play. We discussed the benefits developing more opportunities for children to develop their numeracy and literacy skills outdoors. Children would also benefit from the re-introduction of opportunities to play in the community. This would support them to develop meaningful connections and a sense of belonging.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in an environment that was warm, bright and well ventilated. The playroom had plenty of natural light and children moved around independently. As a result, they were happy and settled. Whilst there was a couch and cosy canopy area in the lunchroom, children did not freely access this area. We suggested developing more cosy and comfortable spaces in the playroom. This would create more relaxing spaces for children to rest or regulate their emotions if required.

Children accessed resources with ease, indoors and outdoors. This meant children felt an ownership of their environment and were confident in leading their own play. Play spaces had recently been audited and improvements had been made to the home area. The leadership team told us of their plans to continue to develop the play environment. We suggested an increase in the quantity and variety of sensory resources. This would enhance children's experiences.

Staff were aware of their responsibility to keep children safe. The service had considered most potential risks and put measures in place to protect children from harm. We highlighted the placement of some loose parts that could be easily climbed next to a low boundary fence. We also discussed the difficulty for one member of staff to safely supervise all risky play resources in the garden due to their locations. We asked the service to develop robust and individualised risk assessments to ensure all potential risks had been considered and mitigated, particularly the outdoor environment and the support needs of individual children (see area for improvement 1). This would keep children safe without limiting their experiences. During our

inspection, the service received confirmation that a higher fence would be provided during the Summer. This would increase the security of the garden and help ensure children's safety.

The environment was clean and clutter free. Staff practised good infection, prevention and control measures. Maintenance and repair procedures were in place and children's information was stored securely. This ensured that children experienced an environment that was clean and well-maintained.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's health and wellbeing, the service should develop their risk assessments to ensure that all potential risks have been clearly identified with clear actions to reduce potential harm. These should include, but not be limited to, the outdoor environment and the support needs of individual children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19).

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The management team engaged well with the inspection process and had a positive attitude towards change and improvement. Suggestions during our inspection were acted on quickly. This demonstrated a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and families. One parent told us the service was, "Overall an excellent nursery where staff are very committed and the children are happy."

The service had undergone a period of significant change. They were realistic about their improvement journey and were in the early stages of developing robust quality assurance processes. We discussed the importance of monitoring all aspects of service delivery in line with best practice guidance. We found some inconsistencies in the administration of medication records and advised the service to update their auditing process to ensure any inconsistencies are identified and rectified. The service acted immediately on our guidance. We were satisfied that this ensured children's safety.

A number of positive changes had been made in a short period of time by the leadership team, for example, detailed children's care plans had been developed, areas of the environment improved and new planning processes implemented. This demonstrated a good capacity for improvement. A joint school and early years improvement plan was in place. This had been developed prior to significant changes in the staff team and did not fully reflect the recent focus areas in the early years' service. We discussed the benefits of using the plan as a working document to capture the early years' improvement journey. We suggested updating priorities if required with clear actions, timescales and progress updates. This would help the service to sustain changes, and embed improvements over time.

Some staff and families felt included and listened to, whilst others did not feel they had been consulted or encouraged to influence change. We asked the service to develop meaningful quality assurance processes with all staff, and seek regular feedback from families to inform improvement planning (see area for improvement 1). This would increase collaborative approaches and promote a shared vision for change and

improvement throughout the service. Through our observations, discussions and the actions taken over the inspection, it was clear there was strong motivation to enhance positive outcomes for children and families.

Areas for improvement

1. To support continuous improvement in response to the needs and views of all stakeholders, the service should meaningfully include staff, children and families in robust quality assurance processes and improvement planning.

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), and 'I am supported to give regular feedback on how I experience my care and support and the organisation uses learning from this to improve' (HSCS 4.8).

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

4.3 Staff deployment

The service had experienced recent changes in the staff and leadership team. They had recognised the importance of focussing on building relationships and providing continuity for children. Familiar staff from the school had initially spent time in the early years' service and bank staff had remained consistent where possible. This helped children to feel secure during a period of change. Most parents felt they knew the new staff team well. One parent told us, "Ardeer nursery has managed a change of staff team over the Summer term very well. The team have taken great efforts to get to know the kids in the nursery." This meant children knew they mattered.

The service was appropriately staffed to meet children's needs during our inspection. Staff breaks were planned to minimise any impact on children's experiences. This ensured staff had time to rest and relax. Some staff told us that at times they felt more staff were needed to provide high quality experiences for all children. The manager was proactive in requesting additional staffing to meet children's needs. This helped to promote positive outcomes for children and families.

All Staff were keen to provide a high quality service with children and families at the heart. They communicated well during our visit and supported each other when required. This created a friendly and positive atmosphere for children. There was a mixture of staff experience, knowledge and skills. Whilst some processes had been put in place to utilise staff strengths and support areas for development, further work was required to ensure that all staff felt professionally valued. The management team were aware of this, and were continuing to develop processes to empower staff. These included plans for staff to establish leaderships roles, one-to-one meetings with management, and designated time for key working and professional reading. We discussed the importance of embedding these processes to ensure all staff feel listened to and professionally supported.

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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