

# St. Columba's School Day Care of Children

St. Columbas Junior School  
Knockbuckle Road  
Kilmacolm  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
19 June 2025

**Service provided by:**  
St. Columba's School Limited

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003586

**Service no:**  
CS2003016197

## About the service

St. Columba's School is an Independent School situated in the rural village of Kilmacolm in Inverclyde. The early years centre is registered to provide early learning and childcare to a maximum of 34 children aged three to those not yet of an age to attend primary school at any one time.

Children are cared for in the early years department within the school. This comprises of an indoor playroom, an outdoor play space and a secure wooded area. Children also access the school lunchroom.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 18 and 19 June 2025 between 09:00 and 16:00. 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 information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with three children using the service;
- spoke with four staff and the manager;
- reviewed online questionnaire feedback from six families;
- 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; and
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

## Key messages

- Children experienced warm and nurturing relationships, supporting them to feel secure and valued. .
- Further improvements should be made to changing facilities for children. This will ensure they continue to receive respectful personal care that supports their dignity.
- Children benefitted from regular access to the outdoors. This supported their overall wellbeing.
- Staff were enthusiastic and passionate about providing high quality outcomes for children and families.
- Effective deployment of staff ensured children were safe and their needs met.

## 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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

## How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Warm and nurturing interaction supported children to feel settled, happy and relaxed. Staff communicated with children at their level, offering comfort and reassurance when needed. Staff were skilled in picking up on children's verbal and non verbal cues. Respectful relationships supported staff and children to form positive attachments. As a result, children felt valued.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Staff knew children well and were aware of their individual needs. Plans were regularly reviewed and the views of parents were sought when setting individual targets for children. One parent told us: "I met with staff several times prior to starting the service, have completed a personal plan and discussed curriculum, developmental objectives, observations and next steps for transition to school". This supported a collaborative approach to learning.

Communication was a strength of the service. Regular updates on learning journals, newsletters and informal discussions at handover times meant parents had key information about the service and their child's wellbeing. As a result, parents felt informed and involved in their child's time at the service.

The service promoted an inclusive ethos and families were welcomed into the nursery to participate in the life of the service. Parents had the opportunity to participate in craft afternoons and lead reading and cooking sessions with the children. One parent commented: "They are encouraging of feedback and always look for comments from you regarding the service. They regularly have parent input days for readings or visits to the facility allowing you to feel heard and valued as a parent."

Effective Transitions supported children to feel secure. There were regular opportunities for children to visit areas of the Junior school, for example the gym hall to participate in physical play. Staff also spoke positively about opportunities for children to engage in shared group working with children from the Junior School. For example, some children were part of the rights respecting group.

Mealtimes were a sociable experience and children were able to choose from a variety of nutritious meals. There were some opportunities for children to develop independence and life skills, for example, pouring their own water and clearing away their dishes. Children enjoyed chatting to staff and each other. Staff supported children with cutting of their food if needed. Due to the current layout, there was little room for staff to sit with children. The management team spoke of their plans for a new lunch space in the coming months. We encouraged the staff to look at online resources, including Care Inspectorates practice Note; 'Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtimes experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC). This will further enhance children's overall mealtime experience.

A medication policy and processes were in place. We asked the management team to review the current medication guidance 'Management of Medication in daycare of children and childminding services' to ensure medication forms record all necessary information. This will continue to ensure children's overall wellbeing is supported. This was actioned prior to the conclusion of this inspection.

### Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun and enjoyed engaging with their friends and staff. A balance of planned and spontaneous experiences provided children with some opportunities to lead their own play and learning. For example, children happily prepared their own snack and engaged in drawing and Lego. As a result, children were confident in their play.

Planning approaches were child centred and took account of children's individual targets and interests. Staff were developing floor books to show progression and development of children's learning across the curricular areas. Staff were skilled in extending and scaffolding children's learning and quality observations supported staff in tracking children's progress and identifying meaningful next steps. These next steps were reviewed regularly and allowed staff to offer support and challenge for children. As a result, children were encouraged to learn and achieve at a pace that was right for them.

The pace of the day was well planned and worked well in the service. Children could choose where they would like to play and were supported by staff if needed. Staff told us during the morning sessions, children were offered the opportunity to participate in more structured experiences, including; drama, music and languages. classes. One parent told us: "They have a varied curriculum and specialist teaching in music, drama and sports and languages. They also teach and encourage outdoor play." As a result children experienced breadth and depth in their learning.

Whilst a variety of resources were available for children across the week, we found that some core provision, including sand, water and arts and crafts materials were not always available for children daily. We discussed with staff how this had resulted in some missed opportunities for children to continue to develop their creativity and imagination skills. The management team discussed upcoming changes to the environment and we could see that children and parents had been consulted on the new layout. We would encourage the management and staff team to further explore and enhance provocations. This will ensure children continue to experience high quality play and learning.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through regular access to the outdoors. Outdoor clothing was readily accessible and supported children to play outdoors in all weather. A free flow system supported children to choose where they would like to play during their day. During our visit, children enjoyed spending time outdoors playing in the mud kitchen, making their own paint from mud and water and mark making using chalk. One parent told us: "The facility has a purpose-built garden with safe and secure access for the children to play in."

### 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 areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were welcomed into a safe, clean environment which had plenty of natural light and good ventilation. Furnishings were appropriately sized and were well maintained. Outdoor clothing was organised to allow children to be fully independent at changing themselves. A parent told us what they liked about the nursery: "fantastic teachers, environment and wonderful to see all the children growing in learning experiences. I love how much the children are outside."

There was a large outdoor area which provided ample space for children to move around. There were a variety of resources available, including climbing apparatus, jumping platforms, and an assortment of bikes and cars. These supported children's physical development. There were some opportunities for children to use their imagination and be creative including a large mud kitchen. Children had made good use of a paved area to draw and colour using chalk and they told us "I like the chalk, I like to make patterns." Another child told us "I like the scooters, and the bikes too!" Children also had opportunities to explore the adjoining woodland area which is part of the wider Junior school playground.

Risk assessments were in place to ensure children were safe. Additionally, we observed staff supporting children to assess their own risk, for example, when using the high jumping platform children talked about checking for obstacles before jumping. This demonstrated children were being taught about safety and encouraged to be self aware.

The nursery is located within the Junior school and the building was safe and secure. The outdoor area was surrounded by a secure fence which was within the school playground. Staff were vigilant at transition points of leaving the nursery to ensure all children were accounted for. As a result, children were kept safe.

Infection control procedures were in place and children experienced an environment that was clean and tidy. Good hand hygiene practices were encouraged. This helped to minimise the spread of infection. During the last inspection an area for improvement was made in relation to nappy changing facilities for children. Thus area for improvement has not been met and will remain in place as part of this inspection. Please see area for improvement one at the end of this report.

## How good is our leadership?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children which clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvements are led well

Leaders had created a strong ethos of continuous improvement at the setting. Self-evaluation was central to the ongoing development of the service and the views of staff, families and children were incorporated into all improvements made. As a result, children and families received care and support that met their needs.

Recent development of the vision, values and aims of the service demonstrated that the voice of the children, staff and families were acted on. The service made good use of informal 'coffee and chat' sessions, open days and parental questionnaires to consult with families. A map of the proposed changes to spaces for children was displayed so families could be involved in its' development.

The leadership team were committed to providing high quality care for children. Staff told us they felt empowered, and well supported to take on further champion roles within the service, for example children's rights and literacy. This gave staff autonomy to evaluate practice and make improvements where necessary. As a result, staff felt valued and that they mattered.

Staff told us they felt valued and very well supported by the leadership team and benefitted from regular meetings to support both their personal professional and wellbeing needs. Regular team meetings meant that the staff team worked very closely together which had a positive effect on outcomes for children. A parent told us, "I honestly could not say there is anything that could be better."

We are 100% happy with every element of this amazing facility and the care the team have for the children and their families. I believe they should be a benchmark for all nurseries."

### How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

#### Quality Indicator 4.3 Staff Deployment

Children benefitted from a staff team who were kind, inclusive and nurturing. Strong relationships supported children to develop positive attachments with staff and their peers. On parent commented: "The staff are friendly, professional and always tell me what my child has been up too. I feel that communication is key to a great service and that is what they all provide"

Staff understood the importance of ensuring children were safe and cared for throughout their day. The service was effectively staffed and staff were flexible, moving between areas indoors and outdoors to maintain appropriate supervision of children. This provided children with the opportunity to freely choose where they would like to play. As a result children's needs were met and their rights recognised.

Children experienced continuity of care throughout their day. The senior management team were available to provide support during busier times, for example mealtimes. It was clear the children knew the senior management team well and were happy to see them and invite them into their play. This contributed to positive outcomes for children.

Children benefited from a staff team who were motivated and highly skilled. Staff were respectful of each other and were passionate and enthusiastic about their roles within the service. Staff told us they recognised each others strengths and offered support where needed. Staff regularly undertook training both individually and as a whole staff team. They shared their knowledge, skills with each other to promote best practice, improve outcomes and offer high quality experiences for children and families.

### 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

To support children's wellbeing, the provider should review and improve nappy changing facilities, taking account of good practice guidance, "Nappy changing facilities for early learning and childcare services: information to support improvement"

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

"If I require personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed" (HSCS 5.4)

And

"If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected" (HSCS 1.5).

**This area for improvement was made on 20 September 2022.**

#### Action taken since then

No further changes have been made to the area used for children's personal care. Therefore this area for improvement has not been met and remains in place as part of this inspection.

## 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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