

Midstocket Playgroup Day Care of Children

Room M6
Rosemount Learning Centre
Belgrave Terrace
Aberdeen
AB25 2NS

Telephone: 07860 251 423

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 October 2025

Service provided by:
Midstocket Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003000315

Service no:
CS2003001734

About the service

Midstocket Playgroup is situated within the Rosemount Learning Centre, in the city of Aberdeen. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children aged between two and a half years and five years.

Children have access to a playroom, kitchen, toilet and changing area and an enclosed outdoor area. The service is near to parks, local shops, the central library, and other amenities.

Up to 13 children were present during the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 30 September 2025 between 08:25 and 16:20 and 01 October 2025 between 08:15 and 14:30. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with three of their parents/carers
- received eight responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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 were happy, confident and settled.
- Children were leaders of their own play and learning and could transport resources to meet their interests.
- The staff team worked well together to meet children's needs.
- Improvements had been made to the indoor and outdoor environments, this could be developed further.
- Partnership working with parents was a key strength in the service delivery.
- As part of quality assurance process, management should ensure everyone is fully involved in the self-evaluation process and developments are reflected upon to ensure continuous improvement.

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	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - 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 4 - Good

Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The playgroup's vision was clearly reflected in practice. Valuing all aspects of children's lives was evident throughout the inspection, with strong partnerships between staff, families, and the wider community contributing to the quality of care and learning.

Self-evaluation supported the delivery of care tailored to children and families' needs. Staff gathered feedback mostly on an informal basis, noting conversations with parents. A short survey after a stay-and-play session revealed families wanted more of these opportunities. Parents felt involved in developments. The setting should now consider how feedback is shared and used to inform improvements. Regular staff meetings were protected time and used effectively to discuss children's interests, upcoming events, training and signposting staff. We discussed the benefits of including self-evaluation, such as using challenge questions from the quality framework to deepen staff involvement in self-evaluation. This would strengthen partnerships and drive positive change.

Parents told us they were involved in a meaningful way in the development of the setting. One parent said, "Feedback is actively encouraged by the play leaders and there is always an open dialogue". Another parent said, "My child loves it when I come in to help with making a meal during special occasions. And [they] like it when there is a stay and play session or when we go to the library together. My child has also asked us to keep some things from home (i.e. - empty bottles etc) to take into nursery for play". As a result, parents felt valued, with their contributions reflected in the day-to-day experiences and development of the setting.

Quality assurance and moderation were in place but could be further developed. For example, scheduling regular monitoring slots in the quality assurance calendar and reflecting on the outcomes would help identify priorities for improvement planning. Auditing was in early stages and should be reviewed with staff to ensure clarity. Support and supervision sessions allowed staff to reflect on practice and receive guidance, including signposting to relevant literature and training. This helped staff understand their responsibilities and build confidence. For example, a staff member led fire pit activities after completing outdoor training, demonstrating leadership and shared expectations.

Leaders were passionate about play-based learning, and this was central to improvement planning. Positive changes had already impacted on outcomes for children. The next step will be to evaluate these developments, to measure impact and guide future planning, supporting continuous improvement.

The playgroup had recruited and retained a stable, skilled team, which supported both children's and staff wellbeing. Safer recruitment practices were generally followed, though a recent oversight occurred due to confusion around a staff member previously working through an agency. Management should ensure all future recruitment follows the correct process to maintain safety and wellbeing of children and staff.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Children experience high quality spaces

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.

It was clear the physical environment had been a focus for improvement since the last inspection. Indoors, the space had been made more homely with additions such as rugs and a sofa. There was still scope to enhance this further by adding greenery, varied materials, and softer lighting. We discussed the benefits of introducing more open-ended, real-life resources such as clocks, scales, and family photos. Labelling resources would help children see what was available and support independent play. More print at children's level could further support their interest in mark-making. Displaying children's work helped them feel valued.

Outdoor improvements supported various play and learning experiences. A large sandpit and den-building areas gave children shelter and space to explore. Lighting helped soften the environment and make it more inviting. More natural elements, like plants, could further enhance this. A cosy shelter for reading would support children's interest in books, which they currently enjoyed on the outdoor steps.

Resources reflected children's interests and supported rich play experiences. Staff were clearly passionate about the value of outdoor learning. During the inspection, children engaged in water play, filling buckets, pouring water down pipes, and exploring cause and effect. They used loose parts to build and climb, enjoying the challenge of balancing a plank on tyres and jumping on it. Children showed confidence and resilience. All children chose to join the fire pit experience, observing and learning about fire and safety while enjoying campfire songs. Photos showed children sewing cushions and an outdoor suit, following support from a grandparent, making the experience purposeful. After using the workbench, children fixed a brush with tools, practising their skills. These experiences helped children actively explore and learn about the wider world.

Staff took clear action to ensure children's safety. Benefit-risk assessments were in place, balancing safety with learning opportunities. Hazards were identified and mitigated. Staff were vigilant and aware of which children were in their care. At the park, everyone wore high-visibility vests, staff did regular headcounts spread out across the area, and used walkie-talkies to communicate. Children were supported to learn about safety, marching around the park to discuss boundaries. When one child wanted to search for fairies in a bush, they asked first and were accompanied by a staff member. The outdoor courtyard had been made more secure with gates, increasing staff confidence in keeping children safe.

Children were actively involved in shaping their environment. For example, they helped choose the location, measure, and construct the new sandpit. They showed ownership by independently moving resources to create a garden in the courtyard, without seeking permission. This autonomy kept them engaged and built confidence.

There were opportunities for independence. Children dressed and undressed for outdoor play, with time given to practice these skills. They accessed water independently, turning the water butt tap on and off. They cared for the natural environment by planting vegetables and exploring sensory resources like herbs and leaves. Diversity was celebrated through cultural experiences. Parents cooked traditional meals and shared celebrations, helping children develop respect and understanding of their community and the wider world.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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.

Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of child development and learning. They applied relevant theory and practice to enhance play experiences and engage children meaningfully. For instance, staff meetings were used to share training, with recent discussions focusing on outdoor learning. Management supported this by signposting staff to further reading, resulting in the introduction of new experiences like woodwork and weaving. Staff felt more confident explaining the benefits of outdoor learning to families.

Children were encouraged to lead their play, with time and space to explore their interests. Management promoted a slow pedagogy prioritising time for learning and relationships and creating a calm and relaxed atmosphere. This was reflected in the day's pace and flow, allowing children to be curious, creative, and solve problems. At the park, children engaged in imaginative play using benches as a stage and leaves as dinosaur tails. In the courtyard, they collaborated to build a garden, problem-solving together to create a stable bridge using tyres. These experiences showed children were motivated and engaged.

Language, literacy, and numeracy were naturally embedded in play. Children discussed the shapes and sizes of leaves, counted items during lunch preparation, and sounded out words like "open" on shop signs. Adult-initiated interactions supported skill development through playful experiences.

Parents told us the children were involved in a range of opportunities and fun experiences, including outdoor play, to meet their needs and support their development. One parent said, "The children attend park days, they are encouraged to explore their interests and they occasionally have family members come in to provide educational days (cultural, skills such as sewing)". Another parent said, "Outdoor play, park outings, visiting local shops, growing plants and veggies in the grassy area". These experiences promoted physical development, curiosity, and social interaction.

Staff were actively involved in children's play, showing genuine interest and listening attentively. They used modelling, commenting, and questioning to extend thinking. For example, during water play, an adult helped a child observe water flowing through a sieve, prompting discussion and vocabulary development. However, some missed opportunities were noted. Children playing with dolls outdoors could have benefited from additional resources like towels and bubble bath. A new child attempting to use stilts was not supported, highlighting inconsistencies in interactions. We noted that the service had identified the need to improve interactions and this was an area for improvement within the setting's development plan. The setting worked to build families' understanding of play-based learning through initiatives like stay and play sessions and PEEP (learning together programme) concepts. One staff member created an e-book following outdoor training to share the playgroup's vision with families and the wider community. This collaborative approach fostered trust and cooperation, supporting children's development.

Children were central to planning, with a balance of intentional and responsive approaches. Recent leadership training helped management support staff in observing and tracking children's learning. Improving consistency in observations would better identify progress and achievements, ensuring children develop a broad range of skills for life and learning. To help children reach their full potential, the setting maintained strong relationships with families, sharing information both formally and informally. Staff had also built connections with other professionals, deepening their understanding and enhancing planning for each child's learning journey.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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 benefited from being cared for in a setting built on the understanding that nurturing relationships are essential for growth and development. They experienced warm, consistent and responsive care that supported their wellbeing. For example, children knew staff's names, ran to them for cuddles and held their hands during play. Staff recognised that transitions can vary for each child and used tailored approaches. For instance, some children were told, "We're going to start our fire pit in ten minutes" while others used timers. These strategies supported smooth transitions and minimised disruption to learning, helping children feel safe and sensitively cared for.

Daily routines, such as mealtimes, were used to promote independence and learning. Children planned, prepared, and cooked their own meals. They visited local shops, including the fishmonger, and helped chop vegetables, grate cheese, mix tuna, and spread bread rolls. Utensils and crockery were accessible, and children knew where to find them. Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable, with staff and children sitting together. This supported supervision, social skills, and language development. Meals were nutritious, culturally appropriate, and adapted for allergies and preferences, making mealtimes enjoyable and safe.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning, which highlighted their interests, strengths, and needs. Staff worked with children, families, and professionals to sustain wellbeing. Wellbeing indicators provided a holistic overview, helping staff plan care and support. Where strategies were needed, they were implemented consistently to support individual children.

Staff knew children and families well and were warm and welcoming. For example, when a new baby arrived at drop-off, staff, children and parents all took time to congratulate the family. The setting was culturally sensitive and inclusive, with care and learning influenced by families. During an outdoor song session, children used props, prompting a parent to share traditions from weddings in their country, which the children enjoyed. These connections enriched learning experiences and strengthened relationships.

Parents spoke positively about their engagement with the setting. One parent said, "All the staff are lovely, they really take the time to speak with you about the care/needs of the children and really listen and adhere to what it is you're telling them. They are all also fully committed into listening and chatting with you and making you feel comfortable". Another parent shared, "The play leaders are always available and open to discuss any aspect of my child's development - they will always endeavour to accommodate specific needs and provide structured plans and support and work through any issues (such as toileting and separation anxiety from parent). They are always thoughtful and kind in all their responses".

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 play and learning, the manager and staff should ensure the environment is well resourced and inviting for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices' (HSCS 5.23).

This area for improvement was made on 24 May 2024.

Action taken since then

The physical environment had been a focus. Indoors, the space had been made more homely with additions such as rugs and a sofa. Resources were more organised meaning they were more inviting for the children.

Outdoor improvements supported various play and learning experiences. A large sandpit and den-building areas gave children shelter and space to explore. Lighting helped soften the environment and make it more inviting.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's safety, the provider should ensure a full review is carried out of the setting, identifying where all potential risks and hazards may exist for children, and take appropriate action to address these.

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

This area for improvement was made on 24 May 2024.

Action taken since then

The outdoor courtyard had been made more secure with gates, increasing staff confidence in keeping children safe.

This area for improvement has been 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

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Children experience high quality spaces	4 - 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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