

Playtime Early Years (an SCIO) Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 October 2025

Service provided by:
Playtime Early Years, an SCIO

Service provider number:
SP2014012300

Service no:
CS2014325881

About the service

Playtime Early Years is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (an SCIO) that provides a day care of children service to 24 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school. The service is based in the town of Dalry, North Ayrshire.

At the time of our inspection, 23 children were registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 30 September and 1 October 2025. 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 children using the service and six of their family members
- reviewed 18 responses for parents/carers to our electronic questionnaire
- spoke with all staff and management
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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 were happy, confident, and having fun. They experienced warm and nurturing care from staff who knew them very well and were responsive to their individual needs.
- A variety of experiences supported fun, interesting play and learning experiences for children.
- Since their last inspection, the service had relocated premises. Staff had worked hard to make significant improvements to the environment to ensure a homely atmosphere.
- Children benefitted from a passionate and caring staff team.
- Strong community connections were a key strength of the service which supported children's sense of belonging.
- Processes for planning for and tracking children's developmental progress had recently been reviewed and new systems introduced. These should continue to be embedded.
- Personal plans should be reviewed to ensure they contain detailed strategies which demonstrate how children's individual needs are 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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	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

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

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service's vision, values and aims were well established and embedded throughout the setting. A strong emphasis was placed on creating a warm, welcoming environment where children, families and the wider community felt valued. Staff, children and families understood what to expect from the service, and this ethos was reflected in daily practice. Children and parents had been consulted during the review process, ensuring the values remained relevant. Parents shared examples of the lasting impact the nursery's values had on their children, particularly in fostering respectful behaviours within the community. This demonstrated that the service values had positively influenced children's attitudes and skills for life.

Staff had recently taken on leadership roles, including leading the literacy initiative 'ICAN'. This enabled staff to implement targeted interventions to support children's communication. To further strengthen leadership across the team, the service planned to expand opportunities and assign responsibilities based on staff interests, helping embed the service's vision more deeply.

Children and families' views were valued and had influenced change. A range of informal and formal opportunities were available to gather feedback, including conversations, questionnaires and digital platforms such as Facebook. Whilst almost all families felt involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service, some feedback indicated a desire for more meaningful participation. Suggestions included introducing a child committee or child leadership roles. The manager was receptive to parental ideas.

Self-evaluation and monitoring tasks had led to improvements, such as changes to playroom layout and outdoor play space. This reflected a shared commitment to enhancing children's experiences. Strengthening the cycle of improvement by monitoring and revisiting practice and assigning responsibilities for each improvement would support a more focused whole team approach.

An improvement plan was in place and aligned with the National Improvement Framework. Priorities included fine motor development and leadership roles. These were clearly displayed in accessible formats, supporting transparency and shared understanding across the setting.

Staff were recruited in line with safer recruitment guidance and were appropriately registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), ensuring children's safety and wellbeing. An induction process was implemented, introducing new staff to key policies, procedures and the service ethos. Staff practice was monitored and reviewed to ensure compliance with expectations. This supported a culture of professionalism and belonging within the team.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

This was the setting's first inspection in its current premises. A secure entry system and boundary fencing were in place, supported by risk assessments to ensure children's safety. The environment was welcoming, comfortable, and well-ventilated, with natural light and neutral tones contributing to a calm and inviting atmosphere. Children's photographs, artwork, and voices were meaningfully displayed throughout, reinforcing a strong sense of belonging and value.

Children benefited from thoughtfully designed spaces that supported their wellbeing, learning, and play. Resources were primarily natural and open-ended, which are play items with no pre-determined outcome that encourage curiosity, creativity, and exploration. Children had direct access to indoor and outdoor spaces, allowing them to move freely in line with their interests and needs. Outdoor play was rich and engaging, supporting exploration. Children were observed enjoying water play and experimenting with force and trajectory using bottles. One child commented, "I like the water and the water wall." During these activities some children became wet, which impacted their comfort later in the day. To support wellbeing, waterproof clothing should be more readily accessible, and children should be involved in risk assessments to help decide when such clothing is needed.

Indoors, literacy was well embedded through environmental print, labelling, and well-resourced story areas. Children engaged with numeracy naturally through daily routines, such as subitising materials at snack and exploring dice play. Simple recipes were displayed, although children's experiences could be enhanced by supporting them to follow these independently or with guidance. For example, when making playdough. This would deepen engagement, promote independence, and strengthen early literacy and numeracy through real-life, purposeful experiences.

Community involvement was a strong feature of the setting. Children's play experiences were enriched by regular access to community green spaces and places of interest. Visits to local parks, the library, and the community garden enhanced children's sense of belonging. To build on this, the service could consider how they capture the impact of structured programmes that allow children to develop skills and revisit and consolidate learning.

Due to limited space within the premises, the service did not have a designated nappy changing area. As an interim measure, a risk assessment should be completed to outline how children's privacy and dignity is maintained. To fully support children's comfort during personal care routines, and as part of the service's longer-term development planning, we have asked the setting to consider implementing a suitable, well-equipped area for nappy changing. The Care Inspectorate's practice guidance, 'Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders)', could be used to support this.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

Children were consistently happy and engaged in the play and learning opportunities available to them. Their right to play was prioritised, and they expressed enjoyment through a wide range of experiences. For example, One child sang while mixing water and leaves in the mud kitchen, showing contentment and creativity. Children were observed drawing and exploring early writing for prolonged periods, demonstrating their sustained engagement. Children's voices reflected this enjoyment, they told us: "I just like drawing" and "I like learning to write my name."

Play environments both indoors and outdoors were thoughtfully set up to support children in independently selecting materials and leading their own learning. A variety of loose parts, open-ended and sensory resources enriched children's creativity and curiosity. Staff supported children's language and imagination through play. For example, children created a bath for a toy giraffe and staff joined in using conversation to encourage children to recall their own experiences.

The pace of the day generally met children's needs. Informal group activities, such as story reading, maintained children's interest and engagement. However, group times before lunch and at collection did not suit all children's developmental stages. Some children disengaged or became unsettled during these periods. Adapting group times to reflect the diverse developmental stages of children could enhance engagement and support children's wellbeing. In addition to supporting children's engagement through well-paced routines, staff interactions played a key role in promoting respectful and safe play.

Staff consistently responded to children's cues for support and guidance, promoting respectful and safe play. For example, when children attempted to throw resources into a tree, staff sensitively redirected the activity, discussing safety and encouraging them to aim for low level tyres instead. Children were supported to help each other, such as when moving a bucket of water, fostering cooperation and mutual respect. Interactions were developmentally appropriate, with staff using commenting, explaining and questioning to extend learning and enjoyment. As a result children developed an increased understanding of safety and boundaries.

Staff demonstrated a secure understanding of child development theory and practice, which informed their planning and assessment approaches. Planning was responsive to children's interests, with learning walls and floor books effectively capturing children's ideas and contributions. Through observations, staff identified individual achievements, however, some improvements were needed in the documentation of milestones and identifying next steps to ensure a consistent and high-quality approach. Planning and assessment processes were under review at the time of inspection, with a new developmental tracker recently introduced. Ongoing monitoring during this transition will be key to ensuring accuracy, consistency, and that staff receive timely support where needed. This will help ensure planning continues to meet children's individual learning needs and supports their progression.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

Staff consistently demonstrated warm, caring and responsive interactions, which supported children to feel safe, secure and emotionally nurtured. The keyworker system was effectively implemented, with induction days and learning conversations providing opportunities for children and families to build relationships and share information. This promoted continuity of care and supported smooth transitions. Staff sensitively supported children during moments of conflict, encouraging reflection and offering reassurance. Positive language such as "kind hands" reinforced respectful behaviour. As a result, children developed positive relationships and demonstrated kindness and empathy.

Family engagement was prioritised and strengthened through the committee-run nature of the service. A range of communication methods, including digital notice boards, text messages, nursery displays and a closed Facebook page, ensured families were well informed and actively involved. Families attended events such as stay and play sessions and community outings with all families strongly agreeing they had positive

relationships with staff. As a result, children experienced consistent care, and families felt valued and included in all aspects of their child's care, play and learning. One parent shared, "I am fully involved in my child's learning. We share learning from home and discuss my child's targets each term before they are set."

Staff maintained effective communication with external agencies, including health visitors, which supported children's health, wellbeing and development. Systems were in place to ensure continuity of care for children attending more than one setting, with staff valuing previous experiences and continuing learning plans to support transitions. Most children had a personal plan in place, and where plans were still being developed, meetings had taken place with families and targets agreed. Plans included relevant information, such as medical needs and involvement from external professionals. Families expressed confidence in the personal planning process and felt fully involved. Some improvements were needed to ensure targets and support strategies were clearly documented and capture children's interests. Continued monitoring of personal plans would ensure all children received high quality care and support.

Staff sat with children during mealtimes to ensure effective supervision and respond promptly if needed. Fruit and water were available throughout the day, and children were encouraged to self-serve at snack, promoting independence. Lunch routines did not consistently offer a calm or relaxing experience. The environment was noisy, with background music contributing to raised volume levels and tables were pre-set without involving children. To support children's independence and skills for life, staff could further involve children in the planning and preparation of mealtimes.

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

The provider should ensure that staff are supported to recognise when an injury may require medical attention. To do this, the provider should, at a minimum, ensure that staff are supported to:

Refresh first aid training to recognise when an injury may require medical attention.

Update the accident/incident policy to provide clear guidance to staff on the procedure to be followed in such circumstances.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard 3.14: I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.

This area for improvement was made on 11 April 2025.

Action taken since then

Previous concerns regarding first aid recording have been actioned, with staff training completed and updated documentation now in place to ensure accurate and timely information is shared with families.

This improvement supports children's safety and wellbeing and reflects a responsive approach to quality assurance.

This area for improvement was met.

Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website (www.careinspectorate.com) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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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