

Maxwelltown Playcare Day Care of Children

Lochside Road
Dumfries
DG2 0NF

Telephone: 01387 720 595

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 October 2025

Service provided by:
Maxwelltown Playcare

Service provider number:
SP2003003193

Service no:
CS2003013482

About the service

Maxwelltown Playcare is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 70 children at any one time from age 12 weeks up to and including Primary 7. Of those 70, no more than 15 children aged from 12 weeks to 2 years with a maximum of 2 under the age of 6 months. No more than 55 children over the age of 2 years to primary 7, of whom no more than 25 are aged between 2 to under 3 years at any one time.

Maxwelltown Playcare voluntary committee are the providers of this service. The committee employs a suitably qualified and experienced peripatetic manager who has responsibility for the management of the nursery. The nursery supervisors plan and provide the day-to-day management and care for the children.

The nursery is located in the Lochside area of Dumfries. The nursery accommodation includes 3 playrooms for children aged under 2, aged between 2 and 3 years and children over the age of 3. The rooms are inter-linking which means that children can see what's happening in the setting. All rooms have direct access to the outdoors so that children can freely choose whether to be out or indoors. There is a separate kitchen and dining area which enables children to feel included and part of the nursery. Creative use has been made of space so that children are able to rest and sleep safely.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 13 and Tuesday 14 October 2025, which were the first two days of the school October holidays, which meant that children and staff from the partner service were also in attendance. Feedback was given on Thursday 16 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 their families
- received electronic feedback from 22 families whose children attended the service
- received electronic feedback from 10 staff who worked in the service
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents including children's personal records, monitoring records and risk assessments.

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.

In making our evaluations, we are referring to the quality framework for Early Learning and Childcare and for school age childcare. Where we are referring to school-aged children, we are referring to children who attend school and were in the service for holiday care.

Key messages

- Children were cared for in a welcoming, spacious, and well-maintained environment, recently refurbished to a high standard. Features like sleep pods and free-flow access to indoor and outdoor areas promoted relaxation, independence, and choice.
- Children were having fun as they played in the well-resourced environment, and were developing a variety of skills like problem solving and creativity.
- Staff created a warm and inclusive environment where children were supported to try things out and make friends. Staff knew the children well and responded sensitively to their individual needs.
- Management and staff were developing confidence in self-evaluation and were keen to learn and ensure the continuous improvement of the setting.
- Children were cared for in an open, respectful and inclusive environment, where parents were confident that they would be listened to and valued.

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	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 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.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

Children were being cared for in a caring, safe and friendly environment where they had the opportunity to develop skills and interests and enjoy being outdoors. This was clearly set out in the service's statement of vision, values and aims, which had recently been reviewed in collaboration with staff, parents and the board. We agreed that involving children in the review process would strengthen their engagement and support improvement. The statement was visible in the setting, as it was on display on noticeboards and a version was set out in handbooks. We discussed the value of using the statement as a reflective tool to support self-evaluation and the setting's improvement journey.

Parents and staff confirmed that they were confident that they could make suggestions about improvements in the nursery, which confirmed the open and respectful culture of the setting. Parents told us, "I feel that the nursery really values parents' feedback and takes it on board. There are regular opportunities to share ideas or comments, and I've noticed changes being made based on what families suggest. The staff are always open to listening and involving us in discussions about how to make things even better for the children."

An improvement plan was in place, which was based on self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. Management and staff were developing confidence in self-evaluation using the new Quality Improvement Framework and were keen to expand their knowledge and understanding of improvement techniques. They were reflective practitioners who used their observations and understanding of children's needs and interests to inform change. For example, room layouts had been adapted to the changing needs of children, showing a responsive and child-centred approach to how they met children's needs.

The management team clearly understood the setting's strengths and areas for development. We discussed the format of the improvement plan with management, and advised that it would be more helpful and measurable if, for example, strategies for change, dates for completion and allocated responsibilities were more clearly set out within their big book of improvement. We signposted the setting to the ELC Improve section on the Care Inspectorate's Hub, which contains information which will further build confidence.

A monitoring calendar supported quality assurance, including parental surveys and document reviews. We suggested that it would be helpful to focus document reviews on evaluating their effectiveness and impact on outcomes for children, rather than confirming that they have taken place. Management had recently strengthened the way they reviewed accidents and incidents, ensuring that their learning improved practice and reduced risks for children and staff. However, we noted an incident which had not been notified to the Care Inspectorate as well as an occasion when the attendance register had not been updated as soon as a child had arrived. We discussed this with management, who agreed to update procedures.

Children were cared for by a committed, professional, and established staff team with a mix of skills and experience. Management were in the process of reviewing their recruitment procedures in line with recognised good practice. We made some suggestions about involving children more in the setting's

recruitment procedures. All new staff were supported through their induction, with an allocated mentor, who helped them settle in and become familiar with routines.

Staff appraisals were in place, and we discussed the value of introducing alternative formats which would streamline the process and make it more efficient for management. Wellbeing check-ins had recently been introduced, providing staff with additional opportunities for support. Practice observations were informal and formalising these would strengthen reflective practice and support continuous improvement. Information from appraisals was used to develop a training plan for staff, which supported them to develop their skills and interests. Management were open to learning from other services and actively engage in visits to different settings. These visits would have more impact by having a specific focus on the improvement priorities of their own service, for example to explore approaches to capturing and responding to children's voices.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 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.

Children experience high quality spaces

Children were cared for in a welcoming, spacious and well-maintained environment, which had recently been refurbished to a high standard. Imaginative use of space, like the sleep pods, ensured that children had spaces to relax and rest in. Free-flow access to indoor and outdoor play areas supported choice and independence. Children had weekly access to an orchard area, where they took part in a variety of activities, which enabled them to enjoy being outdoors and learn how to keep safe.

Risk assessments were in place and supported a safe environment. These could be further strengthened by involving children in identifying risks themselves. Fire safety procedures were in place, with weekly alarm tests and termly drills. We suggested that drills be extended to holiday periods so that all children had the opportunity to become familiar with the routines of this setting. We also suggested that monitoring room temperatures, especially during colder months, would be beneficial and asked for thermometers to be installed in playrooms.

Access to the building was secure with visitors signing in and being monitored. Parents and carers were welcomed into the building to collect their children and share information with staff. We suggested that communication between staff at transition times be improved to support the children as they move around the setting.

Children were supported to make choices and influence their environment. They had access to a wide range of toys and resources which promoted creativity, problem-solving and exploration. Staff used their knowledge of children's interests and needs to adapt room layouts and resources. Provision for younger children was well-managed, however, a review of the environment for school-aged children would support their needs better.

Children were supported to wash their hands independently, with staff modelling good hygiene practices. We made some suggestions about how to improve infection prevention and control practices, particularly out in the orchard area, which included the storage of soiled clothing, making tissues more easily accessible and dish washing.

Information was stored appropriately, and some staff had completed GDPR training. Extending this training to all staff would strengthen digital security and data protection practices.

Children play and learn 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.

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

Children were having fun as they played. They were supported to play independently, in groups and with their friends. The environment enabled children to make choices about where and with what they played, which promoted skills like decision making. A wide variety of opportunities were available to support curiosity, creativity and the development of literacy, language and numeracy skills.

Children were able to choose to play indoors or outdoors, particularly in the older children's room where the door was open throughout the day. The setting was well resourced, with a variety of toys and real-life objects available. These enabled children to problem solve and explore the world around them. Role play opportunities helped children to make sense of their world, with areas like the home corner being popular in all rooms.

Children benefitted from a language-rich environment with songs, stories and conversations woven into their day. Staff supported communication skilfully and used tools like communication cards to support children to be involved, for example at mealtimes. We suggested that staff continue to develop their use of open-ended questions to challenge and extend children's thinking skills and creativity.

Staff responded to children kindly and respectfully, praising children and celebrating their achievements. They encouraged children to share and be considerate of others, which helped to create a safe, caring and inclusive environment. Staff used a range of information to plan for children's experiences, including their knowledge of children's needs and interests, developmental stages, information from parents and seasonal events. We agreed that they should continue to develop the way they use children's voices meaningfully so that they are fully involved in planning their own learning.

Whilst school-age children were generally content, we observed that they were not fully engaged in the opportunities provided. Activities and resources for most of this age group were not always matched to their interests or developmental needs and there were some missed opportunities for extending what they were doing. We acknowledged how challenging it can be to meet the needs of such a wide age range. We made suggestions about involving them more directly in planning holiday activities, and assigning a specific member of staff to support them.

Parents told us how pleased they were with the progress their children were making and said, "[my child] has developed in confidence since starting and is learning so much through play, building lovely friendships, and becoming more independent each week. It's clear that it's a nurturing environment where [my child] is really valued and understood."

Individual learning stories effectively captured children's experiences and progress within the setting. Staff regularly recorded observations of children however, these tended to be descriptive rather than evaluative. As a result, opportunities to identify meaningful next steps and extend learning were sometimes missed. Big

books, including those in the baby room, told the story of children's experiences. However, we noted some duplication between books and digital records and asked the setting to streamline these systems so that they are easier to manage.

Most children had learning targets based on their interests and developmental stages. However, for younger children, we noted that targets were often too broad and long-term. We have asked the setting to review the appropriateness of these targets and consider breaking them down into smaller, achievable steps.

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.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, nurturing care from a kind and supportive staff team. Positive relationships were evident, with staff knowing children well and responding sensitively to their individual needs. This supported children to feel safe, secure, and confident in the setting. Attachments with key staff were developing well, and we observed examples of responsive and comforting care, such as during sleep routines.

Parents were welcomed into the setting and valued the strong relationships with staff. Communication at drop-off and collection times was effective, and staff were developing further opportunities for parental involvement, such as stay-and-play sessions. The setting may benefit from using the Me, My Family and My Childcare Setting guidance to reflect on how well current arrangements support family engagement.

Children were provided with healthy meals and snacks, and staff supported them with eating and encouraged independence. We discussed the provision of snacks and additional meals and were reassured that children were provided with enough to eat. However, we have advised that the nutritional experience should be reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet the latest Setting the Table nutritional guidance and supports children's needs across the day.

Staff were respectful during personal care routines, and sleep arrangements were well considered. However, we have suggested that monitoring guidance in the 2-3 room should be strengthened to ensure safe and visible supervision of sleeping children and include more detailed risk assessments for the use of monitors.

Medication was stored safely, but individual risk assessments for children requiring emergency medication could be improved. Staff supported older children to manage their own medication, promoting independence.

Most staff had completed child protection training and demonstrated an understanding of their responsibilities. However, some staff were not confident in identifying signs of concern or in knowing who the designated Child Protection Officer was. Management were taking steps to improve this through in-person training and regular discussion of case studies at team meetings.

All children had personal care plans which set out how the setting would meet the health, wellbeing and safety needs of children. Information was gathered from parents when they started and during ongoing "care and share" meetings. These meetings supported the sharing of information about children's health,

wellbeing, and learning needs. Parents were also involved in reviewing and planning for their child's learning, with learning folders being sent home and regular updates shared via an online app.

Parents confirmed that they felt fully involved in their child's care and told us "I feel that I've built up a great relationship with management and staff. My child has settled with ease. They are always willing to chat and are approachable and have supported us."

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

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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