

Childcare Connections – Gilmerton Playcare Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 November 2025

Service provided by:
Childcare Connections Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003002864

Service no:
CS2003040939

About the service

Childcare Connections - Gilmerton Playcare provides a daycare of children service, which is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children aged from primary school age to 14 years. The service is based within Gilmerton Primary School in the south of Edinburgh.

The service operates from the dining hall in an annex linked to the larger school building. Toilet and kitchen facilities are within easy reach of the dining hall. Children have access to a large playground, which includes a trim trail and wildlife garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 6 November 2025 between 14:40 and 17:45 and Friday 7 November 2025 between 12:25 and 17:40. 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:

- spoke with children using the service and two parents onsite
- spoke with staff and management
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- received five completed questionnaires from families and seven from staff
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents
- spoke with a representative of the school in which the service was based.

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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within the heading: 'Leadership'.

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 warmly welcomed into the service by friendly and approachable staff.
- Positive partnership working with parents ensured a collaborative approach to meeting children's needs and providing effective support.
- Children were able to make independent choices about how and where they played. This supported their needs and encouraged positive wellbeing.
- Children were well supported and included by staff who knew them well.
- Quality assurance approaches were beginning to impact positively on outcomes for children and should continue to be embedded.
- Experiences should be further reviewed and monitored to ensure they are consistently positive.
- The service should further develop the play spaces and resources to ensure they consistently meet the needs, interests and wishes of all children.

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 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

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 staff, management team and provider actively promoted the service's vision, values, and aims through their daily practice and experiences. They warmly welcomed children and families into the service, creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Staff encouraged children to talk about the service's values through interactions and activities. For example, children created a friendship wheel, which was displayed in the service. This activity helped them understand the values matter to them and their peers.

The service listened to and respected the views of children and families and acted on their feedback. Reviews of snacks and daily evaluations of the sessions gave children a voice. The management team and staff were finding ways to turn these views into meaningful changes. One child told us how staff had asked them about snack options and they felt the range of choices had improved. Although this work was still developing, it showed children that the club responded to their needs and wishes. Moving forward, the service should explore more ways for children to influence decisions, for example, children could be included in further developing the play space to match their interests, needs and wishes.

Quality assurance processes supported children's wellbeing. For example, a personal plans audit helped staff to keep information up to date. Daily environment checks helped to maintain a suitable and safe space for children. For example, staff were proactive and identified that some toilets needed cleaned prior to children using them. However, to ensure experiences were consistently positive a greater focus was need in relation to planning and evaluating the quality of the experiences. During the inspection, the fire pit activity was mostly safe. However, staff needed to take extra steps to further manage risks, such as monitoring children's positioning and clothing when engaging in the experience. The management team and staff were receptive to this feedback and took action. The provider agreed to review the use of the fire pit to ensure it was as safe as possible. Further quality assurance of children's experiences was needed to ensure they were consistently positive and safe (see area for improvement 1).

The service's improvement plan set out priorities to improve outcomes for children and families. For example, adding a breakfast club service was a priority. This had been planned in partnership with parents, with clear timeframes and actions to help the service achieve the improvement. However, some parts of the improvement plan were generic and did not clearly link actions to the service. Strong improvement planning should be specific and encourage leadership of improvement at all levels. Further developing the improvement plan to make it more specific to the service could further support a cycle of continuous improvement.

Recruitment practices supported children's wellbeing as they aligned with good practice. Procedures were robust and organised meaning important checks were carried out to ensure staff were suitable for the role. Staff inductions were well-organised and appropriately paced. This helped new staff to build their confidence and skills.

Training plans focused on key areas such as child protection and first aid, which enabled staff to safeguard children. Team meetings included reflective discussions, which helped staff to learn about good practice and develop their skills. For example, staff used Care Inspectorate practice notes on supervising children, helping them to ensure safety practices were followed in relation to supervising and supporting children. To continue to support the development of staff practice and enhance children's experiences, the provider should continue to offer meaningful and timely training aligned with current childcare practice. This is to ensure children and families continue to experience a consistently capable, confident workforce.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's experiences are consistently safe, engaging and positive, the provider should ensure the service has robust processes in place for planning, delivering and evaluating play activities and experiences.

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 experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Playing, learning and developing

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 were engaged and having fun as they took part in both independent and group play. They enjoyed activities such as role play, puzzles, games, arts, and outdoor play. These experiences helped them use their imagination, develop their skills and be active. One parent shared, "Our child is involved in arts and crafts, playing games and story time". While children were active and happy, the service should further enhance play opportunities to provide greater levels of depth and challenge. Adding materials such as open-ended resources, loose parts, and more sensory activities could further support children's creativity and spark curiosity through play.

The large outdoor playground supported children's physical development, with a focus on games and sports. Children were able to be active, develop their skills and work together through the range of activities available. Staff often joined in games such as basketball and dancing with children. This promoted positive wellbeing and created a sense of fun.

Planning for play was based on staff observations of play and children's interests. For example, construction activities were popular with a range of materials readily available. Seasonal events were incorporated into daily experiences to foster connections to community and wider culture. During the inspection, children used the fire pit and toasted marshmallows as part of Bonfire Night celebrations. This experience supported children to learn new skills and enjoy themselves. While most children were happy and engaged, some opportunities to extend interests were missed. For example, when a child was digging for bugs outdoors, there were no tools or staff interaction to build on this interest. To ensure experiences are individualised, varied and engaging for all children, the service should continue to develop planning approaches to ensure they are responsive and meaningful.

Staff were enthusiastic and showed children their play and ideas were valued. They responded quickly to requests, such as providing extra resources. Staff gave praise and celebrated children's achievements, including commenting on their skills while using the climbing bars or taking photos of artwork. This practice supported children to feel a sense of pride. During play interactions, some staff asked questions to help children develop skills and extend their interests. For example, some staff encouraged a risk benefit approach to play. To further improve play experiences, staff could strengthen their practice by developing their use of questions and conversations. For example, they could ask more open ended questions that could spark children's imaginations and creativity. This could offer greater challenge in children's play and learning experiences.

Children's wider interests were supported as the service enabled them to attend clubs and activities provided by the school. Staff managed transitions to and from clubs safely and chatted to children about their experiences. This recognition of individual interests and partnership working with the school enriched children's after-school experience.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this heading as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children experienced friendly and caring interactions with staff who knew them well. Staff helped children build friendships and join in with different play activities. This caring approach supported children's wellbeing.

Staff supported children's wellbeing by supervising play, while still enabling them to independently choose how to spend their time. Children were able to choose from a range of spaces and play options. At times, the play space was noisy, and children had fewer options to read, chat, or relax in a calm area away from the larger groups. To further enhance children's wellbeing, the service should create cosy and comfortable areas in the play space to give children better opportunities for relaxation.

Snacks were healthy and balanced. Staff had recently consulted with children about food preferences. This had given them more choice and involvement in planning the menus. Children could be independent as they served themselves and collected their own drinks. These routines helped develop independence and life skills. However, there were opportunities to further develop the snack routine. For example, children could be included in the preparation of snacks. This could further increase their involvement and skills.

Mealtimes were usually social as staff sat down together with children. However, there were some periods where staff did not always sit with them. This meant there were a few missed opportunities to build connections and promote the social experience. To make mealtimes as positive as possible, the service should continue as planned to improve snack experiences.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning approaches. Personal plans gathered important information, which helped staff to keep children safe, healthy and included. Staff worked closely with parents, the school and other partners to make sure children who needed additional support received consistent care. Personal plans recorded strategies for children with specific needs or preferences. Staff supported children well as they implemented the strategies based on the individual needs of children. This helped children feel included and supported. To further enhance personal planning approaches, the management team and staff could consider how to support all children's wellbeing or build on children's individual strengths using the range of information available. For example, developing ways to include how children's interests will be met through the use of personal planning approaches could be developed.

Parental connections were a positive aspect of the service, supporting children to experience nurturing care and support through effective partnership working. One parent said, "The staff always go above and beyond to meet my child's needs. They listen, communicate openly, and work with me to make sure my child feels safe, happy, and included."

Children's medical needs were managed effectively. Medication was stored in line with good practice guidance, ensuring it was secure but accessible. Reviews were completed regularly to keep records up to date. This meant staff had the information they needed to promote children's health and safety. There were a few issues identified in relation to quality assurance checks. For example, one medication was missing the prescription label. However, the management team understood the need to fix this and agreed to take action. Overall, the management of medication was organised and staff knowledge of children's medical needs supported their safety and wellbeing.

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 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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