

# Dalmally Primary Pre Five Unit Day Care of Children

Dalmally Primary School  
Glenview  
Dalmally  
PA33 1BE

Telephone: 01838 200 359

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
17 November 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Argyll and Bute Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003373

**Service no:**  
CS2003014637

## About the service

This service registered with the Care Inspectorate on 01 April 2011. The service provider is Argyll and Bute Council.

Dalmally Primary Pre Five Unit is a daycare of children service. The service operates from their own self contained designated area and enclosed outdoor space within the building and grounds of the primary school, in the village of Dalmally. The service operates during school term times.

1. To provide a care service to a maximum of 16 children aged 2 years to not yet an age to attend primary school at any one time. No more than 5 children are aged 2 to under 3 years old.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection, carried out by one early learning and childcare inspector, which took place on 12 November 2025. During the inspection two children were present aged 3-5 years. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the 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:

- Observed practice and daily life.
- Spoke with children using the service.
- Assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.
- Reviewed documents.
- Spoke with management and staff.
- Sent online questionnaires to parents/carers to gather their views and feedback.

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.

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
- 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 experiencing very warm, nurturing care and support.
- Staff knew children well and had developed trusted, respectful and loving relationships with them to nurture, support their wellbeing and help them feel valued, safe and secure.
- Children enjoyed a very positive, nurturing lunchtime experience.
- Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's individual needs and interests.
- The service had a dedicated staff team who communicated and deployed themselves well to support transitions, supervise play experiences, and respond to children's needs.
- The strong, respectful, and meaningful relationships with children and their families.
- The head teacher and staff were committed to maintaining a high standard of provision, with systematic procedures in place to evaluate all aspects of their service delivery.

## 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 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

### Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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 and families had been fully involved in the design and review of the service's vision, values and aims, which set out everyone's common goals and clear aspirations for the setting of 'Respect, Fun, Ambition, Healthy lifestyle and Fairness'. These values were informing staff practice and embedded in the everyday life of the setting through daily communication and conversations with parents, pictorial aids for the children and promoting the values through their play, learning and development. As a result, children's rights, interests, curiosities, needs and preferences were at the centre of any planned developments or improvements.

The head teacher and staff were committed to maintaining a high standard of provision for all. They had established well considered and purposeful processes for self-evaluation, to discuss and critically reflect on their work, through staff meetings, day to day discussions and gathering children's thoughts, views and ideas within floor books. This was supporting best outcomes for children and enabling staff to consider the child's voice through planning and the development of the service. To enhance this further, we suggested the service could develop a 'big book' that documented and reflected on the setting's journey of improvement, which could be shared with children and their families.

As a leader, the head teacher had embedded systematic procedures, that included well-timed monitoring and data gathering, to evaluate all aspects of their service delivery. For example, a yearly calendar that included staff meetings, policy and care plan reviews, along with regular audits carried out on children's personal plans and any documented work within floor books, and planning formats. This was supporting staff and the service to be child focused, deliver best outcomes and ensure that high quality learning through play was at the heart of their improvement planning. A questionnaire returned by a parent confirmed they were very happy with the service provided. 'Effective interactions' were an identified priority in their current improvement plan, with work already underway to review, reflect and implement the new shared framework, 'A quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors: early learning and childcare 2025', using the challenge questions linked to the 'Health and Social Care Standards' (HSCS), 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC) and 'Realising the Ambition'.

Staff were open, honest and engaged well in the inspection process, confidently demonstrating their knowledge, skills and expertise. They were working very well together as a team, communicating and deploying themselves effectively throughout the day. There was a good mix of skills and qualifications within the team. Along with the implementation of the 'National Induction Resource', the service supported staff to attend training in for example, quality conversations and book bug training. Staff told us this was supporting them in their practice further enhancing their knowledge, skills and confidence. Staff spoke very positively about their links with management and how they were supportive. All staff had been safely recruited and were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

**Children play and learn** **5 - Very Good****Quality Indicator: Play 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.

Children were observed using their imagination and creativity in spaces that encouraged discovery and supported learning through play. Play areas were thoughtfully arranged, with staff giving careful consideration to children's interests, to promote curiosity and independence and actively involve children in leading their own play, learning and development. As a result, children were happy, eager to play and having fun. They could free flow, and enjoyed self selecting and seeking out resources that captured their interest, imagination and natural curiosity, supporting choice and their independence. They engaged well with the rich and carefully considered play and learning opportunities on offer. A parent commented the most positive aspect of their child's experience was "learning through play, being creative and having fun". Through sensitive well judged interactions staff were skilfully supporting children to extend their thinking, problem solve and learn at their own pace, helping to widen their skills and develop their curiosity and creativity. For example, when children showed an interest in measuring rainfall, staff expanded the experience by introducing a variety of resources to experiment with and explore the different properties of water.

Outdoor play was encouraging children to explore, investigate and develop their friendships, as well as promote their health, wellbeing and sense of adventure. Areas were set up and designed to support group or individual play. There was a balance of adult directed and freely chosen activities inside and outside which were helping children to develop key skills in language, numeracy and literacy through story telling, imaginative play and using real life resources, for example in the mud kitchen.

Planning effectively captured children's voices and linked clearly to learning intentions and children's rights. A system was in place to track and show the breadth, depth and progression in children's learning. Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to their needs, capturing children's individual needs, interests and strands of learning, as well as supporting the opportunities required to meet their next steps. This was ensuring that children had valuable, enriching play and learning experiences that deepened and enhanced their learning and supported them to reach their full potential. Staff were developing play and learning through focused observations, making effective assessments, while developing provocations and reflecting on how they documented children's progress and achievements. To support the 'golden thread' of children's progress, play and learning even further, we suggested staff consider individual interest/floor books as a way to record and involve children in developing their skills, celebrating their progress, and identifying their next steps.

## Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

### Quality Indicator: 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 were experiencing very warm, nurturing care and support. Staff knew children well and had developed trusted, respectful and loving relationships with them to nurture, support their wellbeing and help them feel valued, safe and secure. Children were happy, active and confident about approaching staff for help. Staff engaged skilfully with them to reassure and support their play, encouraging them to make choices, share, follow their own interests and promote friendships. A parent commented on their child's behalf; "[Staff are] welcoming, approachable and caring".

Children enjoyed a very positive lunch time experience with a nutritious, home cooked meal that was nicely prepared and presented. Lunch time was an opportunity for children to develop self-help skills and independence. For example, the children were encouraged to self-serve, practising their fine motor skills with tongs and using cutlery, given choice where they would like to sit and followed a routine of washing their hands and clearing away their plates after use. Staff were supportive, attentive to their needs with support offered and given when initiated by the child. The environment was unhurried, relaxed and sociable. Everyone enjoyed sitting together having lunch, with staff encouraging friendly social interactions, developing conversations and supporting children well when they needed help. Snack choices included a carbohydrate option and an alternative was available if children did not eat what was on offer at lunch. Staff demonstrated a commitment to best practice and were reviewing the menu choices on offer to ensure they aligned with current dietary guidelines including 'Setting the table' and 'Food matters'.

Staff spoke confidently about children's individual, likes, dislikes, personalities and interests and how they were supporting individual needs. For example, providing resources to support children's interests or stage of development, along with carefully devised strategies to support their transitions. Children's personal plans contained relevant core information about children's individual needs and preferences. Staff were recording information to support children's health, welfare and safety needs, building a comprehensive record on how each child's needs will be met. We discussed how recording methods and formats could be further refined to streamline and strengthen next steps to clearer progression pathways.

Strong, respectful and meaningful relationships with families were a key strength of the service. They were communicating with parents through regular conversations and meetings with staff and were welcoming children and families into the setting to be part of the book bug sessions and stay and play days. This was supporting parents to be involved helping to enhance children's care, play, learning and development. The service welcomed parents into the nursery playroom at drop off and collection times. This was supporting transitions, developing strong connections with families and increasing their engagement with the service. Staff were taking full account of good practice guidance 'Me, my family and my childcare setting' and 'Connecting with your childcare setting - a guide for families' to achieve best outcomes.

Staff spoke knowledgeably about working collaboratively with professionals to support best outcomes for children. For example, the health visitor and speech and language therapist. They described how they would work proactively with children, families and other professionals to identify support needs, and have clear strategies in place to ensure children's wellbeing. The head teacher confirmed when a child requires

multi agency support, other professionals would contribute to ensure children are protected, get the required support and care placing children and families at the heart of any decision making.

## 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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	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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