

Carousel Nurseries (Dumbarton) Day Care of Children

Glenfield House
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Dumbarton
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Telephone: 01389 732 636

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 December 2025

Service provided by:
Carousel Nurseries Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003001161

Service no:
CS2003005600

About the service

Carousel Nurseries (Dumbarton) provides a daycare of children service, working in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council, to offer funded early learning and childcare provision for children aged 2-5 years.

The service is registered to provide children's daycare for a maximum of 21 children 6 weeks to under 2 years, 54 children 2 years to primary school age. Inclusive of the 54 children is a maximum of 3 children of primary school age.

The setting is located in Dumbarton, West Dunbartonshire and operates from the ground floor of a large detached Edwardian villa within its own grounds. Children have access to four playrooms and secure outdoor areas. The nursery benefits from good transport links and proximity to local shops and amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 and 12 December 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 a small number of children using the service
- Spoke with two family member of children using the service
- Spoke with staff and management present on the days we visited the service
- Gathered feedback from 12 staff members using a questionnaire
- Gathered feedback from 18 family members using a questionnaire
- Observed staff practice and children's experiences
- Assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.
- 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 deployments
- 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

- Management and staff demonstrated a capacity for change, as a team they were committed to the continued development of the service to improve outcomes for children.
- Parents' views were sought to help improve the service
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation systems were used to monitor key aspects of the service. Reflections on practice enabled staff to make positive changes within the service.
- Planning and 'being me' learning journals captured children's experiences. Further developing links between observations and next steps would support individual progress.
- Children were happy, settled and having fun, they experienced nurturing care from staff who knew them well.
- Regular opportunities for outdoor play supported children's health and wellbeing.
- Personal plans were in place for all children containing key information that supported their health, safety and wellbeing needs. The service have been considering ways to further develop these.
- Children enjoyed relaxed, unhurried, sociable snack and meal times.
- Opportunities for family engagement were encouraged, strengthening partnerships and supporting children's learning and wellbeing.

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

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

The leadership team had recently expanded. They spoke positively and confidently about their roles and shared a clear vision for the service, and plans to move it forward. Roles and responsibilities were allocated to reflect staff strengths, some staff were given opportunities to lead areas of practice, such as eco, transition, and forest school initiatives. This supported staff interests, encouraged professional growth, and contributed to positive experiences for children.

Management were visible and approachable within the setting, and had positive connections with children. They worked closely with staff, offering guidance, encouragement, and support. Staff told us they felt valued and well supported. As a result, a positive team ethos was established, which supported children's learning and wellbeing.

Children, families, and staff had previously contributed to shaping the setting's vision, values, and aims. Words used to describe their aspirations included cuddles, singing, love, support, and laughter. We observed these values embedded in daily practice, helping children feel safe and loved. Management shared plans to consult with new and existing families to ensure the vision continued to reflect what matters most to them.

Families received regular communication and opportunities to provide feedback through a range of methods, including social media, newsletters, Friday flyers, 'This Week at Nursery' sheets, and questionnaires. An open-door approach ensured families were welcomed in at drop-off and pick-up times. We observed positive, relaxed interactions between staff and parents. One parent told us, they appreciated the time taken for daily handovers. As a result, most families felt informed and involved in their child's experiences.

Regular audits were carried out across key areas, including planning, medication management, and accidents and incidents. Procedures had been reviewed to make them more robust, supporting the safe management of medication. A new format for accident recording had also been introduced in line with best practice. Staff spoke positively about the revised procedures and documents, noting that they were clearer and easier to use. As a result, these measures helped to maintain a safe environment for children.

Self-evaluation processes were in place, including a monitoring calendar, playroom observations, and an improvement plan, which were shared with staff to support reflective practice and understanding of improvement priorities. Regular team meetings provided further opportunities for more in-depth discussion. Staff spoke about being actively involved in self-evaluation, with comments such as, 'Staff are provided with questionnaires to help improve', 'I help identify strengths and areas for improvement', and 'Self-evaluation is a frequent fixture of monthly staff meetings, with all staff involved in our improvement plan'.

Staff spoke positively about some of the changes already made and the impact on children's experiences. For example, improvements to the 3-5 room layout incorporated literacy and numeracy across all areas, and the new lunch and snack room created a calmer mealtime environment, supporting children's learning and routines.

The leadership team demonstrated a capacity for change and a commitment to continuous improvement. The service should now continue working through priorities to sustain improvements as part of its ongoing self-evaluation journey.

Training plans were in place to support continuous professional development, including recent training in first aid, child protection, children's rights, and child development. Reflection opportunities allowed staff to consider their practice and explore ways to introduce new learning. Management should continue to work with individual staff to support their development, build confidence, and ensure practice meets the current and evolving needs of the service.

Staff were recruited safely, and induction processes were in place. Mentoring systems supported new staff to settle into their roles. We discussed with management how induction could be strengthened further by incorporating national guidance alongside the service's induction checklist. This would help ensure staff induction is ongoing and tailored to individual needs.

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 happy, settled and having fun. We saw older children leading their own play, choosing where they wanted to play and with who they wanted to play with. Resources were easily accessible, supporting independence and choice. Loose parts materials, such as tyres, wooden and metal items and wooden planks, encouraged curiosity, problem-solving and imaginative play. The service should continue to build on open-ended resources across all playrooms to further support children's creativity and exploration.

Literacy and numeracy was a focus within the 3-5 room and reflected in daily play and routines. Staff enhanced the environment by adding books across all areas and providing varied mark-making opportunities, including clipboards, paper, pens, pencils, paint and playdough stations. Environmental print, such as signs and children's writing, supported familiarity with letters. We saw children enjoy matching pegs to number cards and exploring number stones. Across the service, children were singing and participating in story time with staff, promoting language and early literacy. Staff should continue working with the early years teacher to embed literacy and numeracy further. Opportunities to extend these experiences for children under three were also discussed with management.

For younger babies, the playroom had recently moved location, creating a cosier space. One parent shared positive feedback, noting that the room was brighter and offered more opportunities for play. We saw children in the 0-3 rooms engaging in a range of play-based experiences, including active, sensory and malleable play, as well as crafts. Children enjoyed spending time together, taking part in experiences such as mark making with paintbrushes and water at the chalkboard, exploring water play, and joining in with songs and stories.

These experiences promoted sensory development, early communication, and physical skills. We discussed further staff training, including schematic play, Realising the Ambition and the use of documentation such as Growing My Potential, to support independent, interest-led play for under-threes.

Older children benefited from staff engaging at their level when invited or offering support when needed. Some staff were skilled at extending learning and thinking. Children explored a variety of resources, including remote-controls, playdough, sand, water, construction, arts and crafts, and mark-making. We observed children listening to and engaging with the Stick Man story. Children shared their enjoyment of using cushions to make dens, while another confidently explained the process of helping to make playdough. We also saw children filling and emptying containers with water and making "chocolate cakes" with sand. These experiences supported children's learning and development through play.

Children's 'Being Me' learning journals included photos, observations and some next steps, these were not always consistent or clearly linked to individual interests, making it more difficult to track progression. Families of children aged 3-5 also received regular updates through an online app, which parents said helped them feel informed of their child's learning. Management shared their plans to gradually introduce this system for younger children, which would ensure that progress is shared more regularly with families and further support learning at home.

Planning was in place across the nursery to support play and learning. Staff observed children's engagement in areas and used this to plan experiences, including group times for older children. Literacy and numeracy was a planning focus, and tracking systems helped monitor development. Planning approaches varied across playrooms. Management had already identified planning and journals as an area for development, we agreed that strengthening these processes will ensure planning is meaningful and responsive, while celebrating individual progress and achievements.

Due to ongoing refurbishment, some garden space was limited on the days of Inspection, however on day 2, we saw older children exploring outdoors in small groups, while others went on walking adventures. Younger children also enjoyed walks with staff. Outdoor play for older children included hula hoops, a mud kitchen, chalks, balls and tyres, supporting physical play and exploration. We saw staff kicking a ball to each other, and staff modelling how to use the hula hoop, providing encouragement and praise as children tried new skills. Parents commented positively, for example, 'My son is outdoors in all weathers (within reason) which I think is great and necessary'. We discussed the outdoor space layout with management, who have plans for further development.

Outdoor learning was enhanced through local walks, forest outings, and visits to parks, shops, and monthly care home visits. Management spoke about using the local school grounds, working in partnership with the local school to extend outdoor opportunities. Parents said their children enjoyed these experiences with one commenting, 'My child loves Forest School'. The Forest School champion shared the benefits of the programme, highlighting how it supported children's confidence and resilience. These opportunities promoted physical development, curiosity, and wellbeing, while fostering a strong connection to nature, the local community, and intergenerational relationships.

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's care and wellbeing needs were supported by staff who knew them as individuals. We observed warm, caring interactions between staff, children, and families, with children receiving cuddles, comfort, and reassurance. Positive friendships were evident, we observed a lovely moment when two children hugged, one said 'I love you, your my best friend'. These interactions created a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere throughout the service.

Settling-in visits were planned in partnership with parents and tailored to suit each child. One parent told us, staff were patient and supportive, ensuring their child started at a time that felt right for them. Transitions between playrooms were also well managed, and strong links with local schools supported smooth transitions that met the needs of children and families.

Personal plans were in place for all children, with staff working closely with families to share key information on likes, dislikes, routines, and health needs, ensuring consistency between home and nursery. Management shared their plans to review this paperwork, with ideas discussed on how to include clear strategies and next steps for learning and development. This will help ensure plans include to include clearer strategies and next steps for children's learning and development and accurately reflect how staff and parents are currently support individual needs, promoting consistent and well-informed care.

Mealtimes were calm, relaxed, and unhurried, with table settings creating a welcoming environment where children felt comfortable and valued. Older children used a designated lunch room that had been recently developed and had meaningful opportunities to serve themselves and clear their dishes, while younger children were encouraged to develop independence through self-feeding, with staff providing support and praise. Staff sat alongside children, engaging in conversations, ensuring safety, and attending to dietary needs and preferences. Menus had recently been reviewed, with nutritious meals and suitable alternatives provided, and children enjoyed these experiences, which supported their growing independence. We discussed simple enhancements to the after-lunch routine, such as adding a mirror and face cloths, to further promote self-care skills.

Children's individual sleep and rest needs were respected. Staff followed family wishes, including the use of comforters and soothers from home, and monitored children closely while sleeping to ensure safety.

Children were encouraged to brush their teeth as part of their daily routine. They visited the toothbrushing area in small groups, using a timer while a staff member sang 'This is the way we brush our teeth'. This activity supported children to develop healthy oral hygiene habits and build independence in caring for themselves.

Staff had completed child protection training and understood their responsibilities in keeping children safe. Policies and guidance supported practice, and medication procedures were in place with safe storage and accurate administration records. Staff were knowledgeable about children's health needs, which supported their overall safety and wellbeing.

Family engagement was actively encouraged. The service provided opportunities for families to get involved, such as stay-and-play sessions, Book bug activities, invitations to Forest School and eco committee meetings, as well as progress meetings and an open-door approach. These experiences helped families feel included, valued, and connected to their child's learning.

Parents shared positive feedback about the staff and the service. Comments included, 'staff are always approachable and reassuring, they have an amazing relationship with my child,' and 'staff are friendly, personable, professional, they are genuinely interested in my child's wellbeing and development'. Other parents said, 'I love the staff, they make my experience at nursery special,' and 'fantastic staff, well-planned activities, and absolutely brilliant facility'. This feedback reflects the positive relationships and connections within the nursery community.

Complaints

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

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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