

Little Staggies ELC Day Care of Children

10 Fodderty Way
Dingwall
IV15 9XB

Telephone: 01349 865 783

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 January 2026

Service provided by:
Little Staggies ELC Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2019013402

Service no:
CS2019377651

About the service

Little Staggies ELC is situated on the outskirts of the town of Dingwall, in the Ross-Shire area of the Highlands. It is provided from purpose built premises comprising of three playrooms, nappy changing and toilet facilities, office, staff room and kitchen. There is a large fully enclosed outdoor area accessible from each of the three playrooms. Staff also make use of the local area for walks and visits to places of interest.

The service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 20 December 2019. The service is managed and provided by a private provider and is in partnership with the Highland Council to deliver funded early learning and childcare. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 48 children at one time. Of those no more than nine are ages under two years, no more than 15 are aged two to under three years and no more than 24 are aged three to those not yet of an age to attend primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 12th January and Tuesday 13th January 2026, with feedback on Wednesday 14th January 2026. 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:

- observed practice and daily life
- spoke with the children using the service
- spoke with staff and the management team
- received and reviewed twenty five completed questionnaires, seventeen from family members and eight from staff
- reviewed documents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

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.

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 mostly happy, engaged and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing support.
- Further work was needed to ensure the setting and resources offered children high quality play, learning and development opportunities.
- Children enjoyed relaxed, unhurried, sociable snack and meal times.
- Management and staff were committed to the ongoing development of the service.
- Quality assurance processes should continue to be embedded to secure sustained improvements across the service.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

The management team engaged well in the inspection process. They demonstrated a good understanding of the service and were aware of where improvement was needed. They were receptive to feedback and committed to making improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children and their families.

The manager understood the importance of reviewing and updating the setting's vision, values and aims in collaboration with children, families and staff. We discussed with the management team that the current vision, values and aims would benefit from being reviewed to ensure that they reflected the aspirations of the service, children and families.

Management and staff were developing their confidence and skills in implementing self evaluation and quality assurance processes. Some regular self evaluation was taking place with all staff being actively encouraged to be involved in the process. Staff confirmed that regular team meetings offered them the opportunity to reflect on practice and to be proactive in introducing improvements. To support continuous improvement and help promote positive outcomes for children, approaches to self evaluation and quality assurance should become embedded in practice. This should include, but not limited to, monitoring and auditing of personal plans, the review of the environment and resources available to enhance and enrich children's playing, learning and development, and observations and monitoring of practice.

The manager and staff identified working in partnership and engagement with families as one of the areas they wished to improve. They recognised the importance of establishing strong partnerships with families and having opportunities for parents to visit the setting and share in their child's care and learning. Parents were welcome into the nursery at any time. There were regular parent meetings and the introduction of an online app also benefited parental engagement. The manager was proposing to introduce stay and play sessions in each of the playrooms. Parents commented that they were invited to offer their views and feedback and felt involved in a meaningful way to help development the service. The service should continue to develop partnership with parents in all aspects of nursery life.

Recruitment and induction followed clear, safe practices, in line with safer recruitment guidance. This helped to keep children safe. New staff benefitted from a structured induction and opportunities to shadow experienced colleagues. The service made use of the National Induction resource to support new staff.

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff were positive about the service and felt supported by the management team. Staff engaged with the inspection process, with most demonstrating a positive attitude towards change and improvement. They were responsive to suggestions made during the inspection to continue to improve outcomes for children and families. Overall, staff were warm, supportive, and committed to meeting children's care needs. Parents were all complimentary about how friendly, approachable and caring the staff were.

Staff had completed core professional training including first aid, food safety, health and safety and infection prevention and control training. This training helped to support children's wellbeing and enhance staff knowledge. Staff had completed child protection awareness training and ensured that they attended refresher training on a regular basis. Staff commented positively about the child protection training and how it made them more confident in understanding how to keep children safe.

Team meetings and one to one supervision meetings were also opportunities for reflection, professional dialogue and support staff development. The local authority had also provided training to support staff to have the knowledge and skills required to meet children's needs. This included training in relation to planning for children's learning and tracking and monitoring their progress. Unfortunately, due the turnover of staff, a number of the staff who had attended the training no longer worked in the nursery. We discussed with the management team the option of more experienced staff modelling skilled interactions and good practice to support less confident staff to develop the appropriate skills and knowledge which would promote positive outcomes for children.

Although the minimum adult to child ratio was met, the deployment and level of staffing was not always sufficient to meet the needs of the children. The approach to staffing was not always outcome focussed and did not take into account the complexity of individual children's needs. At different times of the day, staff in the 2 - 3 year olds room and the preschool room were stretched especially if some of the children were outside. We identified missed opportunities when skilled interactions and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills, and promote development of imagination. Staff were not engaging with the children in a meaningful way as they were occupied with routine tasks.

Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Playing, learning and developing

Children were generally supported to learn and develop through play, with both planned and spontaneous opportunities. They were encouraged to take an active role in leading their play and learning. Some experiences offered were stimulating and engaging and promoted children's curiosity and imagination. There were some opportunities for children to enhance their skills in literacy, language and numeracy. These included access to books and other printed materials in various areas, mark making, sorting and counting activities. However the range of resources were limited. For example, in the 2 - 3 year olds room, water, sand, painting and other messy play activities were only available for part of the day. Following previous inspections, an area for improvement was made in relation to the range of resources readily available to the children, both indoors and outdoors. Work was still needed to further develop the indoor and outdoor setting to ensure children are appropriately challenged and consistently experience high quality play and learning opportunities. (see area for improvement 2 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

Some staff confidently used a range of effective language strategies for example, open-ended questions, wonder questions and conversations that encouraged children to think, predict and explore possibilities. They naturally got down to the children's level, showed interest and enthusiasm with what the children were doing and saying. For example, we saw staff in the baby room actively reading a book to a baby in an engaging manner which made the child giggle, while in the toddler room we observed staff supporting a messy play activity. This encouraged and extended imaginative play, creativity and emerging communication

skills.

We identified missed opportunities when skilled interactions and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills and promote development of imagination. This was particularly evident during busier times of the day when staff were more focussed on completing routine tasks. As a result children did not experience consistently rich and meaningful learning opportunities across the day.

The three playrooms all opened directly onto the outdoor play area. However, we only observed the children from the preschool room having access outdoors. We discussed with the manager the benefits to children's wellbeing, development and learning from having regular access to outdoor physical activities and fresh air.

Current planning approaches did not consistently support individual learning and progress. Staff used an online app to record observations and to share these with families. Overall, the quality of observations and assessments of children's learning and development were inconsistent and infrequent. Some observations did reflect children's learning and development however others were more descriptive and did not identify next steps to children's learning. The management explained work was ongoing to improve how they monitor and track children's learning and progression which in turn would improve planning. To facilitate learning and progression for all children, the manager should continue to support the staff team to develop their understanding and skills in relation to assessing, planning for and monitoring children's learning and development.

The service was not currently using floorbooks or individual learning journey folders to record children's learning. We discussed the benefits of using them to support responsive planning based on children's inputs, interests and ideas and deepen children's learning. The reintroduction of floorbooks would ensure that experiences were planned and evaluated collaboratively. It would also help to strengthen the child's voice, promote engagement, and lead to richer, more meaningful play experiences.

Children are supported to achieve

3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Nurturing care and support

Overall, children benefitted from a warm and welcoming environment where staff interactions were caring and responsive. Staff were kind, helping children to feel safe and settled. Appropriate comfort and reassurance was offered, supporting wellbeing, for example during sleep routines. However, there were some occasions where staff did not consistently respond to children's cues or attempts to initiate interaction. This resulted in missed opportunities for engagement and limited children's ability to feel fully supported. Parents were positive in their comments about staff. Staff were described as being friendly, welcoming, caring and professional.

Since the last inspection, the service had reviewed and updated their policy and procedures in relation to transitions and settling in to ensure that they supported children appropriately. Staff understood the need to support transitions, whether starting nursery, moving between rooms, moving to school or during daily routines. This helped children feel safe, secure and confident during any changes.

The management and staff recognised the importance of establishing good working relationships with

parents and the positive impact this had on outcomes for children. Positive working relationships with parents promoted and supported good communication and informing sharing which in turn supported consistency and continuity of care for children. We observed parents being welcomed into the playrooms during drop off and pick ups and being provided with good levels of feedback about their child's day. The parents appreciated being able to go into their child's playroom and being able to see the range of activities their child could take part in. The manager explained that they were continuing to extend the opportunities for parental engagement. For example, they were proposing to introduce stay and play sessions for parents across each of the three playrooms.

Personal planning was not yet consistently effective in recording strategies to ensure children's health and wellbeing needs were being met. For example, there were no clearly recorded strategies of support for some children. Where strategies had been identified these were not always being followed by all staff, leading to inconsistency in the support children received. The management team highlighted that a number of changes in staffing had impacted on making progress in this area. They were at the early stages of further developing personal plans, having chronologies in place and clearly identifying support strategies for individual children. As a result, not all children were being effectively supported to reach their full potential, therefore an area for improvement in relation to personal planning remains in place. (See area for improvement 1 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

Children were provided with home cooked lunches and snacks. There was a very varied menu which was shared with families. Children were provided with meals which met their specific allergies, preferences and dietary needs. Lunchtimes were used to promote independence, learning and enhance children's experiences. We observed relaxed, calm and sociable lunchtimes with the children and staff sitting together. This supported supervision, social skills and language development. We discussed with the management how the children would also benefit from being involved in snack preparation to further build their independence. Staff ensured children stayed hydrated by providing drinks throughout the session.

Sleep routines were responsive to children's individual needs. Since the previous inspection, work had been completed to develop the playrooms, including the cosy areas. These areas provided children with a safe and calm spaces where they could safely rest or sleep. Further work was still needed in the toddler room to make the space more homely, cosier, and comfortable for any children who required a nap or even just some quiet time away from the busier spaces to regulate their emotions.

Medication was stored safely and was easy for staff to access. However, not all paperwork relating to the administration of medication was fully completed with parents. The system to audit medication held within the nursery was also not sufficiently detailed. As a result there was no clear record of the amount of medication being stored. This was not in line best practice guidance. (See requirement 1)

Requirements

1. By 31 March 2026, to ensure children's medication needs are met and children are safe, the provider must ensure that medication is safely managed and is in line with best practice guidance.

In order to comply the provider must, at a minimum ensure:

- a) Accurate and up to date records are maintained of all medications on the premises for the children's use including details of when medications are returned to parents/carers.
- b) For all children requiring medications, all necessary information is recorded and is available to staff upon

the child's admission to the service or when the condition first becomes known.

- c) Staff must have a demonstrable understanding of the appropriate procedures to follow to ensure the safe administration of medication including the need for accurate, legible record keeping.
- d) There is a robust auditing system of all medication held.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1)(a) - requirement to make proper provision for the health and welfare of service users - of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (4.27).

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that: 'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective' (HSCS 1.24).

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 30 June 2025, children must experience high quality care and support based on individual needs, legislation, guidance and best practice and be accepted and valued.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) ensure all staff have the ability to provide developmentally appropriate, balanced and wide ranging support for individual children.
- b) ensure all staff can demonstrate age and stage appropriate knowledge and understanding of supporting children.
- c) use and explore further all pre-registration information to make informed decisions about a child's care and support, and plan a meaningful transition based on the child's individual needs.
- d) review policy and procedure for inclusion, transition and admissions, these must be underpinned by legislation, national standard and best practice.

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 is in order to comply with: Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland(Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011 / 210)

This requirement was made on 14 May 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

The manager and staff had made some progress towards meeting this requirement. They had reviewed and updated their policies and procedures in relation to inclusion, transitions and admissions to ensure that they took account of and reflected current legislation, Health and Social Care Standards and best practice. These had been shared with all staff.

The manager confirmed that greater use was now being made of pre-registration information to plan for settling in visits. There was a clear process in place to record how settling in visits and transitions had progressed and how the service would meet the individual needs of the child should the placement proceed.

As stated in previous sections of this report, the service had experienced several changes within the staff team. As a consequence there were a number of staff who were yet to develop the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to ensure high quality experiences and outcomes for all children.

The management acknowledged the impact the changes to the staff team had made and were looking to providing more training opportunities to improve practice. We discussed with the management team the option of more experienced staff modelling skilled interactions and good practice to support less confident staff to develop the appropriate skills and knowledge which would promote positive outcomes for children.

This requirement has not been fully met therefore it will be continued with a new timescale of 1 May 2026.

Not met

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

To meet children's health, welfare and safety needs, the manager should continue to review and develop children's personal plans and identify appropriate strategies to meet children's needs, support progress and help children to achieve their full potential. These plans should be reviewed at least every six months.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.1)

This area for improvement was made on 30 January 2024.

Action taken since then

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a sample of children's personal plans. Although there had been some improvements, many still needed to be fully completed with appropriate information clearly recorded. For some children with additional support needs, there were no identified support plan or strategies to meet their individual needs. Personal plans were also not being routinely reviewed with parents at a minimum of every six months, particularly if there had been significant changes.

The management team routinely audited personal plans and other written records. They recognised that further work was still needed and would continue to support staff.

This area for improvement has not been met and will be continued.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote their individual learning and development, the manager and staff should provide children with a choice from a rich variety of experiences. They should create an environment which inspires children's imagination and provides children with more challenging opportunities to discover, explore, experiment and problem solve.

Consideration should be given to:

- Supporting children to lead their own learning by ensuring they have the resources to do this
- Developing opportunities which stimulate creativity and curiosity in the play environment
- Re-establish effective planning cycles to ensure all children are receiving a wide range of play and learning experiences.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 30 January 2024.

Action taken since then

Since the last inspection, there had been some improvements to the outdoor space. New resources had been sourced and there were plans to further improve the outdoor play area to ensure that all children had access to inspiring outdoor spaces. Some parents commented positively in relation to the improvements to the garden area. However, others were of the opinion that the outdoor space was in need of development to offer the children fun, stimulating and engaging spaces to extend children's curiosity, imagination, play and learning.

Only limited work had been completed to improve the playrooms. There were only limited resources available throughout the day, especially in the two - three year olds room. There should be a review of the indoor play spaces and the resources and experiences available to the children.

This area for improvement has not been met and will be continued.

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Playing, learning and developing	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Nurturing care and support	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.