

MACS Carolside Day Care of Children

Carolside Primary School
Ashfield Road
Clarkston
Glasgow
G76 7TX

Telephone: 07725249465

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 January 2026

Service provided by:
Mearns After School Care Service
Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003000772

Service no:
CS2003003963

About the service

MACS Carolside is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 80 children aged under 13 years who attend primary school. Children will be accommodated within Carolside Primary School. The service may be delivered through breakfast club from 07:45-09:00 and afterschool care from 15:00 - 18:00. 143 children were registered with the service during our inspection.

The service is located in Carolside Primary school in the residential area of Clarkston, East Renfrewshire. The service is close to local shops, parks and other amenities. Children are accommodated in a large gym hall, two classrooms and an enclosed outdoor playground.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 and 27 January 2026. The inspection was carried out by three 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
- Gathered feedback from sixteen families through online questionnaires
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice and daily life
- Reviewed documents
- Spoke with the area manager

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 the 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

- The service demonstrated exceptional capacity for change through a measured and planned approach informed by best practice guidance.
- The manager encouraged a highly reflective, collaborative culture that supported robust self-evaluation and quality assurance systems.
- The manager was deeply committed to providing the highest standards for children, families, staff, and demonstrated inspirational leadership.
- Children were having fun with their friends and staff at the service.
- Children had the freedom and autonomy to lead their play and development in the service.
- Staff were warm, kind and caring to all children in their care.
- Staff promoted a culture that upheld the Playwork Principles and children's Right To Play.
- Children's personal plans and care routines were individualised with clear plans and strategies recorded for those with additional supports needs.

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	6 - Excellent
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 6 - Excellent

Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this key question as excellent where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for children.

The service's vision, values, and aims were clearly visible and actively shared by the team, the children, and families. We found that the service's aspirational vision, values and aims were embedded and informed daily practice, aligning strongly with children's rights and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. Children had meaningfully been included in the design of the services Vision, Values and Aims. Children confidently articulated what mattered to them and demonstrated a strong sense of belonging and ownership at the service.

A well-considered improvement plan with relevant priorities and clear targets had been developed, supported by reflective questions that demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement, underpinned by a quality improvement framework for school aged childcare. Improvement planning and self-evaluation approaches were impressive, using clear, rigorous, evidence based processes to identify strengths, address areas for development, and promote excellence across the setting. The service demonstrated exceptional capacity for change through a measured and planned approach informed by best practice guidance and research, with progress continually evaluated to ensure sustained impact.

The manager encouraged a highly reflective, collaborative culture that supported robust self-evaluation and quality assurance systems. The manager could evidence where children, families and staff views had informed change and improvements and the impact this had on outcomes for children by following Gibbs reflection model. This strong commitment to ongoing improvements delivered outstanding outcomes for children. evaluation and quality assurance systems.

There was a strong culture of shared responsibility and accountability within the service, supported by an exceptionally effective and approachable manager whose leadership was grounded in reflective practice and continuous development to ensure high quality play, care, and learning. The manager was deeply committed to providing the highest standards for children, families, and staff, and demonstrated inspirational leadership through effective communication, emotional intelligence, and a dedication to developing the potential of others. This supportive approach motivated staff, aligned team values, and created a positive, high performing culture where morale was consistently high, leading to high quality experiences for children, who benefitted from a team continually striving for excellence.

Children and their families were central to the quality assurance cycle, with families offered varied opportunities to influence the service and outcomes for their children. The whole staff team was committed to meaningful partnership and collaboration, and had established an empowering, rights-based ethos that was well understood and embraced by everyone, including the children, whose voices were consistently heard and acted upon. based ethos that was well understood and embraced by everyone, including the children, whose voices were consistently heard and acted upon.

Staff had been recruited following national safer recruitment guidance and with input from children through a selection of questions to be asked at interviews.

All staff were appropriately registered with the regulatory body the Scottish Social Service Council and being supported to achieve training and qualifications relevant to their registration. The manager had established a robust induction programme for new staff that was personalised to their individual needs and preferences within their new roles. The manager supported staff to develop their knowledge and skills to ensure a high standard of care for children and their families.

Mentoring was highly effective in the service as the manager was committed to giving staff time, support and guidance to help them reach their full potential. Many staff we spoke to told us how integral the manager was to their growth, development, and confidence in their roles. The Health and Social Care Standards underpinned supervisions and appraisals. With staff permission, the manager also engaged children in the appraisal process, further strengthening their role in shaping the service delivery.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Playing, 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 having fun and engaged in a variety of play and leisure experiences on the days of inspection. Children enjoyed spending time with their peers and staff, fully engaged in activities for long periods of time. We heard and observed lots of laughter and chatting across the day when children engaged in their own imaginative version of the traitors. This approach supported children to develop their confidence, communication and problem-solving skills in a fun, joyful environment. Children told us they enjoyed "nature club" "Lego" "homework club" and "playing with friends" at MACS Carolside.

Children had ownership of their play and were empowered to be independent and lead their play experiences at the service. Staff promoted a culture that upheld the Playwork Principles and children's Right To Play. Children were at the centre of planning in the out of school care, their ideas, goals and wishes shaped the variety of activities planned and clubs on offer. Dance, homework and nature clubs were all created and led by children, with staff providing support, and supervision when required. Children had previously created, written, directed, and acted in their own version of a Christmas nativity which was then performed in front of families. We found experiences and opportunities were flexible, responsive, and based on children's current interests and needs. This approach supported children to flourish and develop at the out of school care.

Floorbooks sampled clearly demonstrated children were active leaders in shaping their own play and learning opportunities. Children's voices and ideas were captured through mind maps, discussions with staff and monthly "you said, we did" information. Children told us, "We get to make decisions" and "I am a Mini Mac, I can choose what I want to learn." Children were confident and articulated how their views were heard and acted upon by staff. One staff member told us "The children's voice is so important. We can't be child led without that being at the centre." This showed us children could make informed decisions about their play as their voices and choices were valued and respected.

The environment offered diverse spaces that sparked children's interests and supported social interaction. Whether in small group play, or solitary activities, the spaces enabled children to make choices to suit their preferences. Children designed the layout of the space, resources, and activities they would like available each day through discussions with staff and a visual floor plan they could change.

In response to older children's requests and feedback a chill-out room was made available when they wished time away from the busy spaces. This meant the space was adaptable and flexible to suit the needs of children attending each day. One child told us, "We have loads of toys, there's a cupboard with lots of toys and a tent to snuggle up in."

Children benefited from fun, responsive, and respectful care from staff. Staff were attuned to children's verbal and non-verbal communication and provided appropriate support to enable children to manage their emotions and self-regulate. Staff were careful when engaging with children to ensure they facilitated but did not interfere or interrupt play. We observed staff interpret children's interests, interactions and then extend their thinking without directing their play. Staff worked with children, families, and school staff to celebrate children's achievements both in the setting and at home through MACS Merits. We observed children and their families share successes at clubs, out with the out of school care, which mattered to children. This was then shared on the company's page and newsletters.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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 experience compassionate and nurturing care from staff which made them feel welcome, safe, and fostered their wellbeing. Staff were patient and kind, taking time to listen and respond to children's ideas, suggestions, or request for help. This rights respecting approach ensured children felt valued and secure in the service. One child told us, "We are really listened to, the staff makes sure that kids at MACS are having fun and enjoying doing the games." Another child told us, "Leaders are all kind."

Children were encouraged to model the rights respecting approach through MACs mini helper roles. We found older children took pride in helping younger children during snack time and activities. This positively impacted on the ethos of the service, as well as allowed children to continue to develop social, communication and life skills. One child told us "Mini helpers help with different things such as crafts. We need to try and look after the kids, if they are not doing something safe, we will tell them."

Children's personal plans and care routines were individualised with clear plans and strategies recorded for those with additional supports needs. Personal plans were linked to the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework, with children setting their own individual goals they wanted to achieve. This process supported children's rights and empowered children to be meaningful contributors to their plans. Personal plans effectively supported children's wellbeing and development. Medication and health needs were managed safely and effectively. The process for the storage, administration and recording of medication was well established in the service.

Children's changing and evolving needs were well considered by the team and manager, with a focus on a child-centred approach to transitions. Adaptions were made to the routines of the day to enable some children to settle into the play spaces before all children arrived. A nurture room was available for children should they need a quieter space to manage their emotions and relax if required. The team had good working relationships with school staff to share key information and ensure consistency and continuity of care for children.

Children experienced mealtimes that were sociable, relaxed, and unhurried. A thoughtfully set out snack area, with table clothes, plants, plates and cutlery, was homely and inviting to children. Children were able to self select and serve from a range of healthy snack options that were aligned with current dietary guidance. This promoted children's involvement, independence, and development of life skills. Children and staff sat together at the snack area and used the time to connect and chat. Fresh water was available to children to ensure they remained hydrated.

The team strived to create a warm and welcoming environment for children and their families. We observed drop off and collection times to be relaxed and unhurried. Parents and carers could collect their children from the play spaces which enabled them to see what their children were playing with and have open discussions with staff about their day. Families had regular opportunities to discuss their child, both informally and formally. Parents were invited to events such as MACS Got Talent, and the children's nativity. This supported a friendly, inclusive, and accessible space for all.

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	6 - Excellent
Leadership and management of staff and resources	6 - Excellent
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

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 iarrrtas.

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.