

Woodlands Primary School Early Years Class Day Care of Children

Woodlands Avenue
Irvine
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 February 2026

Service provided by:
North Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003327

Service no:
CS2003044481

About the service

Woodlands Primary School Early Years Class provides a daycare of children's service to a maximum of 50 children aged 3 years to those not yet at primary school.

The service is provided by North Ayrshire Council and is located in a residential area within the town of Irvine. It is close to local amenities, including shops and bus routes.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 11 February 2026 between 10:00 and 17:15 and Thursday 12 February between 09:15 and 17:45. Feedback was given to the service on Friday 13 February 2026. 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received 17 completed Microsoft Forms questionnaires
- spoke with staff and the senior leadership team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

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.

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.

Key messages

- Leadership promoted a positive culture of reflection and improvement, with staff feeling supported to develop their practice.
- Continued focus on strengthening consistency across the team could ensure high-quality practice was sustained and further enhanced.
- Children benefited from well-designed, engaging spaces that promoted independence, curiosity, and rich play opportunities.
- Ongoing refinement of planning and responsiveness to children's interests could further deepen learning experiences and extend children's engagement.
- Children experienced warm, supportive relationships that helped them feel safe, valued, and confident.
- Continued development of nurturing approaches and responsive interactions could strengthen the consistency of care across the setting.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very 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.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

Leaders demonstrated a strong commitment to a clear, shared vision that reflected high aspirations for children and families. The setting's vision, values and aims had recently been reviewed as part of a whole school approach. Leaders recognised the importance of involving staff, children and families and ensured their views contributed meaningfully to ongoing developments. Parents commented on how they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service, including the "Great communication" and "Parents are invited to events happening in the nursery." As a result, children and families benefited from a collaborative, inclusive environment where their views meaningfully shaped ongoing improvement.

Leadership practice was positive and purposeful. Leaders created conditions where staff felt confident to engage in well informed change and take shared responsibility for improvement. While this approach was effective, further development across the wider team was needed to ensure greater consistency in practice.

Values of the setting were beginning to be reflected more consistently. This was evident in the positive and stimulating environment, in the happy and settled children, and in warm, responsive relationships that nurtured curiosity and creativity. As a result, a culture of high quality care, learning and continuous improvement was emerging across the setting.

Priorities for improvement were realistic and already contributing to enhanced experiences and outcomes for children. Key actions included strengthened planning and tracking systems, clearer universal and targeted approaches to meeting individual needs, and a strong focus on nurturing, positive relationships. Although these processes were appropriate and well documented, they were not yet fully embedded across the day or at all staff levels. Continued, systematic evaluation may be essential to secure sustained and meaningful improvement.

A quality assurance calendar had recently been introduced to support ongoing development. Planned monitoring, focused data gathering and regular audits, including reviews of the environment, medication procedures and accident and incident processes, were increasingly understood by staff and helped identify strengths and areas for development. As these systems embed further, they could support increased consistency, clearer shared expectations and improved standards across the setting.

Increasing opportunities for staff to engage in peer monitoring could further strengthen the sharing of effective practice, build confidence and skills, and support greater consistency across the team.

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff felt well supported by the leadership team, and regular 'time to talk' discussions and staff meetings provided meaningful opportunities for professional learning and reflection. This encouraged staff to think more deeply about their practice and make positive changes. These developments included improvements in staff deployment, which contributed to confident and effective working across the day, supporting children's experiences and helping ensure their needs were met. Staff also reflected on recent adaptations to the environment and the positive impact these had on children's engagement in play.

Leaders recognised and valued staff strengths and had introduced distributed leadership roles to empower the team. Staff had taken on responsibilities such as environment and outdoor champion roles, which supported their involvement in leading improvement and contributed to a shared sense of ownership.

Staff skills, knowledge and values were developing well. They were increasingly confident in contributing to change and engaging with improvement processes. As these approaches continue to embed, they may support more consistent, high quality practice across the day.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 5 - Very Good

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 high quality spaces

Children were supported to make choices about how they spent their time and to follow their own ideas and interests during play. Carefully selected and well-positioned resources, including thoughtful provocations and invitations, encouraged independence and enabled children to access materials freely. As a result, the wide range of resources offered rich, multisensory experiences that promoted creativity, problem-solving, resilience, and wellbeing. Children were observed making purposeful decisions and engaging in experiences that reflected their individual interests, developmental stages, and emerging curiosities.

The physical environment, indoors and outdoors, was welcoming, well maintained, and thoughtfully organised. It gave a strong message that children were valued and that their play and learning were a priority. One parent said, "Woodlands outside play area is fantastic and my child thrives in the outdoors." Another commented, "My child likes the different areas of play in the setting." As a result, the quality of the environment had a positive impact on children's play, wellbeing, and overall experiences.

Staff had created an engaging and motivating environment that was intentionally resourced to reflect children's emerging interests. Their considered design of learning spaces ensured these remained dynamic and responsive, offering opportunities for exploration, creativity, and appropriate challenge. As a result, children moved confidently between areas, and for many, this supported sustained and meaningful engagement in their play.

High-quality resources and displays positively represented children, their families, and their local community. Children's and parents' voices were actively encouraged and included. This inclusive approach helped children to feel recognised, respected, and celebrated, supporting their sense of identity and belonging.

Children were encouraged to make decisions and act independently within safe and well-considered boundaries. This supported them to take increasing responsibility during routines, such as snack and outdoor experiences, and helped develop confidence, self-direction, and ownership of their learning.

Robust systems were in place to maintain children's safety and security indoors, outdoors, and in the wider community. Staff were knowledgeable about risk-assessment processes, remained vigilant, and responded promptly and confidently to potential hazards. This enabled children to safely enjoy a wide range of play experiences.

The physical environment provided a secure and respectful setting that upheld children's rights and reflected the service's aims and values. Efficient and well-managed record-keeping systems were embedded across the setting, with electronic information stored securely in line with data-protection requirements.

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.

Playing, learning and developing

Staff were consistently at children's level and available to support play. Children's smiles and laughter demonstrated that they were happy, settled and confident. Staff could continue to build on their approaches to gathering children's interests more responsively, helping to sustain engagement for longer periods and further enrich learning experiences.

Early literacy and numeracy were supported naturally throughout the day. Through the use of open-ended questions, staff encouraged children's thinking. We observed staff and children sharing stories, children becoming familiar with numbers during play and having fun mark making. These interactions supported emerging skills in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

Staff met regularly and used observations, professional discussions and information from parents to plan for children's learning. This helped staff to provide experiences suited to children's developmental stages. Staff had also reviewed their planning approaches and identified specific improvements to strengthen learning experiences. As a result, children benefited from a balance of responsive and planned experiences.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of when children required support and when it was appropriate to step back, allowing learning to unfold naturally. As a result, children experienced interactions that were generally responsive and well judged, helping them to develop confidence and independence in their play.

Children's learning was recorded and shared through personalised online learning journals, which involved families and celebrated children's achievements. This new approach provided a meaningful way to capture children's progress and highlight their developing skills. Parents commented positively on the range of opportunities and enjoyable experiences offered to support their child's individual needs, noting activities such as "outdoor play, den building, bike riding" and "helping with snack." As a result, children's learning experiences were supported through stronger family involvement and clearer recognition of their individual progress.

Leaders were aware of the differing skill levels within the team and were actively monitoring practice and providing targeted support. Over time, this may contribute to a more consistent approach to high quality observations that could further support children's learning and progression.

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.

Nurturing care and support

Children experienced responsive care that supported their wellbeing. They were safe, healthy, and encouraged to express their needs, which helped them build the trusting relationships important for their growth and development. Overall, respectful relationships were observed, helping many children feel valued and secure. Parents commented on positive aspects of the service, including "the friendly, caring, warm atmosphere within the nursery" and "the family-friendly, relaxed environment." This contributed to a caring environment where children's rights were upheld and their wellbeing was prioritised.

Personal care routines were carried out sensitively and respectfully, maintaining children's privacy and offering reassurance. Routines such as mealtimes and group times were generally calm and predictable, reinforcing children's sense of security and helping them develop relationships at their own pace.

Transitions were managed sensitively and thoughtfully. Staff planned these on an individual basis to meet the specific needs of each child and family. Staff spoke positively about the processes in place to build trusting relationships, which helped to support continuity and consistency of care.

Mealtimes followed Setting the Table nutritional guidance, with fresh water readily available. Lunchtime routines were well organised and promoted children's independence, healthy choices, and social development. Children's dietary requirements and cultural preferences were appropriately considered and respected, helping them feel included and cared for.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Plans provided a clear and holistic overview of each child, reflecting their strengths, interests, and any support required. Plans were child-centred and co-created with families and, where appropriate, external agencies. Parents told us their views were actively sought, and they felt meaningfully involved in shaping their child's plan. This contributed to children's needs being identified and responded to in a timely and appropriate way.

The service promoted positive family relationships through handovers, family events, and newsletters. Opportunities such as the Peep Learning Together Programme and stay-and-play sessions supported staff to build on family strengths, promote healthy lifestyles, and contribute to children's developing social skills and confidence.

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 ensure that all children receive nurturing care and support that is right for them and meets their needs, the provider and leadership team should review systems in place to support children's health and wellbeing. This should include but is not limited to, accessible plans for all children attending. Plans reflect children's current needs and set out how these needs should be met, and staff are skilled in implementing the strategies in practice.

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 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 31 October 2024.

Action taken since then

The provider and leadership team had strengthened systems to support children's health and wellbeing. All children had accessible, up-to-date personal plans that clearly outlined their needs and how these would be met. Staff understood these plans well and implemented agreed strategies, which overall supported nurturing experiences for children.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children's individual health and wellbeing needs are met, the provider and leadership team should ensure that medication procedures align with best practice guidance. This should include but is not limited to, ensuring all medication is stored safely and accessible but out of reach of children. Medication paperwork reflects guidance and is reviewed every three months.

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 based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 31 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Medication procedures now follow best practice, with safe storage and documentation reviewed every three months. Staff should continue to ensure that paperwork reflects administration guidelines and matches prescription labels. Daily medication should be signed in and out with parents, emergency medication

should have a risk assessment, and medication no longer required should be signed out. These actions would ensure procedures are followed consistently to support children's health and wellbeing.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children in reaching their full potential, the provider and leadership team should enable staff to build on their awareness of child development to ensure children are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes. This should include but is not limited to, continuous learning and development on quality observations, assessing progress, including families as partners, and using this knowledge to inform their planning, which will further enhance this area.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

This area for improvement was made on 31 October 2024.

Action taken since then

The provider and leadership team had strengthened support for staff to deepen their understanding of child development. Staff engaged in continuous learning focused on high-quality observations, assessing children's progress, involving families as partners, and using this knowledge to inform planning. As a result, children experienced well-informed, responsive support that helped them achieve the best possible outcomes.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To ensure children consistently receive high-quality play and learning experiences that supports their curiosity and critical thinking, the provider and leadership team should improve the quantity and quality of play materials and resources available to children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state 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 31 October 2024.

Action taken since then

The provider and leadership team had enhanced the quantity and quality of play materials and resources available to children. These improvements had contributed to good-quality play and learning experiences that promoted children's curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. As a result, children benefited from a richer, more engaging environment that supported their learning and development very well.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

To support continuous service improvement, the provider and leadership team should continue to develop their quality assurance processes, including monitoring and improvement planning. This should include but is not limited to, monitoring personal plans, staff practice, play spaces, planning for children's learning, medication, and infection control.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19) and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 31 October 2024.

Action taken since then

The provider and leadership team had strengthened their quality assurance processes, including effective monitoring and improvement planning. Regular oversight of personal plans, staff practice, play spaces, planning for children's learning, medication, and infection control had contributed to continuous improvement across the service. As a result, these enhanced processes supported positive outcomes for children and ensured the ongoing, well-managed development of the service.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 6

To ensure children's needs are consistently met, the provider and leadership team should ensure that staff deployment considers the staff's skills mix, children's routines, and day-to-day activities.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'People have time to support and care for me and to speak to me' (HSCS 3.16) and 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work well together' (HSCS 3.19).

This area for improvement was made on 31 October 2024.

Action taken since then

The provider and leadership team had improved staff deployment to ensure children's needs were consistently met. Staff skills, children's routines, and day-to-day activities were well considered when planning staff roles and responsibilities. Staff also took on leadership roles that enhanced play spaces and supported positive experiences for children. As a result, children benefited from a well-organised environment where their needs were effectively supported throughout the day.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 7

To promote high-quality care and support for children, the provider and leadership team should ensure all staff access a suitable training programme. Priority should be given to refresher training in child development, infection control, and data protection.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'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' (HSCS 3.14) and 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 31 October 2024.

Action taken since then

The provider and leadership team had ensured that all staff accessed a suitable training programme to promote high-quality care and support for children. Priority training in child development, infection control, and data protection had been completed, strengthening staff knowledge and confidence. As a result, staff were better equipped to fulfil their roles and contribute to positive outcomes for children.

This area for improvement has been met.

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
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children experience high quality spaces	5 - Very 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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