

Little Stars Nursery Day Care of Children

Little Stars Nursery
Kildean Business and Enterprise Hub
Drip Road
Stirling
FK9 4UA

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
11 February 2026

Service provided by:
Little Stars (Stirling) Limited

Service provider number:
SP2011011652

Service no:
CS2011299473

About the service

Little Stars Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 94 children not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is located in Stirling and is based in a modern building within Kildean Business and Enterprise Hub. Children have access to four playrooms, each with a cloakroom and appropriate changing and toilet facilities. There are enclosed outdoor areas directly accessed from most of the playrooms. The service is on one level and also has an office, reception area, staff room and kitchen. The service is located near local amenities such as shops and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 10 and 11 February 2026. This 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with three family members and reviewed 28 questionnaires from families and 18 from staff members
- spoke with the staff and the manager
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within Leadership.

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

- Positive, respectful, and nurturing interactions between staff and children supported children to feel loved with a sense of belonging.
- Families held the staff team and setting in high regard and valued the relationships and attachments their children had formed with staff.
- The provider must ensure children are kept safe and protected by supporting staff to register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) within the required timescale and to maintain their registration while employed.
- Since the previous inspection the staff team had worked hard together to improve outcomes for children and families.
- To support staff to improve outcomes further, self-evaluation and quality assurance processes should be strengthened.
- Children benefitted from positive and well considered learning environments that engaged them in their play and learning.

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	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 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated different parts of this key question as good and satisfactory/adequate, with an overall evaluation of satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service has established a vision for the service and included supporting happy and confident individuals through values of kindness and nurture which we saw reflected in practice. Staff had been included in reviewing the current values which supported their understanding of the service's ethos. We encouraged leaders to consult with families and children during the next review to ensure the vision and values reflect the current needs and wishes of children and families.

The quality improvement plan identified achievable priorities including areas for improvement made at the previous inspection. This had supported the staff team to ensure children were safe and had helped them improve outcomes. Further information can be found in the section 'What the service has done to meet any requirements and areas for improvement made since or at the previous inspection'. We encouraged leaders to consider how the improvement plan is used as a working document throughout the year, with progress being regularly recorded. This will support clearer oversight of what has been achieved and what still requires action. Families recognised the improvements that been made and told us, 'I feel that the nursery has made so many great improvements over the past year that I would struggle to see what could be improved. Staff turnover has reduced, staff seem to be working better as a team from the rooms I have experienced' and 'Recent improvements have been done by the staff to give the room better structure and organisation to each area'.

Some self evaluation activity had been undertaken. Staff, children, and families were consulted on practice through QR code surveys. However, recording of this work remains at an early stage and there was scope to develop these systems further to clearly evidence how self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were influencing positive change. An area for improvement made at the previous inspection has been reworded to focus on quality assurance and self-evaluation (see are for improvement 1).

Staff were recruited safely, and new staff spoke positively about their induction and feeling part of the existing team. Induction paperwork was in place, however some induction paperwork was incomplete. We asked the manager to ensure all induction processes are fully completed to support staff to gain confidence and develop an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, it will help leaders be confident that unfamiliar staff understand what is expected of them.

Not all staff working with children were registered with the appropriate professional body, despite having been in post long enough to do so. This had the potential to place children at risk and compromised their wellbeing and safety. We highlighted this to the manager and immediate action was taken. However, this was identified at the previous inspection and further work is required to support newer staff to gain their registration and ensure that this is maintained while employed with the service (see requirement 1).

Quality indicator: Staff skills, knowledge and values and staff deployment

Staff expressed pride in their achievements over the previous year.

They proudly told us how they had responded positively to change, developed meaningful relationships, and worked hard together to improve experiences for children. A strong sense of teamwork, and effective communication contributed to the calm and well organised environments. Staff told us they felt valued and well supported by leaders and each other. This meant morale had strengthened and staff demonstrated a commitment to improving outcomes for all.

Deployment of staff was planned in a way that reflected their individual skills, knowledge, and experience. Some playrooms had relatively new staff teams, relationships were positive which supported consistency of care and support for children. Breaks were well organised to minimise disruption to children while ensuring staff were able to rest and maintain their wellbeing. Arrangements for planned and unplanned absences minimised disruption to children's routines as children were cared for by familiar staff promoting their sense of security.

Children benefitted from a staff team that moved confidently and purposefully around environments, ensuring children were consistently accounted for, well supervised, and appropriately supported. This had a positive impact on children's safety and quality of their experiences.

Staff worked collaboratively with families to provide good outcomes for children. Families spoke highly of the staff team and the service. They found staff approachable, felt staff knew their children well. This helped create an inclusive, trusting, and nurturing ethos for children and families. Their comments included, 'Staff are always warm and welcoming. Know my child really well', 'The care all the staff and manager show me and my child is wonderful and makes me a happy mum' and 'The staff really care about the children and their individual needs'.

Staff were clear about their roles and responsibilities and had accessed a range of training opportunities since the previous inspection. While this had impacted positively on practice, we encouraged the manager to develop a training plan to further supported individual development and align more closely with service priorities. Additionally, we asked them to consider how individual staffs learning could be shared more widely within the staff team. Opportunities for reflection were provided through regular staff meetings. We encouraged leaders to strengthen this further by maintaining clear records of meetings and meaningful reflections on training. This would support staff to better evaluate the impact of professional learning on practice and continuous improvement.

Requirements

1. By May 2026, the provider must ensure children are kept safe and protected.

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

- a) ensure all staff register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) within the required timescale
- b) implement an effective system to support staff to maintain their registration.

This is to comply with Regulation 9(1) 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 states 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 is consistent with the Scottish Social Service Council code of practice that states: Support workers who need to be registered with the SSSC to meet and maintain their conditions for registration and the requirement for continuous professional learning and development (SSSC 3.4).

Areas for improvement

1. To improve outcomes for children, the manager should develop an effective system of quality assurance and self-evaluation to support improvement planning. This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) establishment of effective quality assurance and self-evaluation processes; and
- b) develop an effective monitoring programme, including individual support for staff.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HCSC) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning, and developing.

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.

Children benefited from consistently positive engagement with staff. Interactions were kind, respectful, and attuned to children's needs in all playrooms. Staff used open ended questioning effectively, which supported children to think for themselves, extend ideas, and develop independence. With younger children staff used age and stage appropriate language and facial expressions which enabled children to gain an understanding of the spoken word. When minor disputes occurred, staff responded calmly and sensitively, enabling children to resolve conflicts effectively and independently. This helped them to gain confidence and supported them well with emotional regulation.

Children benefitted from positive and well considered learning environments that engaged them in their play and learning. They were happy, relaxed, and confidently moved between play spaces, independently selecting activities that captured their interests. Most children were provided with free flow access between the indoor and outdoor environments which promoted active and healthy lifestyles. We asked leaders to ensure all children were offered daily access to the outdoor play area.

Children were empowered to lead their own play and learning, as staff responded to most children's interests. Younger children were supported through experiences that promoted schematic and sensory play experiences. Older children had access to a good range of purposeful learning experiences. Natural and loose parts resources provided opportunities for imaginative play, creativity, and exploration. To further enhance challenge, the service could strengthen the availability of real life materials, such as tools and tinkering opportunities, and enriched creative areas. This would better support children's enquiry, exploration, and problem solving skills.

Planning for younger children reflected a mixture of adult led and responsive experiences which enriched their play. We asked staff in the older children's playroom to strengthen how responsive, child led planning is documented.

Their floor book evidenced some children's voices and learning, however, there was scope to strengthen how progression and depth of learning is captured. This would result in children's contributions helping to inform experiences and activities provided and meaningfully deepen children's learning over time.

Some families who responded to our questionnaire told us they would like more regular updates on their child's development. The service had identified this aspect of practice as part of their ongoing improvement work and we agreed, further work was needed. We looked at observations and next steps in children's learning on the services digital platform. Some observations were overly long or descriptive and did not consistently focus on children's learning and there were inconsistencies in the quality of observations across the service. Next steps recorded were sometimes too broad or not developmentally achievable and some had not been updated for some time. This resulted in missed opportunities to support children to achieve their full potential (see area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to achieve their potential, the service should improve how they track children's learning and monitor their progress. Staff should be supported to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to identify meaningful next steps.

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

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

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

Staff were consistently kind, warm, caring, and responsive in their interactions with children. Their nurturing approach meant that children felt secure and well cared for by adults who knew them well. This contributed positively to children feeling happy and settled at nursery.

Personal plans had been revised and updated since the previous inspection, and each child had an individual plan in place. Care plans outlined children's needs, and preferences along with overview sheets from All About Me information meant staff had easy access to key information. Personal plans would benefit from being streamlined to ensure that only current and relevant information was retained. Visible review dates were in place, and we asked staff to ensure families sign these to help strengthen the audit trail and ensure information was up to date.

Most staff knew children and families well and families were warmly welcomed into the service and children were well supported during transitions. Staff provided additional reassurance for children who required it, helping them separate from their families calmly and confidently. Families received meaningful feedback at the end of each day, which strengthened communication and helped maintain strong relationships between home and the nursery. A range of engagement opportunities such as stay and play sessions, seasonal celebrations, parents' meetings, and an open door ethos further enhanced partnership working.

Children benefited from calm, sociable, and unhurried mealtime experiences. They were offered a range of opportunities to develop their independence and responsibility, and meals provided were nutritious and well balanced. There was scope for children to be offered more choice at lunchtime, for example, providing plates of bread and vegetables. Children were enabled to prepare their fruit; however, they would benefit from deeper involvement in mealtime planning and preparation to further enhance their life skills.

Personal care routines were carried out in a nurturing and respectful manner, which supported children's dignity and promoted good health and hygiene habits. Safer sleep practices were promoted, and staff were attentive to children's individual needs.

Staff were confident in how to respond to concerns regarding a child's welfare and wellbeing which helped keep them safe from harm. Medication was stored safely, and documentation supported staff to understand children's health needs. However, a more robust audit of long term medication was needed to ensure symptoms, dosage instructions, and expiry dates, along with original packaging remained accurate and valid. This would support staff further to administer medication safely. We signposted our guidance 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' to assist with this.

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 children continually benefit from positive interactions, the manager should ensure that staff are trained and can implement approaches and interactions which reflect a sound understanding of attachment theory and nurturing support.

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

'As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure' (HSCS 3.10).

This area for improvement was made on 7 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff had attended training on positive interactions and senior staff with experience of schematic play and development of children had cascaded knowledge to the wider staff team. Interactions had improved significantly across all playrooms. Children were responded to with warmth, kindness, care and respect.

This area for improvement has been met

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure that children are included and their needs are met. Staff should review and revise children's personal care plans to further reflect the specific needs, wishes and choices of children and their families. This should include but is not limited to ensuring that information is clearly recorded and easily accessible to staff providing care.

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

'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23).

This is to ensure staff skills and knowledge is consistent with the Care Inspectorate document, 'Guide for providers on personal planning: Early learning and childcare'.

This area for improvement was made on 7 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Personal plans were in place for each child in folders accessible to staff. Information is clearly recorded and easily accessible to staff providing care. All playrooms had an overview sheet available with children's key information. This meant supply staff and existing staff had access to important information to ensure continuity and consistency of care and support.

This area for improvement has been met

Previous area for improvement 3

The service should ensure that mealtimes are safe, enjoyable and relaxed social experiences where children can learn about healthy eating, and staff role model and support children's involvement in choices and preparation.

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

'I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

This area for improvement was made on 7 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Mealtimes were sociable and unhurried experiences for all children. Staff sat with children and engaged them in meaningful conversation. Opportunities for independence and choice where age and stage appropriate we encouraged service to consider how they offer children more choice and help develop these life long skills further.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

Staff should be supported to develop an understanding of how they can offer children play that is meaningful and interesting, and that helps them to achieve their potential.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) review and develop how staff plan children's play and learning;
- b) develop an understanding of how to provide resources and experiences reflecting children's needs and interests;
- c) ensure quality outdoor experiences for all children by increasing choice and resources to offer exciting, challenging and creative outdoor play opportunities.

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 to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 7 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff were keen and proud to show us 'before and after' video of how their environments and spaces have improved.

Staff enhanced all playrooms with natural loose parts and interesting resources which were age and stage appropriate for all playrooms. The nursery entrance and all playrooms were inviting and welcoming. Children were observed to be fully engaged in their play and learning throughout our visit.

Planning had been reviewed and developed well in under three's provision.

The planning process in the 3-5 room was in the early stages, staff had a good understanding of the planning cycle and told us of their plans to create a display to capture children's interests and how they would respond to these.

Children had free flow from most playrooms for outdoor experiences. Children were happy outside playing and fully engaged with the choice of resources offered to them. We encouraged staff to continue to build on outdoor play opportunities & experiences.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

To ensure that children's health, safety, and wellbeing is not compromised, the provider should ensure risk assessments are effective and working as planned to maintain a safe environment and experiences for children.

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

'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.17).

This area for improvement was made on 7 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Improvements had been made to ensure children were kept safe and secure.

Risk assessment were in place. Some contained limited information and we asked the service to continue to build on risk assessing practice to help support supply or newer staff gain confidence in their understanding of how to keep children safe.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 6

To ensure children experience sustained quality care and continued improvement, the provider should implement effective, robust and manageable quality assurance systems.

This should include but is not limited to:

- a) staff develop an understanding about the purpose of self-evaluation and the need to develop quality assurance and monitoring systems in line with current legislation and best practice;
- c) To ensure effective and robust audits are in place, including of accidents and incidents.
- d) To ensure that all staff are registered with the appropriate professional body within the agreed timescales
- e) To implement formal systems that support reflective practice across the setting.

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 7 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Quality assurance and self evaluation processes were not yet evidencing how reflection and monitoring was driving forward improvements. A new system had been put in place and we spent time with senior staff discussing how actions could be recorded and monitored in a way that measured positive change. The staff now need time to embed the systems and plan how they will provide and support staff with further opportunities to participate in reflective practice and professional discussions. A new area for improvement with a focus on quality assurance and self evaluation has been made within this report.

Audits of accident and incidents were in place with actions taken to ensure risks had been minimised. An audit of long-term medication had not been undertaken for some time. Suggestions we made had been actioned before the inspection was concluded.

A staff member had not registered with the appropriate professional body within the agreed timescales. There was some monitoring of staffs membership with the Scottish social services, however further work was needed to ensure all staff register within the appropriate timescales and then maintain their registration. As this is the second inspection that this has been highlighted and to help keep children safe, a requirement has been made within this report.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 7

To ensure children experience a range of experiences, quality interactions and effective supervision, the provider should ensure that staff are deployed effectively throughout the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19).

This area for improvement was made on 7 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff deployment was effective in all playrooms which ensured children were safe and well supervised at all times. Following the previous inspection, staff now accompanied children from the 3-5 room to the toilet as this was in a corridor outside of their playroom. Staff were flexible and worked and communicated well throughout the day. Staff interactions and experiences were observed as good in all playrooms and had improved since the previous inspection.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	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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