

SocialBall Kids Day Care of Children

Hermitage Park School
Hermitage Park
Edinburgh
EH6 8HD

Telephone: 01315 640 264

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 February 2026

Service provided by:
Social Ball Kids Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2014012269

Service no:
CS2014324599

About the service

Socialball Kids is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 45 children at any one time of primary school age of whom no more than five may attend over the summer holidays prior to starting school in August.

The manager is peripatetic and is also the manager of the following service:
CS2024000298, Craigy ASC.

The service operates from Hermitage Park Primary School, Edinburgh which is located in a residential street with access to transport links and local amenities.

The accommodation used by the service consists of the dining hall and toilet facilities. Staff have access to a kitchen/meeting room. Children have direct access from the dining room to the school grounds for outdoor play opportunities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 3 February 2026 between 14:35 and 17:45 and Thursday 5 February 2026 between 14:30 and 17:45. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. We provided feedback to the provider on Tuesday 10 February 2026.

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 and two parents onsite
- spoke with the staff and management team
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

We received no responses from staff or parents to our online survey sent out via the service.

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 the headings of: 'Leadership' and 'Children thrive and develop in quality spaces.'

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

- Children had fun as they enjoyed play experiences with their peers.
- Staff were warm and welcoming, helping children to feel relaxed and confident in their play.
- Children benefitted from extended periods of outdoor play, which promoted their overall health and wellbeing.
- Experiences and resources should be further developed to ensure children experience a greater range of activities, which promote creativity, natural curiosity and life skills.
- To maintain children's safety, staff should ensure the playground gates are secured.
- Snack routines should be improved to ensure children's safety and to promote a social, engaging experience that supports children's life-skills and independence.
- Quality assurance processes needed to improve to ensure effective monitoring of 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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	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**Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources**

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

The service shared its aims and objectives with staff, parents and children so they knew what to expect. Some daily practices and procedures reflected these aims. For example, staff helped keep children safe by doing regular headcounts. Staff were also warm and friendly, which helped create a welcoming ethos for children and families. However, other aims were not always consistently evident in practice. For example, one aim was to help children become more independent. However, we saw some missed opportunities for this particularly in relation to snack routines. Staff should continue to support children to choose from the fruit bowl and prepare their own snack as much as possible. Staff, children and families were not fully involved in creating or reviewing the aims of the service. This meant the aims were not always clearly understood or implemented.

Quality assurance had developed in some ways since the last inspection. However, some gaps remained in the areas covered by quality assurance. For example, staff practice was not fully monitored and medication arrangements were not effectively managed. This had the potential to compromise children's health and wellbeing. Also, some daily routines such as snack time did not align with good practice. This meant quality assurance was not yet fully effective and did not always support the management team and staff to make an accurate assessment of the service's quality. Action should be taken to improve quality assurance processes (see area for improvement 4 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

The service improvement plan was developed based on the manager's reflections of the service, which had led to some improvements. For example, the plan identified that there was scope to enhance resources for older children and improve the quality of games consoles. As a result, some additional games had been provided for children. However, improvement planning approaches needed further development to ensure the plans and actions accurately reflected the service and included involvement from children, families and staff. The improvement plan was mostly a list of tasks to be actioned, with limited evaluation of any impact. As a result, outcomes for children remained at times inconsistent and approaches did not yet support a cycle of continuous improvement. An area for improvement made at the last inspection has been continued (see area for improvement 4 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

Children's wellbeing was supported by safe recruitment practices. While no new staff had joined since the last inspection, staff files were organised with clear records in relation to recruitment processes. For example, staff checks such as the protection of vulnerable groups (PVG) were logged for reference. This showed the service had systems in place to maintain good recruitment practices. Also, staff were appropriately registered with a relevant professional body.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

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

Overall, the arrangements to ensure children were accounted for were effective. Staff used tools such as headcounts and a clear signing in system to support this practice. Children were also familiar with routines for signing in, which helped them to learn about keeping safe. While staff supervised children's movements, the playground gates to the main street were often insecure and left open. This presented a risk to the security of the service. To maintain children's safety, staff should ensure action is taken to address this by checking the gate is always secured (see area for improvement 1).

Risk assessments were in place and had been reviewed to take account of the risk and mitigations required to keep the space safe. However, to ensure consistent practices all staff would benefit from being involved in reviewing and discussing effective implementation of the risk assessments. For example, in relation to children sitting while eating and maintaining the security of the playground. This is to ensure risk assessments are reflected fully in practice.

Systems for the monitoring, maintenance and repair of the service were in place. Some previous issues such as the cleanliness and repair of toilets had been addressed. Daily checks ensured spaces, toys and equipment were safe and functioning well. These checks showed staff replaced broken or damaged items when needed. This supported children's safety and wellbeing. To further improve the facilities, the service should consider other ways they could refresh tired areas of the service. For example, consistently maintaining displays to create a more welcoming, homely environment.

Handwashing practices were inconsistent and did not fully support good infection prevention and control. Children were not always supported to wash their hands before eating, especially when they returned later in the session for an additional snack. Also, staff relied on gloves instead of conducting proper handwashing. As a result, infection control procedures did not always align with current good practice. A previous area for improvement relating to handwashing remains in place (see area for improvement 3 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

Some elements of the play space reflected children's interests and developmental stages. For example, tables with Lego and card games were used well by children. However, improvements were needed to ensure the space consistently met the varied needs of the children attending. Areas such as the rest and reading corner and a large table of single purpose plastic toys were untidy, uninviting, and did not challenge children. Overall, children did not experience a consistently inspiring and comfortable environment. To fully support children's play and wellbeing needs, the service should strive to create and sustain a comfortable and inspiring play environment, which aligns with good practice guidance such as 'A quality improvement framework for the early years and childcare sectors' (Care Inspectorate and HMIE, 2025).

Areas for improvement

1. To maintain children's safety, staff should ensure the playground gates are secured at all times.

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).

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 settings work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Overall, most children found experiences and toys to suit their preferences. This allowed them to make independent choices and engage in sustained periods of play. For example, several children enjoyed drawing and crafting, while others played with construction materials such as Lego. During the construction play, children created a game that supported them to problem solve and have fun with their peers. Children told us they enjoyed the club and the variety of activities available including outdoor play and drawing. Although children were busy and engaged there were opportunities to provide a better range of experiences, materials and resources to offer a greater level of challenge and intrigue. For example, children would benefit from the service introducing more loose parts, and other materials that ignite imaginations, spark creativity and support challenge.

Staff recognised the importance of access to fresh air and physical play. Children had regular, free-flow access to the playground for ball games, group games and use of the climbing frame. This promoted their physical wellbeing and encouraged energetic play with their peers.

Children's play was supported by caring and attentive staff. They often joined in games or chatted to children about what they were doing, offering praise and encouragement. Staff responded warmly and with interest when children invited them into their play. This approach supported children to have fun and showed them that staff cared about their ideas. While staff engaged positively with children, they did miss opportunities to develop children's play and extend interests. For example, there were times when children showed an interest in a particular play type, activity or topic, but staff did not demonstrate confidence in extending this further through meaningful discussions or additional play materials. Staff would benefit from further training and learning opportunities in relation to the importance of play, play types and provocations to support play.

Planning approaches were informal and mostly focused around the core areas within the play space. For example, staff set up the space with activities they knew children enjoyed such as construction, drawing, games consoles and small world. Children made some suggestions for resources, which staff provided. This helped children feel listened to and valued. Moving forward, the service should strengthen the approach to planning for play and learning, to ensure children have consistently high-quality play and learning experiences. For example, where children show a particular interest more focused planning could enrich the opportunities provided. Staff could develop their use of observations to support them to interpret children's interests. Using tools such as mind maps to plan experiences, events or play ideas could enrich the quality of children's play and support children to be involved in planning their own experiences.

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 settings work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children benefitted from nurturing interactions from staff who knew them well. They received warm, friendly welcomes, helping them feel secure and ready to engage. Staff had developed positive relationships with children, helping them to feel supported and respected. For example, during minor disagreements staff were respectful and supportive in their interventions enabling children to resolve any issues and quickly return to their play. Overall, the stable staff team contributed to children feeling comfortable and well cared for by familiar adults. Connections with families were consistent and inclusive as parents and carers were able to come directly into the service to engage with staff and see their children at play.

The staff team's knowledge of children's needs and preferences was informed by each child's personal plan. These plans gathered important information related to children's health, safety and wellbeing needs. Information was reviewed with parents to ensure it remained current and informative. However, while some children had recorded strategies of support, this was not consistent for all children. This meant there were some missed opportunities to support children's holistic needs through effective personal planning. For example, staff spoke about how they supported individual children's personality traits, but this information was not readily recorded in personal plans. To further strengthen personal planning approaches, the service should record strategies of support for individual children and review these over time to ensure they are having an impact.

Improvements had been made in relation to children having more choice and influence over the menus and snack routine. Staff asked children for food suggestions and children ate at their own pace meaning they could sit and talk with their peers or return to play when they wanted. While this was positive, other aspects of practice in relation to the snack routine remained inconsistent. This included some unhealthy food options and limited opportunities for children to develop their independence and be involved in the snack time routine. Also, children did not always sit while eating, which did not support consistently safe mealtimes. These issues had the potential to impact on children's wellbeing. To support the improvements needed during the snack routine, we have continued a previous area for improvement at this inspection (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').

There were systems in place to ensure children's medication was present should they need it. Staff were aware of the children who may require medication, which helped to maintain their health and wellbeing. However, during the inspection we highlighted some issues with the quality assurance practices for managing children's medication. These included a discrepancy in the dosage recorded on one child's health care plan and a medication that was not stored in its original packaging. While swift action was taken to address this, quality assurance in relation to the management of medication should be improved to ensure children's health and wellbeing. To support the development of practice, procedures and policies, we signposted the service to the Care Inspectorate guidance 'Management of medication in daycare and childminding service', (Care Inspectorate 2024). A previous area for improvement related to quality assurance processes has been continued (see area for improvement 4 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

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 support children's safety, health and wellbeing, the provider should ensure that the snack routine is improved. This should include staff sitting with children to support social interactions, the presentation of foods and ensuring children are seated when eating.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My meals and snacks meet my cultural and dietary needs, beliefs and preferences.' (HSCS 1.37).

This area for improvement was made on 2 February 2024.

Action taken since then

Snack routines still needed to improve. Children had more food choices and the presentation of snack had improved but issues remained with the quality of the experience. For example, children were not always supported to sit while eating, staff did not always promote a social experience and food choices were often higher in sugar than necessary.

The service should take action to ensure the snack experience and practices align with good practice guidance.

This area for improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's safety and wellbeing, the provider should ensure that daily risk assessments of the environment and resources are effectively carried out. Any issues identified should be reported to the appropriate persons. Any action taken as a result should be clearly documented.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22).

This area for improvement was made on 2 February 2024.

Action taken since then

Daily risk assessments and environmental checklists had been implemented to support staff to assess the safety of the environment and resources. Staff recorded any issues on an overview sheet, which was reviewed by the manager, enabling action to be taken to address any identified issues. This helped to support children's safety. However, there remained an ongoing issue with the playground gates being insecure. The majority of this area for improvement had been met, however, we have made a new area for improvement in relation to the insecure playground gates. See quality indicator: 'Children thrive and develop in quality spaces'.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure children's health and wellbeing, hand washing and hand hygiene procedures should improve for both children and staff.

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 28 February 2025.

Action taken since then

Hand washing procedures still needed to improve. Children often ate without washing their hands when returning to snack from a period of play and staff were not alert to this. Staff relied on gloves when serving snack and did not prioritise handwashing as a key measure to limit the spread of germs or cross contamination of food. The service should take action to address handwashing procedures in line with good practice guidance.

This area for improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To improve outcomes for children and ensure that there is a culture of continuous improvement, effective quality assurance processes including self-evaluation should be developed to monitor and assess the service in line with best practice and legislation.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health & Social Care Standards which state that: '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 2 February 2024.

Action taken since then

Quality assurance processes still needed to improve as gaps remained in the areas covered by effective quality assurance and improvement planning. For example, there were issues with the recording of

children's medical needs, limited monitoring of staff practice and poor quality assurance in relation to the quality of resources and experiences. As a result, children did not always experience high quality care, play and learning.

The provider should ensure quality assurance processes and self-evaluation are further developed, embedded and improved in line with best practice guidance and legislation. This is to ensure the service develops a culture of continuous improvement.

This area for improvement has not 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
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children experience high quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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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