

# Castlegate Nursery & Out of School Club Limited Day Care of Children

Castlegate  
Spylaw Road  
Kelso  
TD5 8DN

Telephone: 01573 226 554

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
14 August 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Castlegate Nursery & Out of School  
Club Limited

**Service provider number:**  
SP2019013319

**Service no:**  
CS2019375390

## About the service

Castlegate Nursery & Out of School Club Limited is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 94 children at any one time aged from three months to S1: of those no more than 20 are aged under two years; no more than 25 are aged two to under three years; and no more than 49 are aged from three years to S1. The outdoor space has been taken into account when agreeing the maximum number of children aged from three years. Children must have access to the outdoor space at all times.

The service operates from premises on the outskirts of Kelso which is close to local green spaces, woodland areas, schools and local amenities. There are five playrooms within the service, which all benefit from their own outdoor area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 12 August 2024 between 09:30 and 17:00. We returned to the service on 14 August 2024 between 12:30 and 17:10. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for this inspection we reviewed information about the 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 evaluations we:

- spoke with and observed children using the service
- received written feedback from 25 families
- spoke with staff and received written feedback from 15 staff members
- spoke with the manager and the provider
- observed practice and children's routines and experiences
- reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- Positive interactions and relationships supported children to feel comfortable and confident within the setting.
- Children's transitions were recognised as important and supported sensitively in a variety of different ways.
- Children had access to a wide variety of resources and play experiences across all playrooms.
- The recording and planning for children's play and learning had improved since our last inspection.
- The playroom and outdoor area for the after-school club had been significantly improved since our last inspection.
- A culture of continuous improvement contributed to the quality experiences that children were having.
- The manager recognised the importance of nurturing staff wellbeing and supporting them to feel happy and confident at work.
- The staff team had experienced several changes since our last inspection and had been working hard to develop positive working relationships within the team, and with children and families.

**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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

## How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Positive interactions and relationships supported children to feel comfortable and confident within the setting. Parents told us, "The staff are lovely and my child has a great relationship with them. They are very friendly and really get to know what the children like" and "Friendly staff, they genuinely care about my little one". Staff within the younger spaces spent time down at child height making eye contact, while using soft voices and positive body language to engage with children. This supported children to feel heard and promoted children's language and communication development. The staff team across the service had experienced growth and movement since our last inspection. Therefore, interactions still varied across the playrooms. The manager was aware of this and was committed to ensuring that interactions remained a focus area for ongoing improvements. This would support children to experience consistent, quality interactions throughout their whole day.

The service had been working hard to develop their personal planning approach. Ongoing monitoring and audits had been introduced to support all information held on a child to become more joined up. Some staff could confidently talk about individual children's care, play and learning needs and how these were being supported. Through sampling we found that further work was still needed to ensure that all information held in these plans was up to date, detailed and consistently being used to inform staff practice. The manager recognised this and took immediate action during the course of the inspection. Ongoing quality assurance processes that had been implemented would support the service to continue to improve their personal planning approach. This would contribute to children's overall care, play and learning experiences.

Mealtime routines had improved since our last inspection. Children within the younger playrooms experienced a calm, relaxed nurturing mealtime which was supported by quality interactions from skilled staff. Quality improvement discussions between the inspectors, manager and staff supported the service to consider ways in which children within the three to five year old playroom could have more choice and be supported to influence their day to day routines. The manager and staff team worked together and proactively implemented new parts to the mealtime routine during the course of the inspection. As a result, older children were able to choose which lunch sitting they would like to attend. This promoted children's rights and enabled children to have their voice heard. The service should now move forward with their plans to revisit and improve their mealtime and snack menus for children. This would ensure that children experienced balanced, nutritional food choices across each day.

Children's transitions were recognised as important and supported sensitively in a variety of different ways. For example, individual transition plans for each child, visits to new playrooms and the passing over of key information. Relationships were placed at the heart of transition planning, with key workers, children and families creating tailored plans to support the needs of each individual child. Information had been developed to introduce new staff to children and families as they prepared to move to their new playroom. External transitions, such as children starting school were also valued. Staff followed the Scottish Borders Council transition programme which included a number of transition activities. As a result, children's wellbeing was being recognised and nurtured through well planned, sensitive transitions.

The service had improved their management and administration of medication since our last inspection. Quality improvement discussions between the inspectors, manager and staff highlighted some areas that required to be strengthened. For example, ensuring that all paperwork is updated with the correct information in line with the prescribed medication. The service responded proactively by immediately gathering additional information from parents. Furthermore, the manager introduced a more detailed monitoring template to enhance the ongoing quality assurance process. This would ensure that any inconsistencies with medication is recognised and addressed in a timely manner, in turn contributing to children's overall health and wellbeing.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had access to a wide variety of resources and play experiences across all playrooms. We recognised significant improvements within the younger playrooms, where staff had worked hard to develop their resources with a specific focus on how very young children play and learn. As a result, babies and young children were able to follow their own natural curiosity, challenge their thinking and be creative. The service had successfully been awarded funding which had focused on developing learning experiences and resources outdoors. This had involved partnership working with subject experts, such as outdoor play specialists. This had supported staff to develop their knowledge, skills and experience of outdoor learning. One staff member told us, "All garden spaces have been developed to enhance the children's learning and experiences". This was particularly beneficial as most children chose to spend long periods of time outdoors. One parent told us, "The outdoor spaces are fantastic, and so well planned. They are doing so many improvements mainly outdoor at the moment, I'm very impressed". One child told us all about the wooden resources "their daddy had made". The service should continue with their improvement plans to further enhance the resources and play and learning experiences outdoors. This would contribute to children having a quality early learning and childcare experience.

The recording and planning for children's play and learning had improved since the last inspection. An ongoing monitoring and review process had been implemented which supported staff to develop their observation skills and knowledge. The service had worked closely with Scottish Borders Council to develop this area of practice. Focussed training had supported staff to begin to consider the learning that was taking place and how to capture and plan for this in a meaningful way. One staff member told us, "We follow child led planning. Through following what the child does or says and giving the child freedom of choice, of what they want to do to extend their learning". The service now needed time to consolidate this new learning and fully embed an effective planning cycle. This would further enhance children's play, learning and progression.

Children's play and learning experiences were shared with families through a variety of different ways. For example, private social media groups for each playroom, children's personal journals, parent's evenings and through daily conversations. One parent told us, "The staff always have time to talk about anything if required. I am provided with an update on what my child has been doing that day at pick up". However, our written feedback from families indicated that some would like to see this area of practice further improved. Parents told us, "It would be nice to have the children's learning journeys shared regularly and for parents to be aware of targets and progress" and "There is not always opportunity to discuss play and learning at pick up if it is a busy time with other parents therefore more updates on Family app would be more useful". The service welcomed this feedback and was committed to continuing to develop opportunities for families to be involved in their children's learning.

## How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a positive, calm and relaxed atmosphere within a welcoming and clean environment. Staff had given thoughtful consideration to what makes a quality play space and had been working hard to develop and improve children's play spaces both indoors and outdoors. Children's current interests had influenced the planning of play spaces and resources. This supported children to feel important and sent the message that they mattered. Quality improvement discussions held with the inspectors, staff and management around the importance of consistency and ensuring that spaces were inviting for children at all times. This feedback was received well and staff acted on areas that had been highlighted for development during the course of the inspection. Moving forward, the manager should ensure that all staff take responsibility for ensuring a consistent approach in the planning and setting up of all play spaces. This would continue to ensure that all children benefit from a variety of resources, quality play spaces and experiences.

The playroom and outdoor area for the after-school club had been significantly improved since our last inspection. The environment had been decluttered and a more calm, relaxed and homely space had been created. Thoughtfully arranged furniture and resources created play spaces that focussed on choice and relaxation. These cosy homely spaces supported children to feel calm, unwind and engage in relaxed play. The garden was a clear favourite with all children eagerly choosing to spend their time there, enhancing their physical activity and social interactions. Additionally, the kitchen area was designed at children's height, allowing them to actively participate in cooking and snack preparation, which supported their independence and practical life skills.

Children's photos, artwork and special items were displayed throughout the environment. This supported a sense of memorability within the space and helped children to feel safe, comfortable and important. This promoted opportunities for conversations as children reflected on their learning, in turn, supporting their language and communication development.

All playrooms had their own garden space, which was complimented by a small private woodland area at the bottom of each outdoor space. The service had plans to further develop the resources, play spaces and experiences in the garden area. We highlighted areas of the wider outdoors spaces that would benefit from being tidied and regularly maintained. For example, the baby room garden on the first day of inspection required attention. The service took action during the inspection to address this. Staff should work together to embed the systems and procedures that have been implemented to ensure that children experience consistently welcoming, inviting, well maintained spaces. This would contribute to the positive environment that children experienced.

**How good is our leadership?****5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

**Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well**

The manager was ambitious and promoted a strong ethos of continuous improvement which enhanced the delivery of quality practice, leading to improved outcomes for all. The provider, manager and staff team had worked together to bring about positive changes and improvements. This was evident through a variety of areas of practice. For example, improvements in resources, play spaces, transitions for children and interactions between children and staff. One parent shared with us, "I feel the current management are being very proactive in improving the service. My child has always been happy to go to nursery which means a lot". This contributed to the positive atmosphere that children, families and staff experienced.

The manager had implemented a number of monitoring and quality assurance systems since our last inspection. Improvement planning had brought about positive changes and had continued to inform the ongoing improvements across the service. Staff had used a number of different audit tools and good practice guidance to inform ongoing improvements across the service. The service had worked closely with Scottish Borders Council and welcomed ongoing external quality assurance and improvement feedback. Staff were able to confidently talk through improvements they had led and contributed to. One staff member shared, "I feel we have a nursery to be proud of now, and it shows in the staff mindset". There was a clear commitment from the provider, manager and staff team to continue on their ongoing improvement journey. Staff told us, "Like everywhere, there is always room for improvement. We will keep moving with the times and upgrade resources/areas regularly so we can maintain high standards of care". This contributed to children having a quality early learning and childcare experience.

The manager had built strong relationships with Scottish Border Council, key partner agencies and other early years settings. This had given the opportunity to share practice, implement valuable peer support, visit other early years settings and support quality transition experiences for children. This contributed to building positive working relationships and enhanced outcomes for all.

The provider and manager recognised the importance of nurturing staff wellbeing and supporting them to feel happy and confident at work. Ongoing support and supervision, regular wellbeing check ins and positive open communication and opportunities for reflective discussions had supported the staff team to feel valued. Many staff shared personal examples of where they had felt listened to and supported by the manager. One staff member told us, "Castlegate is a lovely place to work. Everyone works as a team and our new Manager has done a great job and really like working alongside them". This contributed to the positive and respectful atmosphere that children experienced.

## How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The manager and staff had worked together to reflect on the skill mix, knowledge, experience and aspirations across the team. This information, along with consideration for children's individual needs had informed a number of new staff deployment decisions across all playrooms. Effective systems were in place to ensure that staff breaks, along with planned and unplanned absences had minimal impact on children. Quality improvement discussions during the inspection highlighted areas where staff could build their confidence in developing a more responsive and flexible approach in their daily routines, tasks and responsibilities. For example, considering how children are able to have their voice heard and influence staff deployment decisions that have a direct impact on their own care, play and learning. The manager and staff team were responsive to this feedback and recognised this was an area that could be strengthened. To support this improvement, we directed the service to 'The Voice of the Infant: best practice guidelines and infant pledge' (Scottish Government, 2023). This would further promote rights based practice and contribute to children feeling heard and understood.

The staff team had experienced several changes since our last inspection and had been working hard to develop positive working relationships within the team, and with children and families. Written feedback to us from families had highlighted that they felt further updates on staffing was required. The service had also received this feedback through their own consultation process and had responded positively to this. For example, introducing staffing notice boards outside of each room, staff lanyards and staff information sheets to support transitions. This positive response to feedback sent the message to families that their opinion was valued and important to the service.

Staff had been supported to participate in ongoing professional development and training opportunities. Staff accessed training through an online training platform. This had been complimented by bitesize sessions delivered at staff team meetings. This had supported them to develop their confidence which in turn contributed to their overall wellbeing and positive outcomes for children. Staff told us, "Training has helped me have more confidence with doing observations and helping the children's learning develop" and "I feel staff are secure and happy in their work, and training is ongoing enabling us to do our jobs competently". This contributed to positive outcomes for all.

Children were cared for by staff that were kind, caring and were encouraged to be reflective in their practice and continue to grow and develop as practitioners. One parent shared, "All the staff are wonderful, always so friendly, polite, respectful, supportive". The manager was using the 'Early learning and childcare: national induction resource' (Scottish Government, 2023) to facilitate ongoing reflective discussions with all individual staff. This had highlighted possible gaps or areas for development and supported staff to implement new skills and knowledge into their practice. The staff team had grown since our last inspection. A mentoring programme helped staff to feel supported as they settled into their new roles. One staff member told us, "We use the national induction paperwork and have a mentor who we can speak to about any comments questions or concerns. My mentor has been really helpful". This contributed to staff being confident in providing quality care, play and learning for children.



## 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

Outcomes for children should be improved through supporting staff to implement a child-centred approach to observation, planning and assessment of children's learning through play.

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

'As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open-ended and natural materials' (HSCS 1.31).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 November 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

The service had been working in partnership with Scottish Borders Council to further develop their observation and planning process. Staff had been supported through additional toolkits, resources and good practice guidance to inform their observation writing skills. Staff had attended training in relation to interactions, this had improved the way in which they observed, recorded and planned for children's care, play and learning. A monitoring and audit procedure had been put in place to assess the quality of the observation process. Staff received direct feedback in relation to their observations and this was supporting staff to further develop their confidence and skills in this area. The manager was supporting staff to have reflective discussions about children's care, play and learning through one to one feedback, staff team meetings and through in room quality assurance observations. The manager recognised that this still required further focus to fully embed across the whole nursery and had plans for this to remain as a focus area on their improvement journey. This would contribute to children having care, play and learning experiences that support their overall wellbeing and development.

**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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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