

Langholm Playcare Day Care of Children

Community Centre
Charles Street Old
Langholm
DG13 0AA

Telephone: 01387 380 775

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 February 2024

Service provided by:
Langholm Playcare Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003002743

Service no:
CS2003011688

About the service

Langholm Playcare is based in Langholm Community Centre in Langholm, Dumfries and Galloway. It provides early learning and childcare from two playrooms with access to secure outdoor areas. The service also provides an out-of-school care service from a large games hall on the first floor of the building.

Langholm Playcare is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 54 children up to 16 years of age. Of these, there shall be:

- a maximum of 24 children who attend school
- a maximum of 34 children who are not yet attending primary school, to include no more than 20 children under 3 years, of whom a maximum of 15 children under 2 years, of whom a maximum of 10 babies under 12 months, to include no more than 3 babies under 6 months.

During school term times, Monday - Friday from 08:00 to 13:00, the above condition may be replaced with: to provide a care service to a maximum of 44 children who are not yet attending primary school. Of these, there shall be:

- a maximum of 20 children under 2 years 9 months, of whom a maximum of 15 children under 2 years, of whom a maximum of 10 babies under 12 months, to include no more than 3 babies under 6 months.

The care service operates Monday to Friday between 07:30 to 18:00. During the operating times, the service will have the exclusive use of two playrooms, a games hall and outdoor play areas. They will also have shared use of kitchen and toilet facilities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 22 February 2024, when 22 children attended the service, and Friday 23 February 2024, when 17 children attended the service. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, intelligence gathered since the last inspection and information submitted by the service.

In making our evaluations of the service, we:

- spoke with most of the children using the service
- spoke with three parents using the nursery and four parents using the Read, Play, Sing group
- received feedback from 12 parents and five staff who completed our questionnaires
- spoke with catering and childcare staff, nursery depute and manager
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Throughout this report any reference to parents also includes carers and guardians.

Key messages

- The children liked coming to the service. They had fantastic fun taking part in a wide range of interesting activities indoors and outdoors. They really enjoyed playing outdoors, having the freedom to run about with their friends, using their imagination and making up games.
- The children and staff had formed lovely, caring and nurturing relationships.
- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing towards the children. Staff listened and responded kindly to the children's ideas and requests.
- There were nice, relaxed interactions between the parents and staff. Parents valued the service and the part it played in the life of the community. They thought highly of the staff working there.
- Staff enjoyed working at the service and felt supported by the management.
- There have been good improvements made to the playrooms to support the children's developmental needs. This had enhanced the children's play and learning opportunities.
- The service should set up formal maintenance records and link these to the risk assessments.
- The management committee should ensure that they inform the Care Inspectorate of changes to the committee by submitting the appropriate documentation.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very 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 made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Across the service, children received very good care and nurturing support from kind and caring staff. Children, parents and staff had built nice relationships with each other.

There were good procedures in place to help children and families settle into the nursery. We found that the staff had adapted their methods to support the individual needs of the parents and children, and they knew the children very well. Parents told us about the good support and time taken by staff during the settling-in procedure, which helped the children settle well into the service. This approach helped build warm, kind, and trusting relationships between the children and the staff.

Staff chatted with parents when they dropped off and collected their children. This helped staff build positive relationships and keep up-to-date with the children and their families' needs.

A parent's feedback included the following comment: "I can contact the staff about anything. Eating, sleeping, and the staff suggest things."

To help keep parents informed and involved in the day-to-day life of the service, management had put in place the Parent Zone app. This allowed everyone to stay in touch with each other. Parents shared how helpful it was. For example, "Love the app. I get to know what they ate and what they have done. Staff changes. Accidents, sign to say you have seen it ..."

Information about the child made up their personal plan. Staff used SHANARRI indicators (Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included) to consider and track children's wellbeing. This helped staff maintain continuity of care between home and the service. The plans clearly outlined children's routines, preferences and individual next steps and were regularly reviewed by families, staff and other health professionals. Parents told us they were happy with how the service worked with them and kept them informed of their child's progress. One of the questionnaires highlighted that a parent would like more information about their child's development. We shared this with the management.

The service held information about the children's dietary and cultural preferences. Staff used this information when planning children's meals and snacks.

The children and staff came together to have lunch in the playroom. The children were encouraged to wash their hands throughout the day. This included before and after eating. Lunch was relaxed and unhurried. We saw that the staff were flexible, kind and patient. They gave the children time and support to develop their eating and social skills. Staff praised the children as they ate and were on hand to help them as needed. We saw good opportunities for the babies and young children to be involved in the lunchtime experience. For example, they were able to practice eating their food with their own spoon as the staff fed them.

There was a variety of freshly prepared, nutritious food, as well as milk and water to drink. The children had helped set up the tables for lunch. They confidently poured their milk or water, got cutlery and plates and self-selected what they wanted to eat. Most of the children enjoyed the food. They were happy and relaxed as they chatted to each other. This approach helped the children to develop their skills, confidence and independence. It promoted children's choices and built friendships. Water was available throughout the day which helped ensure that children were hydrated.

As a direct result of feedback from parents, management were in the process of reviewing the menu. This was to improve the range of food available to the children. And ensure that it was shared with parents in advance.

A parent's feedback on how the service could be improved: "A weekly food menu, to allow more insight into what the kids are eating. Parents can help [Langholm] Playcare make more informed decisions around what their kids will eat."

Staff followed the national safe sleep guidance and were responsive to children's individual sleep and rest routines, needs and family wishes. Since the last inspection, improvements had been made to the room layout for children under two. This approach made it a warm and nurturing space for the young children to grow and learn in. New furniture had been purchased. This included 'coracles'. The low, cosy coracles made it easier for the baby or child to feel secure and settled. This helped them to sleep or rest. We saw a young child lying and relaxing in one. When they had rested, they could decide when to get up from the coracle and then join the other children at play.

We reviewed the service's medication procedures. We were satisfied that the procedures followed Care Inspectorate guidance. Detailed plans were in place to support staff to administer medication safely. This included the name of the medication, symptoms and expiry date. We found families had regularly reviewed and signed off on this information.

The management and staff had very good links with other professionals, as required, to support children and families. We spoke with staff from speech and language, and they were able to tell us about how staff had worked closely with them to agree strategies to support children as needed. This approach helped identify the next steps and techniques to help meet the child's individual needs and support positive outcomes for the child. This helped the children to settle into the service and ensured support was in place to help them reach their full potential.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Staff listened to the children and responded positively to their requests and ideas. The planned and spontaneous activities were linked to the children's interests. This included written information showing the child's progress, targets, next steps and desired outcomes. This meant that processes were in place to encourage children to be actively involved in leading their play and then reflect on and praise their achievements. Staff were kind and caring, interacted warmly with the children as they played, and were on hand to listen, support and encourage them as needed. This approach helped to enrich the children's play and learning and encouraged their imagination, creativity and curiosity. It helped the children to feel valued and meant that the children really enjoyed being at the nursery and out-of-school service, having fun, playing, chatting and laughing with their friends. We could see that there was a close bond between the staff and the children. Staff knew the children. They provided a nurturing environment. We saw staff and children cuddle, laugh and have fun together.

A parent told us: "My children attend before and after school club ... My children both feel cared for at [Langholm] Playcare and enjoy the play resources and planned activities."

Improvements had been made to the resources, which included natural materials and other items. This enabled children of all ages to explore and extend their play and helped stimulate their curiosity. This meant children had a good range of activities to take part in both indoors and outdoors. It encouraged them to use their imagination and promoted language, numeracy, and literacy skills. We saw children use objects to count, mark-make and pour. They enjoyed balancing and running around the edge of the large tractor tyres.

Children rolled balls down a hollowed-out tree branch and laughed when the balls fell off the edge. One child told us: "It goes down there. It's stuck. It fell off there." Another child spent a fair amount of time watching a ball float on water. They then found a stick and used it to stir the water to see how fast the ball would go round. Other children joined in, and there was lots of laughter as they took turns stirring the water and adding more balls. Children moved confidently around the outdoor space. The layout ensured that babies to school-aged children, were engaged in their play and having fun. These experiences helped the children to be active, build friendships and celebrate and share in their successes.

Due to the layout of the building, it could be difficult for staff to respond to children's requests to play outdoors. The management and staff were currently looking at how to improve the ease with which the children could choose to move between the outdoor and indoor spaces.

We watched the children as they played. A child was playing in the mud kitchen, moving and emptying water from one pot to another. They told us: "All dirty. That will do. That's the kettle. That's all my dishes."

A child drawing a figure with wet chalk on the fence, commented: "It's pink, but now it's dark. It needs eyes, legs, feet and new shoes."

Comments from the school children included:

"I like playing football."

"I like being outside."

"I like to draw or play on the hammock. I enjoy playing with the balls."

Parents told us what they liked about the service:

"The fun environment, the fun staff and the great facilities, especially the outdoor area."

"It gives my child the opportunity to learn and develop and gives them more independence. Great chance for kids to play. Kids are well looked after, and a good relationship is made between children and staff."

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The building had a secure door entry system. Staff monitored who entered and left the building. The outdoor play areas were secured. This meant the children were kept safe at the centre and as they played outdoors.

The two playrooms and the large games hall were bright and had good natural light and ventilation.

We had asked, at the previous inspection, if the service could improve the playroom layout for the younger children. We found that good quality, appropriate-sized furniture and equipment had been purchased. Staff had redesigned the areas within the room to support the age and abilities of the younger children. For example, the areas offered children cosy and warm spaces to play, rest and relax, as well as physical spaces that challenged and excited them. Toys and experiences were linked to the children's interests. The young children could access the open and low storage with ease. We watched them choose their toys and materials and then happily play with them. As discussed, it would be beneficial if the service purchased a chair to enable staff to sit comfortably and relax with the children, read stories or just cuddle them.

Staff had set up the areas within the other playroom to help children choose what they wanted to play with. There was a cosy space with a sofa for the children to relax and rest in. We saw that the children enjoyed playing on their own or with their friends. The outdoor and indoor spaces allowed them to take part in physical play, get fresh air, and enjoy the freedom to just run about. The children were comfortable and confident at the service and had fun. There was a good range of resources and materials to support the children's learning. The staff and management, as part of their ongoing planning, were looking at how they could continue to enhance and develop the play experiences for the children. And, also the ability for the children to flow freely between the indoor and outdoor spaces.

Staff had undertaken training in infection prevention and control. We found that management were updating their policies and procedures. New nappy changing and toilet facilities had been installed since the last inspection. Staff and children washed their hands throughout the day, and it was clear that the children were familiar with the service routines. These approaches helped to reduce the spread of infection across the nursery, and keep the children safe.

A range of risk assessments was in place. This helped staff to keep the children safe while attending the service. Management ensured that maintenance and repairs were undertaken, as required, to keep the building and equipment in good order. However, they did not routinely record maintenance and repair issues or link them to the risk assessments. We discussed this with management, and they agreed to put this in place. This approach will help show their arrangements for monitoring, maintenance and repairs to keep the building well-maintained and secure. The service had installed an exit door with an opening window in the large playroom. This will help children access an outdoor area directly from the playroom. This improvement will enable the children to be more independent and encourage the free flow of children between the nursery and outdoor space.

The nursery was registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). This helped ensure that the service's information was managed in line with general data protection requirements.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager and depute had formed a very good working partnership. They were motivated, enthusiastic, skilled and knowledgeable. They shared their plans and quality assurance processes with us. These helped them evaluate and improve the outcomes for the children, families and staff. The management team was realistic and acknowledged that the evaluation and improvement plans were a work in progress. They were clear that the service was on an improvement journey. They ensured that the children, parents, staff from external agencies and the wider community were part of, and influenced, the improvement processes.

We found that there was a lovely ethos between staff, children, parents and management. Staff shared with us how management actively sought their views and feedback to help improve the outcomes for the children and families. They participated in a good range of training. This enabled them to implement new approaches to capture children's ideas and wishes. Staff ensured that children's voices were heard and were central to the process when planning activities or improving the environment. This inclusive approach made the staff feel part of the team and valued.

Management and staff discussed with us the importance of ensuring that families and children participated in, and influenced, the ongoing improvements of the service. They had put in place various ways to get their feedback and ideas. They ensured that the information included the aspirations of children, their families and the wider community. We looked at how this was being recorded and monitored, and we could see how it was linked to the ongoing quality assurance processes. This approach helped the management and staff implement the service's vision, values and aims and continued to support the needs of the children, families and staff. Parents' comments included:

"Committed leadership, which is always seeking ways to improve."

"The leadership of the setting is strong. There is a clear team ethos between staff members with a strong emphasis on upskilling all staff. Training offered to staff is relevant and promotes improvement, challenges current practice and ensures development. Staff's views are welcomed, and leadership opportunities are available through the Fundraising Committee."

The service had very good links with the community and actively set up opportunities to reach out to people within the local area. For example, we spent time with the Read, Play, Sing group which runs for an hour on Fridays. This is for families with children up to three years of age. The younger children from the nursery also joined in the fun activities. Parents told us how beneficial the group was in helping them integrate into the village and get to know each other. It also helped the transition when their children started at the nursery. Comments included:

"I don't need to book; I can take my two [children] here. Flexible, make friends. We chat about the children. Relaxed and safe ... Would recommend it."

"It's great for transitioning to nursery ..."

"It is good to mix with all ages. I love it. It's a fantastic group ..."

"They [Langholm Playcare] are a vital service in the community. Thank you for providing such care for my child."

A voluntary committee ran the service. We noted that the Care Inspectorate had not been notified when there had been changes to the committee. We discussed this with the manager who agreed to address this.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We made an evaluation of very good for this key question. We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for the children attending the service.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

We found that management ensured that the deployment of staff, which included staff breaks and outings, supported good continuity of care across the day for the children attending the service. Staff told us that they really enjoyed working in the service. We also saw that they worked very well as a team to provide good play and learning for children in their care. We spoke to staff and observed practice, and this confirmed that staff were flexible, kind and caring, and they supported children to help them reach their full potential.

Discussion with staff confirmed that they had regular meetings with each other and management to discuss the ongoing needs of the children and families as well as operational issues. This approach was effective in helping them reflect on their practice and identify training opportunities that would support positive outcomes for children. Staff were keen to continue to develop their skills and knowledge. They told us about recent training they had taken part in and the positive impact on their practice. For example, child protection, strategies for working with children with additional needs, Introduction to infant mental health, pondering pedagogy, What I need to grow and block play. This helped staff to effectively support the children they were caring for and meet their individual needs.

Children and their families experienced a warm, kind, caring and nurturing setting. Very good relationships and effective communication were established between staff and parents. We found that staff worked very well together, and they were respectful in their interactions with each other. This helped create a positive ethos and ensured that they were good role models for the children. Staff were compassionate and respectful in their engagements with children and each other. They were invested in children's development. We observed staff praising, encouraging, and celebrating children's achievements during our inspection. The atmosphere was relaxed, and there was lots of laughter, cuddles and kindness.

Parents' comments included: "The parent zone app is amazing! I love seeing what [child] has been doing, and the staff are great at updating me when I collect her too. Brilliant facility with staff to match."

"Staff are very open, caring and welcoming."

"Friendly, reliable, caring staff. Nice welcoming atmosphere. Excellent communications with parents, clear and regular."

We found that the service was appropriately staffed. The ratio of staff to children was in line with current guidance. Management ensured that across the day, effective use of the staff's different skills and knowledge ensured that the children's wellbeing needs were met and that they were safe.

Staff told us they had regular meetings with each other and management to discuss the ongoing needs of the children and families as well as operational issues. They felt this was effective in helping them reflect on their practice and identify training opportunities that supported positive outcomes for children.

Children's comments about staff included: "They [staff] are really nice. They help you and take care of you." We also saw a child speaking to a member of staff and saying, "I love you."

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 the developmental needs of children under three, the provider should ensure environments are designed to maximise children's play and learning opportunities.

This is to ensure that care and support are 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 17 May 2023.

Action taken since then

The service had improved the range of toys and equipment for the children under three. The layout of the playroom had been improved to enable the children to move freely around the space, and toys and equipment had been set up to enable children to choose what they wanted to play with.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very 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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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