

Park ELC Day Care of Children

Scott Crescent
Alloa
FK10 1BD

Telephone: 01259 452226

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 January 2025

Service provided by:
Clackmannanshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002713

Service no:
CS2003043738

About the service

Park ELC is located in Alloa, Clackmannanshire. The service is set within a purpose-built open plan building with access to a large, enclosed garden. Smaller rooms off the main playroom provided space for small groups of children to have quiet focussed time with staff, and there were spaces for younger children to rest.

Park ELC was registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 114 children at any one time. Children are aged two years to those not yet attending primary school, of whom there will be a maximum of 30 children aged two to under three years.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 22 January 2025 between 09:15 and 16:30 and 23 January 2025 between 09:00 and 16:40. Feedback was shared during the inspection visit. Two inspectors carried out this inspection.

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 several children using the service
- spoke with and gathered feedback from families in person and received two responses to our MS forms questionnaire
- spoke with management and staff
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing care and warm interactions from staff that knew them well.
- Children's lunch time experiences were social and at a relaxed pace.
- Well-developed spaces and a wide range of resources enabled children to lead their own learning.
- Children's rights were promoted through quality interactions that respected their views.
- Meaningful links with families and the local community was improving outcomes for children.
- A manageable, focused improvement plan was leading to improved experiences and outcomes for children.
- Some policies should be further developed to ensure they are specific to the individual setting and reflect best practice guidance.

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?	5 - Very 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 evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on children's outcomes and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children benefitted from nurturing, caring interactions. Staff took time to get to know children well and understand how they communicate. They interacted with children at their level and enjoyed their time together, reading stories, playing games and joining in with their play. When asked what families like best about the service, one parent shared, "The high level of attention and care provided to my children". This showed children were respected and valued as individuals.

Children's individual needs and wellbeing was enhanced by the effective use of personal planning. Plans were developed in partnership with families which shared children's personal preferences, likes, dislikes and any individual supports. Where children required additional support, the service worked closely with other professionals, such as speech and language therapists to ensure the right strategies were in place. One parent told us, "I have been invited in to speak with my children's key workers and go through their child's plan and their achievements". This ensured that children received the right support at the right time.

Mealtimes were social experiences where staff mostly sat with children and spoke to them about their day. Children's independence was mostly promoted during these times as some children were encouraged to pour their own drinks. This was not yet consistent for all children in the service. The service highlighted this as an area to develop to ensure that children consistently experience quality mealtimes which promote their independence. We encouraged the service to continue with their plans as this would further promote positive outcomes for children.

Children's emotional wellbeing was enhanced through effective interactions which valued their contributions and respected how children communicated their feelings. Staff strived to understand how children communicated their emotions and responded appropriately and warmly to them. This meant that children felt listened to and nurtured.

Medication was stored safely and staff were confident to discuss children's individual medical needs. Appropriate permissions were in place to ensure the safe administration of medication. We suggested the service review some of the forms in place to ensure that the symptoms and actions to take in the case of emergency are clear. The team took action and updated these forms on the second day of inspection. This meant children's medical needs were well considered.

Staff were confident to discuss what they would do if they had concerns for children's safety. They took appropriate actions where required and worked with other agencies to keep children safe. We asked the service to ensure that actions taken were recorded and updated regularly in line with best practice guidance. This would further support children's safety.

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

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun and enjoyed their time in the service. They were engaged in their learning for extended periods, for example as they explored painting portraits in the art area or spent time playing outside with loose parts. Children's choice was respected and valued. They were able to choose where they wanted to play and what they wanted to play with. Staff promoted children's choice through effective interactions. For example, they would ask them if they wanted to take part in an activity and respected their decision. This meant children felt listened to.

Children's creativity and problem solving were promoted through quality interactions with staff. Staff knew when to interact with children and when to step back and let them explore independently. This allowed them to develop their own questions and curiosities about their environment and the world around them. As a result, children were confident in their learning environment and thriving.

The service had recently focused on the development of practice which supports children's progress in numeracy and literacy. For example, clear pathways and resources were put in place and shared with families to ensure children were supported to achieve. Books were used effectively to enhance children's learning throughout spaces within the service. Staff were developing their confidence to talk about children's learning in this area and identify their next steps. This meant children's progress in literacy and numeracy was well supported. Children's learning and achievements were celebrated through a range of well presented wall displays and floor books. Floor books were available to children and encouraged to use to allow them to reflect and share their learning with their peers and families. Children had individual diaries which celebrated their learning journey within the service. The service told us they had worked hard to develop staff observations of children's learning and had plans to further improve this. We encouraged the service to continue with their plans as this would celebrate each child's learning journey through the service.

Meaningful connections with families and the local community were enhancing children's experiences and providing positive outcomes for children. The team were committed to developing and enhancing children's connections to the local community. For example, one parent had recently started a crocheting group with families from the service and this was encouraged and supported by the team. The service worked closely with families and other agencies to ensure that Park ELC was an integral part of the local community. One parent shared, "We had a "stay and play" session which was lovely and we can attend a Wednesday cuppa group to hear all about the nursery". This showed that families and the local community were valued, respected and a meaningful part of the early learning setting.

How good is our setting?

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 quality theme as very good.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting consisted of three large play spaces, toilets, a quiet room and a large, enclosed garden space. Areas were well ventilated and benefitted from an abundance of natural light. Children had access to free flow play between the outside and inside areas across all of the rooms. Cosy, warm spaces had been developed for children to relax and take time away during their day. This promoted children's well-being.

Children benefitted from direct access to a large, enclosed garden. Staff had developed a natural area to support the running of a forest school approach. For example, children built dens with their friends and toasted marshmallows over the fire pit. This supported children to be active and benefit from regular fresh air.

Children's learning was supported through a range of well-considered resources. Loose parts were threaded throughout the environment and were placed effectively to spark children's curiosity or enhance their problem solving skills. The setting had worked hard to improve their learning environment to support children's engagement. Well thought out spaces meant that children were able to explore freely and gave a strong message to children that they mattered. Resources in the younger children's room supported their developing play and linked closely with their interests. In the larger room, there were areas for children to explore large blocks or spend time in small groups. As a result, children remained engaged in meaningful play.

Infection control practices minimised the potential spread of infection, supporting a safe environment for children. Children were supported to wash their hands and spaces were clean and free from clutter. Nappy changing procedures and policies reflected best practice guidance. This meant children's health was promoted as the risk of infection was minimised.

Risk assessments were mostly in place for indoor and outdoor environments which raised staff awareness of potential risks, benefits, and measures to support a safe learning environment. Some risk assessments were in the processes of being reviewed to ensure they were up to date and reflected the good practice observed. We encouraged the service to continue to develop these risk assessments to ensure that they consistently highlight and address potential hazards to children and staff.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

A positive ethos and a culture of continuous improvement within the staff resulted in quality experiences for children. One parent shared, "The children are at the heart of the nursery". The service had previously reviewed their vision, values and aims to ensure these reflected the aspirations of families, children and staff. The leadership team shared that these were in the process of being reviewed again to ensure that they reflected the views of all who use and access the service. This would further ensure that children benefit from a shared vision.

The leadership team were friendly, approachable, and engaged well with the inspection process. At the time of inspection, the service was supported by a manager from another local authority service. There were plans to work closely in the future between the two services. Almost all staff told us they found the leadership team to be supportive and approachable. Parents shared that they felt listened to by leaders and that their views were acted on and respected. This supported families to feel valued.

Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were leading to improved outcomes for children. Children, families and staff were regularly involved in giving feedback about the service and suggestions on how it could be improved. A reflective team continued to use a range of methods to reflect on and improve their practice. Some policies and processes required updating to ensure that they reflected best practice guidance, for example, the child protection policy. We shared this with the manager of the service that agreed to review policies to ensure they are specific to the service and reflect current best practice guidance (see area for improvement 1).

A meaningful improvement plan was in place which was focused and manageable. One of the priorities of the service included improving outcomes for children in literacy and numeracy. The plan had been created in consultation with staff and was shared with parents. Clear actions had been taken and staff were confident to speak about the improvements that had been made and impact on outcomes for children. Staff told us they had been actively involved in leading improvements and their ideas were valued. The leadership team provided a clear focus for improvements including setting out responsibilities and expectations. As a result, children experienced a service which continued to improve.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children continue to experience high quality care, the provider should review their policies and procedures to ensure they are specific to the service and reflect current best practice guidance.

This is in order to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

How good is our staff team?

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff knew children very well and secure relationships between them had been established. Children were consistently supported by staff in ways which were nurturing, respectful and met their needs. This meant that children felt safe, secure, and happy in a service where a caring staff team nurtured and supported them. All parents' feedback was very positive about the staff team and their skills.

Staff were highly motivated and clear about their roles. They worked very well as a team by sharing ideas and communicating effectively. Staff were confident in their leadership roles, regularly and effectively sharing best practice with their peers. One parent told us, "They are there for the parents as well as the children and really do have their best interests at heart". Another parent said, "All staff are approachable and provide excellent feedback". This showed families felt valued and respected.

Staff worked well as a team, despite the changes in the team, staff had worked well to share their skills and support each other. They were respectful and caring towards each other and this was reflected in the respectful way that children treated each other.

Communication and team working enabled consistent approaches and continuity of care for children. Daily communication with families provided opportunities for staff to reflect on the experiences and opportunities for play, and plan to extend children's interests and learning. More formal team meetings were held regularly which allowed all staff to feel informed and included in decisions and development areas.

The leadership team recognised and valued the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed throughout the full day. Staff breaks were planned in a way that minimised the impact on children, while allowing staff to rest and be refreshed. Staffing levels allowed for staff to support children's individual needs where required. Effective staff deployment meant staff were supporting nurturing experiences and were able to meet all children's individual needs well.

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	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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