

Lerwick Early Learning and Childcare Day Care of Children

Old Infant School
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Shetland
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 April 2025

Service provided by:
Shetland Islands Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002063

Service no:
CS2003009584

About the service

Lerwick Early Learning and Childcare provides a daycare of children service in Lerwick, Shetland. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 74 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 74 are aged three years to those not yet attending primary school full time, of whom no more than five are aged two years to under three years.

The service is located within the town of Lerwick, close to local schools, shops, parks and other amenities. The children have access to enclosed outdoor areas.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 and 29 April 2025 between 08:45 and 17:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

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

To inform our evaluations we:

- Spoke with children using the service
- Spoke with four of their parents/carers
- Received 21 parent questionnaires
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice and daily experiences
- Reviewed documents.

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.

Key messages

- Interactions between staff and children were nurturing, warm and caring.
- Children experienced fun and interesting play and learning opportunities.
- Children's safety was promoted as they accessed a safe and well-maintained environment and resources.
- Effective quality assurance and self-evaluation impacted positively on outcomes for children.
- The service was appropriately staffed and staff worked well together to support children throughout the day.

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

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 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring, and loving approaches. Staff interactions were consistently calm and supportive, promoting children's sense of security. They were attentive to children and provided cuddles and reassurance when needed. This contributed to a nurturing ethos that supported strong attachments between children and staff.

Children benefited from their families being warmly welcomed into the service. They were enabled to support their children to settle in. Almost all parents strongly agreed or agreed that they had a strong connection with the staff caring for their child. Daily communication with families at drop off and collection time contributed to creating positive relationships. This enabled opportunities for information to be shared between the service and home to support children's care. Parent comments included, "[Staff] are all kind and considerate and make the children feel comfortable and safe." "They are approachable, kind and genuinely interested in my child's wellbeing."

Children's wellbeing was effectively supported through personal planning which was reviewed regularly with parents. Staff knew children well and were aware of their individual needs. Effective partnerships had been formed with external agencies to help support children's developmental needs. Children requiring additional support had individualised strategies in place, which were reflected in practice. This ensured positive outcomes for children and supported them to achieve their potential.

Children's health was promoted through the process in place to manage the administration of medication. Clear health plans supported staff to know the signs, symptoms, and actions to take where a child may require medication. This helped keep children safe and well.

Children enjoyed snack and mealtimes which were relaxed and unhurried. Staff sat with children at these times, helping to promote a safe, sociable experience. Children's communication and language was encouraged through discussions on a variety of topics. There were opportunities for children to further develop their independence and life skills through involvement in the preparation and serving of their food. Children's health was promoted and parental preferences reflected through staff awareness of any allergies or dietary requirements.

Children's safety and wellbeing was promoted as staff showed a good understanding in their role of identifying, recording and referring any safeguarding concerns. This meant children and their families were provided with the support and help they needed.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun and engaged in play experiences, showing high levels of engagement and excitement. They had very good opportunities to lead their own play and learning, which impacted positively on their development and wellbeing. For example, children enjoyed being doctors in the role play area and exploring the sensory play on offer. Other children worked together to transport logs, wood slices and other

materials to create a "bug city." The range of resources and freedom to transport, supported children to extend their own learning in ways that were meaningful to them.

Staff joined in with play and were responsive to children's interests. They were skilful in knowing when to step back from play and join in again to spark children's interest and curiosity. Staff recognised where further challenge would be beneficial and equally, where support was required. This meant staff could respond meaningfully to children's needs and wishes. As a result, children were respected, valued and achieving.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were embedded across all experiences. These included real life resources such as clocks, calendars, shopping lists, scales, old phones and measuring tapes. Mathematical language was used as children were encouraged to take part in number hunts, play games and count as part of the daily routines. Opportunities for early mark making and early reading skills were promoted through the recognition of environmental print and books, recognising and writing names when registering. Children enjoyed singing songs, reading and creating their own stories with staff in the comfortable indoor and outdoor areas.

Planning approaches supported a balance of spontaneous and planned learning, which effectively captured children's thoughts, ideas and discussions. A mixture of focus week and ongoing observations were used to identify and develop next steps to support children's learning and progression. Children had real ownership of their 'learning stories' and loved looking at and sharing these, which enabled them to further reflect on their own learning. One child commented, "My book is very good." This meant children were well supported to achieve and progress.

Parents commented positively on the range of play stating, "My child has been involved in a lot of experiences while at nursery, such as going for walks in the community, going for a picnic snack and outdoor play." "There is a great choice and lots of opportunities for learning and development." "Various outings and lots of outdoor fun. The nursey has a wide range of play stations for them to experience."

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced by strong connections to their own and wider communities. This included visits to the library, park, museum and folk festival. Parents were invited in for stay and play, Bookbug sessions and a charity bake sale for which the children had done some baking. These enhanced children's play and learning experiences and promoted a sense of belonging within their local environment.

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 key question as very good.

Children experienced a setting that was clean, attractive, well-furnished and comfortable, with natural décor which helped create a calm atmosphere to support children's wellbeing. There were spaces to rest and relax. For example, the story corner included an adult sized sofa that children and staff could snuggle up on to read a story or chat. Rugs and cushions softened the space and plants added a homely touch. This supported children to feel safe and secure.

Play spaces offered choice, challenge and opportunities to develop creativity and problem-solving. For example, the mark making and art areas contained extensive resources that inspired children's creativity and promoted pre-writing skills. The range of open-ended materials inside and out enabled children's

imaginative thinking, whilst displays and set up of resources invited their interaction. As a result, children demonstrated sustained engagement in their choice of play.

Displays around the environment showcased children's artwork, creations, photographs and writing. As a result, children felt valued as they were able to share their learning with family and friends. This gave a strong message that children mattered and enabled children to take pride in their work and celebrate their achievements.

Since the previous inspection staff had worked to develop the outdoor play areas and now accessed the enclosed natural garden area. Children enjoyed exploring the natural, open-ended resources such as cable reels and tyres, climbing trees and running around the large space. This supported children to develop their physical development and movement skills. There were opportunities for children to explore nature as they hunted for insects and used flowers, mud, plants and stones to support their play. The mud kitchen area offered opportunities for children to engage in imaginative play. One parent commented, "My child loves playing outdoors and I have noticed a vast improvement on what is on offer to them outside."

Staff worked well together to identify and remove risks to children within the setting both indoors and outdoors. For example, any spills were promptly cleaned up and children were taught how to use tools, such as child sized scissors safely. Children were encouraged to participate in risk assessing and were keen to be part of the daily 'safety team.' They took part in discussion and recorded information to assess if the outdoor space was safe for play before being used. This contributed to children having an awareness of risk and to support their own and each other's safety and wellbeing.

Children's health was promoted by staff's understanding of infection prevention and control. Staff were clear on their responsibilities and undertook regular cleaning. Hand washing was well supported at appropriate times throughout the day, including before and after eating and after toileting. This promoted a safe environment for children.

Children's personal information was stored securely to ensure families privacy and confidentiality.

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.

The service had clear vision values and aims, which had been recently reviewed in consultation with children, families, and staff. These included 'To provide rich and nurturing early learning and childcare experiences which enable children and families to reach their full potential.' This supported everyone to know what was important for the service to meet the needs of children.

Children and families had opportunities to be meaningfully involved in developing the service. They were regularly asked for feedback in a variety of ways, and their suggestions used to influence change. Recent feedback had led to the development of a new learning story format and online blog. We suggested the process could be improved with the service sharing information of how children and family's suggestions had been taken forward. This would support them to understand the impact their opinions and ideas have on service delivery and improvements.

Positive experiences for children were supported by a realistic and achievable improvement plan. This included an action plan of key priorities identified at the previous inspection and was regularly reviewed to

identify progress, and next steps. A positive ethos helped to ensure that staff were working towards the same goals and progress was seen to be contributing to improved experiences for children.

Leadership at all levels was actively encouraged. This empowered staff to share their individual skills and knowledge. This included staff leading Bookbug sessions for children and families and an outdoor learning champion. Best practice visits to other settings allowed staff to reflect on how to make further improvements. This approach built on existing strengths and supported all staff to further develop their practice and skills.

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 key question as very good.

Children benefitted from a caring and nurturing staff team. Staff were enthusiastic and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. They showed respect and consideration in their interactions with each other as well as with the children. This promoted a happy atmosphere for children to enjoy. Parents described staff as, "Easy to talk to", "friendly" and "supportive."

A supportive induction process for new members of staff helped them grow in confidence and become competent in their role. A mix of staff skills and experience helped to ensure children's experiences were positive.

Children benefited from effective supervision and quality engagement throughout the day. The service was appropriately staffed which allowed children to make full use of the different areas across the setting. Staff communicated effectively, moved around the setting, and responded to children's needs by positioning themselves where they were needed most.

Staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. This helped to ensure that children were safe and well supported.

A variety of training and professional development opportunities allowed staff to develop their skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children. In addition to core training, such as child protection and first aid, staff had attended training on topics such as outdoor learning, risk benefit and planning for children's learning. Staff could confidently discuss how training had positively impacted their practice and how this supported children. Staff provided training feedback at regular team meetings to share knowledge and ensure consistent practice within the team.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 25 November 2024, the provider should develop clear procedures to ensure children are cared for in a safe environment. To do this the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) Detail procedures to identify and reduce all safety risks.
- b) Detail appropriate hand washing procedures and include measures to ensure staff support and supervise effective children's hand hygiene.
- c) Detail procedures to ensure children's toys and resources are clean and maintained in a good state of repair.

This is to comply with Regulation 10 (2) (b), (d) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24).

This requirement was made on 27 September 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

- a) Staff worked well together to identify and remove risks to children within the setting both indoors and outdoors. Children's safety was supported by the risk assessments which were in place and reflected in practice.
- b) Staff were clear on their responsibilities and hand washing was well supported at appropriate times throughout the day, including before and after eating and after toileting.
- c) Staff had worked to develop the indoor and outdoor play areas. Potential hazards identified at previous inspection had been made safe. Play spaces were well thought out, uncluttered and looked inviting. A range of clean, good quality resources were available for children to play with.

Met - within timescales

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 promote children's health and wellbeing, the manager and staff should ensure the safe administration of medication. This should include but not be limited to:

- a) Recording signs and symptoms of illness, where relevant.
- b) Recording actions to be taken if medication administered is not effective.

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

'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective' (HSCS 1.24).

This area for improvement was made on 27 September 2024.

Action taken since then

Medication was stored safely and appropriately. Improved formats for written information included signs and symptoms of illness and what to do if medication was ineffective.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote children's learning and development, the provider should ensure all staff have sufficient knowledge and skills in supporting and extending children's learning and should be confident to put this into practice.

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

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

This area for improvement was made on 27 September 2024.

Action taken since then

The staff team were using a range of national guidance to develop their practice and had completed training in high quality interactions. Children benefitted from a range of very good quality learning experiences that followed their interests to enhance and extend learning. Staff used effective questioning to extend and develop children's individual learning. Staff recognised where further challenge would be beneficial and equally, where support was required.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To keep children safe and promote their wellbeing, the provider and manager should ensure effective quality assurance processes are in place, including robust audits and monitoring of staff practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) 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 12 September 2023.

Action taken since then

Effective quality assurance processes were in place and included audits of medication and the environment which helped keep children safe and well. Observations of practice helped identify where staff may benefit from further training.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To promote consistently positive experiences for all children, the provider should support the management team to effectively review the deployment of staff responsively across the day.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14); and

'If I am supported and cared for by a team or more than one organisation, this is well coordinated so that I experience consistency and continuity' (HSCS, 4.17).

This area for improvement was made on 12 September 2023.

Action taken since then

The service was appropriately staffed which allowed children to make full use of the different areas across the setting. Staff communicated effectively, moved around the setting, and responded to children's needs by positioning themselves where they were needed most.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very 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?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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