

Strathdevon ELC Day Care of Children

Strathdevon Primary School
Park Place
Dollar
FK14 7AA

Telephone: 01259 742 435

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
11 June 2025

Service provided by:
Clackmannanshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002713

Service no:
CS2003015586

About the service

Strathdevon ELC is a day care of children service provided by Clackmannanshire Council and is located in the village of Dollar. The nursery is situated within the school building with access to their own enclosed outdoor space and the school grounds. The nursery is registered to provide a service to a maximum of 44 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is situated in a rural area and is close to some local amenities such as, a community village hall and nature walks. Children are cared for in a designated space, they have access to the school gym hall, their own toilet facilities, areas to have their meals and families have direct access to the nursery.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out by one inspector, which took place on Tuesday 10 June 2025 between 08:45 and 16:45. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this 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 children using the service
- received feedback from 13 families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's 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

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children's play and learning experiences had been enhanced through a range of rich and stimulating resources that reflected their interests.
- Children were cared for by a staff team who were skilled and passionate about getting it right for them.
- Children benefited from a staff team who valued continuous improvement throughout the service.
- Children were confident to lead their own play and learning.
- Children had opportunities to develop their independence in meaningful ways.
- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from staff who knew them well.
- Children experienced daily access to outdoor play and fresh air.
- Children benefitted from a staff team who were proactive and put measures in place to ensure they were kept safe.

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?	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

Children experienced warm and nurturing interactions from staff who cared for them. Staff were down at children's level while they engaged in conversations and when they played with them. They knew children well and recognised cues which helped them to support children while they played. This helped children to feel valued and respected.

Children had personal plans in place that supported staff to meet their needs. These forms were reviewed with parents in line with current guidance. Individual risk assessments were in place to support children to thrive in an environment that was right for them. We discussed with the service how these personal plans could be developed further. The management team had identified how these could be developed further and shared plans of implementing new systems in the new term. This will further support staff to meet children's current and changing needs.

Medication was stored in a locked cabinet within the playroom. Medication was stored separately in bags with medication forms. Administration forms were completed by parents prior to children receiving the medication. We reviewed these forms and identified ways these could be developed further with the management team. For example, ensuring it was clear when and where parents signed forms when reviews took place. This would further support the staff to ensure medication stored within the service is still required and accurate.

Children had opportunities to develop their independence through a variety of ways. Children were seen going to get themselves ready to play outside. They confidently changed their shoes and checked the weather to see if they needed their coat. Further opportunities were provided, for example children choosing to help prepare snack or activities such as arts and crafts, where they were encouraged to cut their own pictures with scissors. This meant that children were able to build their confidence and begin to understand their own capabilities.

Children benefitted from a free flow snack time throughout the morning. They were seen helping to prepare the snack and setting up the area. Children chose when to have their snack. Independence opportunities were developed further through choosing what to have, where to sit and washing their dishes when they were finished. Lunch time was served in a separate space, next to the dining hall in the school and was split into two sittings. Children helped set up the table, self-served most of their meal and poured their own drinks. The space provided children with a calming and relaxing environment to eat their meal. Staff sat with children and chatted about their day. A parent told us, "My child enjoys the range of options on offer". Another parent shared, "always healthy options for snack and also lunch time". As a result, children were happy and relaxed while they ate at mealtimes.

Children were kept safe while they attended the service. Staff were trained in child protection procedures and were aware of who to take concerns to. Policies and procedures were in place and regularly reviewed by all staff. This ensured staff were able to follow correct processes and provide appropriate support to children and their families when needed.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children were happy and having fun while they engaged in their play and learning. They were leading their own play ideas with quality planned and spontaneous experiences. For example, children were interested in role playing 'shops' and this was extended further through skilled staff adding more resources, such as real money. This helped children to extend their play ideas in a way that was meaningful to them.

Language, literacy and numeracy opportunities were provided to children throughout their learning environment. The use of symbols were mostly used to support children with their understanding. We discussed how this could be developed further to provide consistency for children. Numeracy was threaded throughout the indoor and outdoor environment. Children were seen engaging in activities that challenged their problem solving skills. For example, building with blocks and finding items around their environment that was the same height. Story bags were available for children to use and explore. These bags helped children to develop their imagination skills through retelling stories in their own words.

Planning approaches had recently been developed and were in the early stages of embedding them within staff practice. They were child centred and followed children's interests. Mind maps were used by staff to gather information to inform next steps, highlight what children were interested in and gather children's voice. These new planning processes were being used to evaluate the children's learning environment and contributed to professional discussions between the staff team. For example, staff would identify areas children did not access and how they were going to promote this area, such as arts and crafts. As a result, children's interests were woven throughout their play spaces and encouraged them to explore different areas.

Quality observations took place that supported children to extend their interests and learning. These observations were shared with families on an online platform. Individual observations were not always clear on what the significant learning for the child was and next steps were not always revisited. The staff shared that they have been discussing different ways they could track next steps to ensure they were meaningful to individual children. We would encourage the service to continue with their plans in developing children's observations further. This would ensure that children were supported to achieve in a way that was right for them.

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 were cared for in a bright, comfortable and welcoming environment. Play spaces were clean and free from clutter. The use of soft furnishings such as, cushions and blankets helped to create a homely feel. There was ample space for children to explore and extend their play ideas. Children had dedicated spaces to keep their belongings and their art work was displayed respectfully around their environment. This gave children the message that they mattered.

Children benefitted from an environment that was carefully planned out and reviewed by skilled staff. For example, children had free flow access to a well-resourced outdoor area. Resources were low and at child height, where they could access them as they wished.

Children were encouraged to transport items between the indoor and outdoor areas to extend their play ideas. As a result, children were able to make independent choices while they played and explored.

Children were mostly kept safe while they explored their environments. Risks were assessed and documented in risk assessments. Daily risk assessments were in place that mostly supported the staff to review the play areas before children attended. We asked the service to ensure these were used effectively. We identified on the day of inspection a fire exit gate that was not fully secure. The service were proactive and a maintenance team were on site that afternoon to review the gate. We further discussed the gaps in parts of the fence that was used to secure a designated area for children in the nursery to use. Management have decided to not use this space until work has been carried out to minimise and reduce these risks further. These measures the management team took on the day of inspection have further supported staff to ensure children were safe while they freely explored their environments.

Children's wellbeing was well supported through effective infection prevention control measures. Regular cleaning of environments and resources took place. Children and staff washed their hands at appropriate times of the day, for example before eating and after using the toilet. Children were heard being reminded by staff to flush the toilet and wash their hands. This helped to reduce the spread of infection.

How good is our leadership?

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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service had plans to review their vision, values and aims in the new term. We discussed the importance of revisiting these regularly. This would help to build a shared vision and establish what the service means to all those who use it.

Children and families were mostly meaningfully involved in the service. Opportunities for families to attend the service and play with their children were provided, for example stay and play sessions. A parent told us, "I always feel welcomed into the nursery and appreciate having regular opportunities to discuss my child's care and learning with staff". We discussed with the staff team further ways families could be involved within the service. The staff team were enthusiastic and were proactive with implementing plans on how to improve the way they communicate with their families. This would support all families to feel involved and part of their children's learning journey.

Quality assurance systems were in place that supported the management team with the running of the service. Some actions that were required to be carried out were broken down into monthly tasks. These processes could be developed further, for example including monitoring of audit systems. This would further support the staff team with identifying gaps and trends or why processes were not effective.

A meaningful improvement plan was in place that reflected priorities within the nursery. The service worked hard to improve their self-evaluation processes where they take part in regular reflections and evaluations. The staff team were passionate about making these improvements. For example, leadership roles such as, communication champions and numeracy leadership supported the service with targeted areas of development. As a result, children's outcomes were enhanced through good reflective practice.

Policies and procedures were in place that underpinned the service.

They were reviewed regularly and shared with staff. The National Induction Resource was used to support staff when they returned or started within the service. Monthly reflections between the staff member and management helped staff to feel supported and carry out their professional role. As a result, staff's wellbeing was well considered and contributed to a positive ethos within the service.

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

Children were cared for by staff who were warm and nurturing towards them. Children and families were supported by staff who knew them well. A parent told us, "the staff are so welcoming and friendly". Another parent shared, "the staff really enjoy their job and work with parents to achieve the child's best". As a result, positive relationships had been formed.

Staff were appropriately deployed throughout the day to meet children's needs. Busier times of the day did not impact negatively on children's experiences. For example, areas such as the outside remained open over lunch time. This allowed children to continue to make their choices on where they wanted to play. Staff and parents had expressed that there had been difficult times with staffing. The management team requested support from the local authority to support with staffing during these times. This helped the team to ensure they continued to meet children's needs while they attended.

Children benefitted from a staff team who communicated well and respectfully with each other. Staff were heard sharing information with one another, for example what children were attending or if they were going on a break. Registration boards were used and displayed within the service. Staff used these to identify how many children they took with them to different areas, such as the gym hall. This contributed to keeping children safe and protected.

Children were supported by a staff team with a mix of knowledge and skills. Staff participated in regular training that was linked to identified improvements or areas of interest to them, for example 'Play Uninterrupted'. Team reviews of core training took place. We discussed the importance of staff reflecting on their training as individuals alongside their team. This would help staff to identify how training would impact their practice and improve outcomes for children.

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	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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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