

Stramash Outdoor Nursery Day Care of Children

Hilltops
Ganavan Road
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PA34 5TU

Telephone: 01631 566 080

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 July 2025

Service provided by:
Stramash Social Enterprise

Service provider number:
SP2011011702

Service no:
CS2011301594

About the service

Stramash Outdoor Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children at any one time, where no more than 40 are aged three years to those not yet attending primary school and no more than seven are attending primary school.

Stramash Outdoor Nursery is a daycare of children service. The service operates from a woodland site, on a hillside and lower field near Ganavan, close to Oban. Two huts on the woodland site provide warmth and shelter and an indoor space for the children to enjoy a range of different activities while in the lower field there were two bell tents.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 14th July 2025 to Wednesday 16th July 2025. 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Spoke with children using the service.
- Spoke to parents of children attending.
- Reviewed parental responses to an online questionnaire.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy, confident and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing support from staff who knew them very well.
- Children benefitted from a rich outdoor learning environment.
- Children enjoyed relaxed, unhurried, sociable snack and meal times.
- Positive relationships with families supported continuity of care and effective partnerships.
- The manager and staff were committed to the ongoing development of the service.
- Quality assurance processes should continue to be embedded to secure sustained improvements across the service.

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 outcomes for children, and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children were all very happy, confident and having fun as they played and took part in various activities across the setting. There was a great deal of chatter and laughter between the children and the staff which demonstrated the service's value of fun was embedded throughout the day. Children had formed close attachments with staff and their peers, which supported their emotional wellbeing and sense of security. Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to support their overall wellbeing. Staff knew children well and were responsive to their needs, wants and cues. Staff were down at children's level when engaging in play and conversations. Children were seen to actively seek out staff for comfort and reassurance if they wanted it.

Staff were able to confidently discuss the needs of the children they were caring for and how they were supporting them. Children's overall wellbeing was being supported through effective use of personal planning. Following a previous inspection, personal planning had been identified as an area requiring improvement. There were now appropriate systems in place to record information to ensure everyone had a clear knowledge and understanding as to how to meet children's care and support needs appropriately. Personal plans were routinely reviewed in partnership with parents to ensure that they reflected children's current needs and the strategies required to meet these needs. Improvements had also been made to the system to audit and monitor the quality of personal plans. We looked at a sample of personal plans and found that they contained a good level of information and were routinely updated. They also identified children's progression and whether next steps had been met. The management and staff should continue to embed their system of personal planning.

Where children required further support, staff had established good working relationships with other agencies and were confident in their role in liaising with them. They worked closely with other professionals to ensure consistency in their approach. As a result, children experienced a collaborative approach to their care and development.

Children and families benefited from a service that recognised the importance of establishing positive working relationships with families to support children. This ensured that children received appropriate levels of consistent care and support. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time, and information was also shared with parents via an online app. The majority of parents were very positive about the level of information they received while others would appreciate more detailed information about their child's day. Parent comments included: 'At the end of the day, we get an overview of what he has been up to and regular pictures', 'Their communication is excellent and clearly know my child', 'Frequent reports through the blossom app and from her key worker'.

Snack and lunchtimes were very calm, relaxed and sociable experiences where the children were encouraged to develop important independence skills. The staff were very well organised when providing rolling snacks and lunches which ensured that children received their food promptly once they sat at a table. Children were provided with a hot meal at lunchtime. Staff were focused on the children during this time and provided appropriate levels of individualised support and supervision. Staff sat with children which provided

opportunities to form and maintain relationships, and support language and communication skills. Throughout mealtimes all staff ensured appropriate food, infection control and hand hygiene practices were adhered to.

Children's safety and wellbeing was protected through the staff's understanding of their role in identifying, recording and referring any concerns they may have. Staff had attended relevant child protection training and demonstrated a good understanding of the service's policy and procedures.

Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Stramash Outdoor Nursery provided children with a nurturing and exciting space to grow and develop through nature-based play and learning. This allowed children to develop self confidence, independence and self esteem. Children played happily and purposefully together engaging in real life experiences which enhanced their resilience and impacted positively on their development, health, wellbeing and happiness. They had fun and were very comfortable within their natural surroundings.

The children were having fun and were fully engaged as they experimented and explored with a good balance of planned and spontaneous play opportunities which were in response to their interests. Children were offered good opportunities to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning. Since the last inspection, the manager and staff had significantly developed the setting and introduced a wider range of resources and experiences which were interesting, stimulating, challenging and fun. The resources and experiences promoted children's curiosity and imagination. Play spaces were well resourced and promoted learning through real life experiences. Good use was being made of loose parts and open ended resources to enrich children's play and learning. Parents commented positively about the improvements to the setting and how they had benefited children's play and learning.

Planning approaches were child led and responsive to children's interests which supported children to feel involved and empowered. Children were given ownership of their play and encouraged to be independent. Staff supported children, allowing them to plan, lead their play and make choices at their own pace. This helped children to feel secure and settled. Children's successes and achievements were recognised and celebrated, helping them develop a sense of pride, build resilience and support their self-esteem. We discussed the benefits of making use of floor books to record children's interests and illustrate how interests were extended and developed. Floor books could also be shared with families to keep them informed and engaged in their children's learning journey.

Following previous inspections, improving the approach and skills of staff in relation to planning for children's learning and tracking and monitoring their progress was identified as an area for improvement. Since then, staff had received training and support to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps. The service's monitoring systems included a member of the management team routinely looked at individual children's learning folders to check that quality observations were being completed and progression identified. As part of the inspection, we looked at the observations completed for several children. We identified that there had been improvements in the quality and content of observations.

Staff were skilled at engaging with children's conversations and play situations to enhance their understanding and support their learning, which included knowing when to step back and let children discover things on their own and when adult support was needed. They naturally engaged with children and showed interest. They engaged younger children in a warm and kind manner. They were down at their level and offered support at a pace that was right for them. Older children were well supported by staff who were skilled in effective questioning. Staff were able to support, extend and challenge children's thinking. Staff

interactions encouraged children to think independently and to reflect. As a result, children were respected, valued and achieving.

We recognised good quality play, learning and development was taking place. Language, literacy and numeracy opportunities were woven throughout the children's learning environment. Resources and conversations with staff encouraged children to be curious and naturally explore literacy, numeracy and mathematical concepts during their play. Staff interactions gently encouraged children to extend their play and learning. For example, staff made good use of songs and rhymes to encourage vocabulary and language skills. Children had the opportunity to develop their numeracy and literacy skills and mathematical language while playing with real life resources and open ended resources across the setting and while taking part in investigative play.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very 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

Stramash Outdoor Nursery was a fully outdoor service with two distinct areas available to the children and staff. The upper part was set amongst trees on a hill, while the lower section was a field. Both areas offered children a large natural environment where they could be adventurous, explore, be independent and develop a range of physical skills in calm and peaceful surroundings. Each area included shelter for the children during poor weather - in the field there were bell tents erected while on the hill there were two wooden cabins.

There was a system to report any repairs and damaged items were promptly replaced. There were appropriate risk assessments in place which promoted the safety of the children as well as regular visual checks completed before children arrived and throughout the day. Staff fully involved the children in risk assessments and problem-solving to build their confidence and skills in assessing risk and safe decision-making. Children explored the site with ease and were confident in recognising potential risks and ensuring their own safety and the safety of others.

Robust infection prevention and control practices were in place to support a safe environment and children's health and wellbeing. For example, across the setting there were facilities for children to wash their hands with warm running water. We observed children being supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing at necessary times. Food safety practices were appropriate and provided good levels of safety for children.

Since the previous inspection, work had been done to improve both areas of the setting. The site was now well thought out and better organised, providing a stimulating space where children comfortably engaged with nature. Throughout the inspection, we observed children who were very engaged in various activities across the site. Positive approaches to supporting risky and adventurous play were fully embedded within practice. There were opportunities for the children to assess and manage risk and build self confidence. A wider range of engaging and challenging resources and activities were now available throughout the day; for example, open-ended and natural resources, mud kitchen, digging area, extensive loose parts, den building and water play. Staff routinely reviewed children's use of resources and areas to make sure that children were engaged and challenged.

Children's safety was well managed as staff were attentive and alert to children's movements. There were high staffing levels and staff confidently deployed themselves to where they were needed to ensure that children were appropriately supervised. Tools such as updated registers and regular headcounts helped children to move safely around the setting.

Effective arrangements were in place to ensure children and families' personal information was stored securely. This ensured confidentiality was maintained and complied with best practice guidance.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are well led

The management team and staff fully engaged with the inspection process, demonstrating a positive attitude towards change and improvement. They were motivated and responsive to suggestions made during the inspection to continue to improve outcomes for children and families. There was a positive working environment, where staff felt confident to share ideas to initiate change and were encouraged to share the responsibilities. This was highlighted by the improvements which had been put in place since the previous inspection.

The vision, values and aims of the service were being reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflected the welcoming and community ethos. The manager recognised the importance of including children, families and staff in the process. This will support everyone to know what is important for the service to meet the needs of children and their families.

Following a previous inspection, a requirement had been made in relation to quality assurance. This had now been fully actioned. The manager and staff have continued to develop systems of quality assurance to ensure that the quality of the service was monitored and assessed in a focussed and meaningful way. These systems were now embedded and leading to sustained improvements across the service. There was an improvement plan in place which was focussed on meeting the requirements and areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. There was a quality assurance calendar in place that ensured purposeful audits of various aspects of the nursery were routinely carried out. One parent commented 'There has been so many improvements and steps taken to make sure children are at the heart of all decisions'.

The management team continued to monitor the setting and observe staff practice to ensure children receive high quality play and learning experiences. The management also met with staff to discuss the continuous improvement of the service to secure progression and positive outcomes for children. Team meetings supported staff to develop self-evaluation skills and help to plan for improvement. These meetings were an opportunity for the staff team to reflect on current practice and identify how they could improve the service provided to children and their families.

The community ethos of the nursery was reflected in the manager's and staff's positive relationships with families. Involving children and their families meaningfully in the continuous improvement of the service contributed to building strong, trusting relationships and them feeling included. Regular communication with families took place through a variety of methods, including daily face to face discussion, online

platforms, community catch ups and community days where families were invited to spend time in the setting. We observed parents being welcomed at the gatehouse and staff spending time talking to them. Parents commented positively about their relationship with the management and staff. Comments made included: 'I have regular conversations with our keyworker, 'Their communication is excellent', 'Staff are all so friendly and always answer any questions', 'Thank you all for your efforts and the developments you've made over the last 2 years' and 'The staff greet us with smiles and warmth... They make us feel part of a Stramash family'.

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

Children benefitted from a very happy, caring and nurturing staff team who knew them well and were focussed on providing high quality care and support. There was a consistent team who worked very well together which resulted in very positive outcomes for children. The manager and staff were all passionate and committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming setting where all children mattered and were at the heart of the service. Comments from parents supported this : 'They (staff) are very invested in the welfare and development of our child', 'All staff are so friendly and approachable, always greeted with a smile and a story about my child's day' and 'Staff are truly lovely and have a great bond with both the children and parents'.

Staff were all very warm, caring and sensitive and demonstrated positive team working. They had a diverse range of skills, knowledge and expertise which resulted in positive experiences for children across the whole day. One parent commented 'The staff are great. There's a variety of backgrounds both cultural and age / experience which is really lovely to see... so nice to have a mix and range'. Staff communicated effectively with each other and worked flexibly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. Good use was made of walkie talkies both in terms of communication and ensuring children's safety. One parent commented 'The staff communicate well with the walkie talkies across the site to support each other and delegate tasks'. Staff were aware of how many children were in the service and took regular head counts throughout the session. This promoted a happy and secure environment where children were encouraged to lead their own play and learning.

The deployment of staff was well managed to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with the children throughout the day. Staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. Staffing levels allowed for children to make full use of the different areas across the setting whilst still being appropriately supervised. During busier times of the day, for example mealtimes and home time, routines had been established which promoted children's safety.

There was an appropriate induction process which supported newly appointed staff to meet children's needs. The induction programme had helped new staff to settle into their role and become part of the staff team. As a result, they were clear about their roles and responsibilities which supported children's experiences.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 18 August 2023, the provider must ensure children's care, welfare and development needs are met by developing children's personal plans and ensuring staff use this information effectively. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure that:

- a) Personal plans reflect children's current needs and outline how staff will meet the children's health, welfare and safety needs.
- b) Personal plans are reviewed, in conjunction with parents, at least every six months or sooner depending on the individual needs of the child.
- c) Assessments of risk, when required, are developed and routinely reviewed.
- d) Strategies of support for individual children are developed and implemented by staff.
- e) All staff have an appropriate understanding of each child's current needs and use this knowledge to fully meet them.

This is to comply with Regulations 5(2)(a) and (b) (Personal Plans) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15) and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This requirement was made on 2 June 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

The management and staff had actioned this requirement.

As part of the inspection we looked at a random selection of personal plans. These now contained more relevant and up to date information to allow staff to meet children's health, welfare and safety needs. There was also evidence that parents were involved in the development and review of their child's individual plan.

Personal plans were routinely monitored by the management team as part of their quality assurance processes.

For more detailed information, please refer to the recording under QI 1.1 - Nurturing care and support.

This requirement has now been met.

Met - within timescales

Requirement 2

By 18 August 2023, the provider must ensure improved practice and outcomes for children by implementing effective systems of quality assurance. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- a) The management team are supported to be able to undertake effective quality assurance.
- b) Staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service.
- c) Clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service.
- d) Regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented.
- e) The management team effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.
- f) Clear systems are in place for children and their families to provide feedback and to be actively involved in the evaluation of the service provided.

This is to comply with Regulation 3 Principles and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, 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 requirement was made on 2 June 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

Throughout the inspection, we were able to collect evidence which supported that the service now had a system of quality assurance which was having a positive impact on outcomes for children.

For more detailed information, please refer to the recording under QI 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

This requirement has now been met.

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 continued learning, development and enjoyment, children should have access to a wide range of resources and experiences which are challenging and suitable to their individual interests and stages of development. There should be a sufficient amount of resources to enable children to make independent choices and engage in deep and meaningful play.

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

'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 2 June 2023.

Action taken since then

We were able to see that work had been done to improve the setting and the range of resources and experiences available to children. All the children were engaged in activities, either with their friends, with staff and on their own.

For more detailed information, please refer to the recording under Quality indicator 1.3 - Play and learning.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children to achieve, the provider should improve the approach and skills of staff in relation to planning for children's learning and tracking and monitoring their progress. Staff should be supported to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps.

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 2 June 2023.

Action taken since then

Following previous inspections, staff had received training and support to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality experiences and meaningful next steps.

As part of the inspection, we looked at a random selection of observations on the app. We found that they were generally well written, the learning established and next steps identified. Some observations included the child's voice. There was evaluation of children's progression and achievements. This information was being used by staff to plan appropriately to meet children's needs.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's play and learning staff should:

- a) Further develop their knowledge and understanding of child development, relevant theory and practice.
- b) Continue to build as a team on their experience and expertise to fully meet children's needs through high quality interactions, extending children's thinking and widening their skills to support them in developing their curiosity, creativity and leading on their play and learning.

This is to ensure care, play and learning is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states 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 to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 2 June 2023.

Action taken since then

During the two days spent in the setting, we were able to observe all staff confidently engaging with children and extending their play and learning.

For more detailed information, please refer to the recording under Quality indicator 1.3 - Play and learning and Quality indicator 4.3 - Staff deployment.

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?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.2 Leadership of play and learning	4 - Good

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

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