

## Pitcorthie Playgroup Day Care of Children

John Marshall Community Centre  
Pitcorthie Drive  
Pitcorthie  
Dunfermline  
KY11 8AB

Telephone: 01383 602 382

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
27 August 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Pitcorthie Playgroup Management  
Committee

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001593

**Service no:**  
CS2003006969

## About the service

Pitcorthie Playgroup is registered to provide a day care service for a maximum of 24 children aged from two years to an age to attend primary school. The provider is Pitcorthie Playgroup Management Committee. The service operates from one playroom with secure garden, within John Marshall Community Centre, situated in Dunfermline, Fife. It has access to local amenities, including local schools, nursery, parks, the beach and woodland areas.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 27 August 2025 between 09:15 and 14:30. 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, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with six children in attendance on day of inspection
- feedback from 12 families using MS Forms
- spoke with all staff and the manager
- observed practice
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

As part of this inspection, we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how service supports 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

Children received warm, nurturing care that supported emotional wellbeing and secure attachments.

Play and learning environments were stimulating, with staff promoting language and numeracy through responsive interactions.

Facilities were safe, clean, and well-resourced, supporting children's independence and exploration.

Leadership was reflective and improvement-focused, with quality assurance systems beginning to embed.

Staff were well-deployed and supportive, working collaboratively to meet children's needs.

Positive relationships with families were evident, with plans to strengthen engagement and feedback.

## 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 benefited from a warm, welcoming and nurturing environment. Staff consistently demonstrated compassionate care, used calm tones and showed genuine love and interest in each child. Staff interactions were responsive and tailored to individual needs, enhancing children's emotional wellbeing and promoting independence.

The service had just resumed after their summer break and staff were taking time to get to know individual children and their families. This approach was supported through effective use of personal planning information. Personal plans were in place for returning children and were being developed for new children within the required timeframe of 28 days from when they start. Staff were supporting children who were new to the setting, lots of smiles, laughter and fun. Staff used some 'all about me' information to support and settle a new child. We suggested that the service consider when they gather this information from families to ensure staff have the most up to date information to fully support children and ease transitions.

All families who completed our online MS Forms questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that 'they have a strong connection with the staff caring for my child'. Some comments included:

"The staff are really approachable. They know all my child's likes and dislikes. They encourage her to do new things, and they've enhanced her knowledge and confidence so much".

"Each individual staff member is wonderful! They are approachable and friendly and ensure there is opportunity for conversations with each child and grown up at pick up and drop off. It has always been apparent how much the staff genuinely care for the children, especially through their play and conversations with the children".

Overall, mealtimes were a relaxed and unhurried experience. There were opportunities at snack for children to develop their independence and life skills as they were fully involved in preparing and serving their own snack. Whilst all staff were aware of potential choking hazards, they were reminded to remain vigilant about children leaving the table while still eating, this would further mitigate any potential choking risks.

Staff were kind and respectful towards children, asking permission to wipe noses and change nappies. This supported children to feel respected and valued. Staff knew children well and interacted positively with them to support their needs. This helped children feel secure and contributed to the positive relationships they had with staff.

Effective communication systems were in place to ensure children were safe and accounted for. Staff and children were engaging well with the Care Inspectorate SIMOA campaign, which enhanced their practice and kept children safe. A large purple elephant helped bring this to life for children across the service.

**Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning**

Children actively led their play and learning throughout the day. They were happy, confident and engaged. Children benefited from a high-quality play and learning environment. Staff effectively used open-ended questions and modelled language to support early language, literacy and numeracy development and extended children's play and learning.

Planning approaches were responsive and child led. As a result, children were engaged in various activities and were having fun. Activities were child led, focusing on their individual interests. Staff had worked with the local authority to develop their planning processes and were now more confident in how they planned for children's learning.

Observations of significant learning were recorded, with scope to refine next steps and learning targets. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of child development and valued children's right to play, aligning with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) principles.

Literacy and numeracy were well supported across the service through a range of experiences. Staff understood the importance of language development and provided a variety of activities to support this.

All children had the opportunity to play and learn outdoors during our visit, children had direct access to the outdoor area. This meant they could choose when they wanted to go outside to play. The outdoor space provided areas for physical play and for exploration. Children used this area very well.

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

We evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

**Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities**

Children benefitted from an environment that was safe, well-ventilated and supported high-quality play and learning experiences. Indoor and outdoor spaces were thoughtfully arranged to promote exploration, movement and curiosity. Furnishings were in good repair and resources were authentic and reflective of real-life experiences. This created a welcoming and homely atmosphere.

The play space was comfortably furnished and had some cosy areas for children to relax and rest. A wide range of activities and experiences were available to all children across the service. We found that all play materials were appropriate to children's needs and stages of development. This helped to stimulate their natural curiosity. For example, blocks, loose parts, play dough, sensory items and a well-resourced creative area. Children were busy and immersed with their play as they moved around the play spaces independently.

Children took pride in their playrooms as they helped clear away resources when they were no longer in use. Staff also reset areas to ensure that they were inviting to children. This meant children and staff respected the environment and sent a strong message to children that they matter.

There was free flow direct access to the garden. Staff ensured children had daily opportunities to outdoor play experiences. This supported children to be healthy and physically active.

Children had spaces to sleep, rest and relax if needed. This resulted in children's needs being consistently met across the day and supported their emotional wellbeing.

Detailed risk assessments, specific to the service, were used effectively by all staff to ensure children were safe and protected. These were regularly reviewed and updated to ensure any risks were minimised for children, families and staff.

Infection prevention and control practices minimised the potential spread of infection. The setting was visibly clean and clutter free. Staff sensitively supported children to wash their hands at various times throughout the day using mobile handwashing stations. This promoted their independence and created a safe environment for children.

Effective use of visual symbols and child-height displays supported children's independence and understanding of their environment. Resources were transported between areas to enhance choice and engagement.

## 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 management and staff were passionate, motivated and committed to continuing to develop the service to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. The service had experienced a period of change since their last inspection. An experienced early years officer had been promoted to manager and was keen to move forward with their journey of improvement, and we could see that this was a priority. A development plan had been created and the priorities were outcome focused with realistic targets. Staff told us they were included in reflecting on the quality of the service and planning for improvement. They had also actively engaged with local authority support and incorporated all feedback into practice, particularly around staff interactions and questioning techniques. This was confirmed through the high-quality interactions we observed between staff and children.

Quality assurance systems were now in place and were beginning to support improvement. This was in the early stages, as the service had been through a challenging period since the last inspection. The manager and team had worked hard to develop quality assurance processes, to support ongoing improvement. These systems were organised and staff had a shared vision. A range of policies and procedures were in place which underpinned the service's delivery. These policies reflected current best practice and guidance. This resulted in staff that knew what was important to the setting to meet the needs of the children and families.

A training plan was in place for all staff. We saw that staff engaged in regular professional development to keep their skills, knowledge and practice up to date and in line with best practice guidance. One member of staff told us that "It has enhanced the children's experience. I feel that my 'high quality interactions and significant observations' training has made me a lot better at communicating with the children and learning the difference between 'interfering and interacting' I ensure children feel valued, spoken to on their level, they are given the chance to lead their own learning and reach their full potential". Regular meetings gave staff the opportunities to talk about any successes and achievements, discuss any individual children's needs or next steps and reflect on practice.

This resulted in a strong ethos across the team and service, which supported children to reach their full potential.

Distributed leadership was emerging, and staff were involved in monitoring personal learning plans and evaluating their impact. The development of a quality assurance calendar had allowed the manager and staff team to focus on specific key areas. This supported the service improvement plan.

## How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

### Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

Children benefited from a caring and nurturing staff team who knew them very well. The staff team were committed to ensuring that all children received high quality care within the service. The service was well staffed to meet the needs of children across the day. Staff deployment was well managed, careful consideration had been given to differing experience, knowledge and skills of the staff team. This ensured that children received consistently responsive care.

Families spoke highly of the staff team, one parent said, "The staff go out their way to love and care for these children and sometimes attend in their own time to assist. Pitcorthie Playgroup is a home away from home for these children, and I will be forever grateful for the care they have provided my child". The service is also very important to the local community with one family telling us "I think it's very important to understand how Pitcorthie Playgroup runs, and how special it is to our community. The Playgroup has run for over 40 years and is a very sought after establishment for parents".

Children's individual needs were well-considered as staff placed themselves thoughtfully during busier times. As a result, children benefited from a very calm and positive experience. Staff worked very well together, and it was clear they had developed positive respectful relationships with each other. This resulted in staff flexibly supporting each other to meaningfully engage with children and meet their individual needs.

Staff were recruited safely and in line with current best practice. An effective induction period was in place, with new staff being assigned a mentor for support and guidance. The national induction resource was used effectively to support the induction and encouraged staff to reflect and evaluate their own practice. We suggested that this resource would support all staff to reflect on their practice.

Staff told us they felt valued and supported by management and the wider team. This positive and supportive ethos meant that children were thriving as result of the loving and nurturing care they experienced from all staff.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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?	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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