

Kilmartin Primary Pre Five Unit Day Care of Children

Kilmartin Primary School
Kilmartin
Lochgilphead
PA31 8QF

Telephone: 01546 510 293

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 June 2025

Service provided by:
Argyll and Bute Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003373

Service no:
CS2003014652

About the service

The service provider is Argyll and Bute Council. Kilmartin Pre Five Unit is a day care of children service. The service operates from their own building and enclosed outdoor play spaces within the grounds of the local school campus.

The service operates during school term times and provides a care service to a maximum of 24 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of those 24 children no more than five can be aged two years to under three years.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on the 4th and 6th of June 2025. The inspection was carried out by an early learning and childcare inspector from the Care Inspectorate. During the inspection, there were seven children present on day one and eight children present on day two.

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 people using the service
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- 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 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 experienced warm, respectful and responsive care from a committed staff team.
- Children enjoyed a relaxed, engaging, and sociable lunchtime experience that fostered friendships and supported emotional wellbeing.
- Children were confident and engaged in a well maintained environment.
- There were opportunities to further enrich children's development by creating opportunities for the children to free flow access the outdoor play area.
- Management and staff were developing the language, literacy and numeracy provision with view to creating further learning opportunities throughout the setting.

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

We observed children who were happy, confident and having fun. They experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care from a staff team that knew them very well. For example, staff spoke about children's likes, dislikes and interests and children were given comfort and reassurance when it was sought. Staff could tell us how children were being supported, and information was recorded and reviewed in partnership with parents and external agencies. This supported the development of strong attachments and a sense of security in the setting. One parent told us "The staff really care about our children, they take a genuine interest in their wellbeing, likes and dislikes, focus learning on their individuality".

We observed children being treated sensitively and with dignity and respect while having their personal care needs met. For example, staff discreetly asked children if they required the toilet and children were confident in asking staff for help in meeting their personal care needs. This practice supported children's independence and helped to build trusting relationships through respectful interactions.

Children enjoyed a hot, nutritious meal at lunch time. One parent told us "[my child] loves the food at Kilmartin and there always seems to be a very healthy choice for [my child] to choose from." Lunch and snack times were very sociable experiences for the children. Staff joined children at the table and skilfully engaged the children in meaningful discussions on a variety of subjects. This created a relaxed and unhurried lunch time experience that promoted the children's social and language skills. Staff encouraged children to be independent through self-serving, using cutlery, and clearing away their plates.

Staff used an online application to share updates with parents. These profiles gave families a snapshot of their child's experiences while at the nursery. We encouraged the staff team to consider increasing the frequency and consistency of these updates to further strengthen partnership working with families and ensure they remain well-informed about their child's learning and development.

There were no children who required medication at the time of inspection, however, we sampled the nursery's medication policy and found these were in line with best practice guidance "Management of Medication in Daycare and Childminding Services."

Accidents and incidents were recorded and shared with parents. The staff audited these monthly to look for patterns. This helped reduce repeated accidents and kept children safe.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were observed being happy, engaged, and enjoying their time at nursery. They demonstrated confidence within their environment and moved freely around the playroom, making independent choices in their play. The nursery was well resourced, with some natural and open-ended materials available to support creativity, curiosity, and imaginative play.

While the environment offered many opportunities for learning, there were missed opportunities to extend and enrich children's experiences. For example, the outdoor area could be enhanced by using the troughs available to stimulate curiosity and discovery through sensory and investigative play. We encourage the management and staff team to reflect on the current use of space and resources, both indoors and outdoors, to ensure they are maximising opportunities for high quality play and learning.

The quality of play experiences was good across all areas; however, increasing free flow access to the outdoors would further enhance children's learning by providing rich, open-ended opportunities for exploration, supporting appropriate risk-taking, and promoting physical health, emotional wellbeing and independence. We saw staff building on children's interests by expanding play opportunities to support their learning. For example, they used floor books to capture children's ideas and reflections of their play and incorporated these ideas into future play opportunities.

Language, literacy, and numeracy opportunities were evident through play experiences, such as mark making with a variety of writing tools, engaging with puzzles, books, and songs. We saw children enjoying singing "Speckled Frogs" and reading "The Invisible String" was a particular favourite. To further support children's early learning outcomes, management and staff recognised the need to embed language, literacy, and numeracy opportunities more consistently across the setting. They introduced staff champion roles and led a practitioner enquiry project to enhance learning both indoors and outdoors, helping children reach their full potential.

The children enjoyed outings within the local community, for example, visiting the local museum, beach and forest. Being outdoors and exploring natural spaces contributed positively to the children's physical health and emotional wellbeing, while also fostering a sense of belonging to their local area.

Staff used planning tools to effectively record children's interests and to design play and learning experiences that reflected these. Learning journeys sampled during the inspection included observations, clear links to learning outcomes, and meaningful next steps. Staff were able to explain how some next steps were implemented into the learning environment and daily provision. To strengthen the impact of planning and ensure it consistently supports individual progress, the staff team should record how next steps are used to inform future planning. This will help ensure that each child is consistently offered personalised, purposeful learning opportunities that support their development and help them achieve their individual goals.

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 facilitates

The playroom was warm, welcoming, clean and well ventilated. Staff provided a balanced mix of structured and free flow play activities, including opportunities for loose parts play and a cosy area for reading and relaxation. Resources were stored safely, appeared clean and well maintained, and were checked regularly by staff. There was space indoors for creative activities such as floor chalk drawing and block play. The outdoor play space provided a safe environment for children to explore and learn. Securely fenced, the area included sand and mud pits, a mud kitchen, and a popular rainwater tank. Children engaged happily with these features, using pipes and loose parts to experiment, create, and problem-solve. This was supporting their creativity, curiosity, and early STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths) skills.

We discussed how regular evaluation of how indoor and outdoor spaces are set up to invite children could help make them more engaging. This would encourage curiosity and make sure all areas are used well to support a wide range of learning.

The setting's proximity to a neighbouring farm offered unique opportunities for real-world learning and meaningful community connections. Children observed lambs being brought into the shed and engaged in conversations with the farmer's wife about bees, sparking natural curiosity and deepening their understanding of the world around them.

Staff clearly displayed key information for parents in the welcoming entrance area, which also provided space for children's belongings. Information such as safety posters, a suggestion box and other relevant notices were visible and accessible. This contributed to a positive first impression and helped create an inclusive, welcoming environment that supported strong communication and partnership with families.

Children's personal information was stored securely in a locked staff room, demonstrating the service's commitment to maintaining confidentiality and data protection. A secure entry system was in place, and risk assessments had been carried out to help ensure the safety of both indoor and outdoor environments. These measures contributed to a safe and secure setting for children. Management also shared plans to modify the door leading to the outdoor area to support safer free flow access. This is a positive step towards enhancing children's independence and increasing access to outdoor learning.

Staff and children followed good hygiene practices. For example, washing their hands before mealtimes, after using the toilet and when coming in from the outdoors. This helped to reduce the risk of illness and support a safe, healthy environment for both children and staff.

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 well led

As part of the setting's self-evaluation process, management undertook a review of the vision, aims, and objectives, involving staff, children and parents. This collaborative approach fostered a positive ethos of inclusivity and partnership. It also demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and achieving the best possible outcomes for children and their families. We discussed how using the Care Inspectorate's "A Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding and School-Aged Childcare" could further strengthen self-evaluation processes and drive ongoing improvement across all quality indicators.

Staff shared feeling well supported and motivated by leadership and management. One staff member told us "I feel supported by the head teacher and have regular discussions about my wellbeing and training needs." This supportive approach contributed to a positive staff culture and helped ensure that professional development needs were identified and addressed. As a result, staff were well equipped to deliver high-quality care and learning experiences, leading to positive outcomes for children. However, quality assurance processes, such as recording practice supervision and individualised training needs, need to be more firmly embedded within the setting's quality assurance calendar. This would support further reflective practice and help drive sustained improvement.

Children and families were meaningfully involved in the life of the service. Parents were welcomed into the nursery foyer at drop-off and pick-up times, helping to build strong, trusting relationships. They were also encouraged to attend stay and play sessions. Parents told us, "We are offered lots of opportunities to input" and "[Staff are] very friendly. Good communication. Able to talk about anything." This inclusive approach helped families feel valued and respected as partners in their child's early learning.

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

Staff were warm, welcoming, and engaged positively throughout the inspection process. They demonstrated openness and honesty during discussions, reflecting a strong team ethos and a shared commitment to continuous improvement. It was evident that staff were dedicated professionals with a clear focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

The setting was appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the children, supporting continuity of care and consistent relationships. We observed effective communication between staff. They worked collaboratively, communicating clearly while supporting children, transitioning between activities, and moving around the setting. This thoughtful and coordinated approach contributed to effective supervision and helped children feel safe, secure, and confident in their daily routines. We asked that management continue to evaluate staff deployment, recognising the increase in children attending after the summer and the change in staffing. This will ensure that children's needs are consistently met, supervision remains safe and that new staff are integrated into the routines of the setting.

All staff were appropriately qualified and had completed essential training, including child protection, first aid, and infection prevention and control. Each member of the team was registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), ensuring adherence to professional standards. These qualifications and ongoing professional development enabled staff to effectively meet the needs of the children in their care.

Management demonstrated an understanding of the national induction resources, and staff confirmed they had engaged with the material. Continued implementation of this resource will support new staff in developing confidence and competence in their roles.

Informal appraisals had taken place, offering valuable opportunities for staff to reflect on their roles, celebrate achievements, and identify areas for future learning. The manager outlined plans to introduce more frequent and formally recorded appraisals and supervision sessions. These should be embedded within the service's quality assurance calendar and improvement plan, supporting continuous professional development and sustaining the quality of care.

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?	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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