

# Hillhead Nursery Centre Day Care of Children

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
4 November 2025

**Service provided by:**  
East Dunbartonshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003380

**Service no:**  
CS2006139710

## About the service

Hillhead Nursery Centre is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 109 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. Of those 109 children no more than 80 are aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school, no more than 20 are aged 2 to under 3 years, no more than 9 are aged 0 to under 2 years.

The service operates from a purpose built facility in Kirkintilloch, East Dunbartonshire. The building has a secure entrance, spacious playrooms and access to additional rooms including a dining room. Children benefit from direct access to a secure outdoors space and gardens. The service is close to local shops, parks and other amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 3 and 4 November 2025.

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 children using the service and three of their family.
- Gathered feedback from eight families through online questionnaires.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.
- Reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to the core assurances.

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

- The new leadership team had impacted very strongly on the staff team and outcomes for children.
- Staff professional growth was supported through continuing professional development, enhancing quality practice.
- Staff worked in close partnership with families, achieving respectful relationships.
- Children thrived through engaging play, creative experiences and responsive planning.
- Children were nurtured, respected, and supported to achieve positive outcomes.
- Effective personal planning and transitions supported children's wellbeing.

## 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

Leadership	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

**Leadership** 4 - Good**Leadership and management of staff and resources**

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The new leadership team recognised the importance of having a shared vision that focused on improving outcomes for children and families and were currently working to fully achieve this. They promoted inclusion, children's rights and nurturing practice, ensuring that families felt connected and involved in the development of the service.

Parents commented, "Staff are always approachable and friendly", "Staff are always very kind and helpful".

Quality improvement was a main focus for the leadership team who were progressing well in this area, strongly supported by the local authority. Leaders had fostered a culture of shared responsibility by encouraging staff to lead change. Staff implemented relevant guidance and theories in their leadership roles to create a positive and supportive environment for children. Staff we spoke to told us they were involved in self evaluation. They felt their views and suggestions were valued and contributed to the service's development plans. They had embraced recent changes in the service and were feeling more empowered as a result of the support and opportunities provided to them.

The team demonstrated a strong commitment to the continuous improvement of the service. They led a collaborative learning culture, providing time and space for sharing knowledge and support for continuing professional development for all staff. Opportunities for reflective practice and informed discussions helped to identify the settings strengths and priorities for development. Leaders and staff had high aspirations for children and families with the child at the heart of everything.

The team recognised that children's voices were central to the service's ongoing development. While families had some opportunities to contribute feedback through face-to-face discussions, parents' nights, and questionnaires, the leadership team identified this as an area for development. We agree with the service's plans to explore new methods to meaningfully engage parents and carers in the self-evaluation process, supporting positive changes to the service.

Clear quality assurance and monitoring systems were in place in the service. All staff had a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities for ensuring high quality care and learning. We found this was achieved through the effective monitoring and support given by the depute and senior practitioners in the team. We encouraged the service to continue to embed these systems to further enhance staff practice and sustain positive outcomes for children and families.

Staff recruitment followed local and national safer recruitment practices. Induction processes were thorough and aligned with the Early Learning and childcare: National Induction Resource. Effective mentoring and supervision of new staff and students was established in the team. All practitioners and teachers in the setting supported new team members to grow and develop in their role to provide high quality care for children. All staff were registered with the appropriate regulatory bodies and engaged in ongoing professional learning to ensure their practice was informed by current theory, practice, and good practice guidance.

## Children play and learn 4 - Good

### Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were engaged in a range of rich and meaningful experiences during our inspection. They explored a variety of activities that enabled them to develop a broad range of skills, including language, literacy, and numeracy.

A stimulating, safe environment which was play based and responsive to children's needs was created for children. Playrooms and outdoor spaces were organised to ensure that children could fully engage with toys and activities. Play spaces were interesting, attractively presented and accessible with open ended and natural resources to promote creativity and imagination.

Some useful provocations were set up to prompt play and learning. One child told us, "I like playing outside in the garden".

Children could free flow between the indoors and enclosed outdoor spaces. This approach supported children to have autonomy and self-direct their learning. Opportunities for risk beneficial play were evident and well supported by staff, contributing to developing children's confidence and resilience. We discussed further development of play and learning opportunities for children aged under 3 years with the leadership team. This was acknowledged in the service improvement plans.

We observed some children initiating and engaging in play for lengthy periods of time. This helped them to develop critical thinking skills and problem solve.

Staff positioned themselves at children's level showing a genuine interest, supporting children to lead their own learning. Children were encouraged to use their own ideas, make decisions and choices and were given time to explore. Staff were attuned to children, listening and giving children time to communicate. They were able to adapt their practice to meet individual needs. They responded effectively to children's verbal and non-verbal cues, using a variety of communication approaches. One parent told us, "My child has gained more confidence in her abilities and definitely has become much more independent".

Staff were using a flexible, responsive child centred planning and assessment process to understand and meet children's individual needs and interests. They supported each other to record meaningful observations which were used to inform next steps in learning for children. They used children's ideas and suggestions to tailor learning and give children ownership of their play. Teachers and key workers worked in partnership to track children's development, celebrate achievements, and promote progress. This ensured breadth, depth and challenge across the curriculum. We assessed that the planning, assessment and tracking process was working well and impacting strongly on staff confidence and morale. One parent told us, "Staff always take into account my child's needs and treat him as an individual".

Staff were using various social media platforms, email and children's learning journals to communicate with parents. This supported parents to share important information, help them feel connected and involved in their child's learning.

Staff were developing opportunities across the service to include children in their learning, promoting children's voices and encouraging children to give their views.

**Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good****Nurturing care and support**

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Staff at the nursery demonstrated a meaningful understanding of the nurture principles and used these in practice to deliver warm, kind and compassionate care. This supported children's wellbeing, helped to strengthen positive attachments and connections and made children feel safe and secure.

We observed staff providing nurturing touch and reassuring cuddles helping children to feel more relaxed. This approach fostered secure relationships that positively impacted on children's health, wellbeing, and development. One parent told us, "I have a strong relationship with all staff members as does my child which is so important to us as a family that our child feels nurtured safe and happy".

Staff provided safe and sensitive care, guided by children's wishes and parental requests, ensuring children's rights were respected. Care routines were flexible and tailored to children's individual preferences and needs, including sleep and personal care. Consistent and predictable routines and sensory friendly spaces such as the mindfulness area helped children to regulate their emotions. Staff were aware of children's verbal and non verbal interactions and cues and responded positively, for example, offering to take a child who was overwhelmed outdoors to a calm space and praising children for sharing, "Well done for sharing. You're so kind".

These approaches helped children to develop confidence and self esteem.

Children enjoyed mealtimes that were relaxed, unhurried and sociable. Staff valued the opportunity to connect with children through conversations while sitting at the table. Children were supported to develop their independence and life skills by preparing, self-selecting, and serving their snacks and meals. Meals were nutritious, culturally appropriate and reflected the 'Setting the Table' guidance. Water was available throughout the day to ensure children remained hydrated.

Child centred transitions were carefully planned to reduce anxiety, ensure continuity of learning and help children adapt to new experiences and environments. Parents were fully involved in transitions and the life of the nursery by attending sensory stay and play sessions and using 'grab bags' to link with nursery activities. Parents could also build relationships with the nursery by engaging in 'Families Connect' and Triple P parenting programmes. These built on parents' existing knowledge and skills and provided them with the confidence to support their child's learning at home. The nursery valued multi-agency collaboration, which strengthened holistic approaches to getting it right for children, including when their needs changed or evolved. This approach ensured children felt safe, secure, and well-prepared for any change.

One parent told us, "Over the past year I have got to know the staff caring for my child very well, the communication is impeccable between parents and staff. I have complete trust in what they do for my child".

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective and meaningful personal planning. Plans reflected a rights-respecting approach to care, play and learning. "Being Me Under Three and All About Me" documents captured what mattered to the individual child, their interests, and agreed support strategies.

Medication and health needs were clearly identified, monitored, and managed in line with current good practice guidance. Wellbeing assessments using SHANARRI wellbeing indicators were embedded in plans, with next steps and strategies shared across the team to ensure consistency and continuity in care. Parents

told us they had the opportunity to discuss their child's plan through informal and formal discussions with key workers, online journals and during parents' meetings. We discussed with the leadership team the benefits of streamlining personal plans to ensure that information about children's care routines was readily available to support continuity of care.

We found relationships with families were strong, respectful, and meaningful in the nursery. The team valued their connections with families and strived to create a warm, welcoming, and inclusive environment, mindful of cultural sensitivity and accessibility. The team actively embraced opportunities to engage with families in the setting and share children's achievements. Parents told us staff listened to them and made them feel heard and valued.

One parent told us, "I can have a chat at any point I wish, staff are never too busy".

## 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 support children's learning and development, management should review planning systems to ensure children's experiences are reflective of a child led approach, interests and individual needs.

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

**This area for improvement was made on 23 April 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

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