Kids Ahoy Childcare Centre
Day Care of Children

89-93 St. Michael Street
Dumfries
DG1 2PY

Telephone: 01387 279 300

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 August 2026

Service provided by:
Elizabeth Blount trading as Kids Ahoy Childcare Centre

Service provider number:
SP2003002519

Service no:
CS2003010772

About the service

Kids Ahoy Childcare Centre and Out of School Care is a Care Inspectorate registered day care of children service located in a residential area of Dumfries. The service has sole use of the premises and outdoor play spaces, and operates from different areas. The indoors under-three years-old children are accommodated on the ground floor and the first floor, while children over-three-years old attending and out-of-school care access a predominantly outdoor provision.

Children benefit from access to secure outdoor environments, including an enclosed garden area, and opportunities to make use of local community resources within walking distance of the service.

The service is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 65 children, with no more than nine aged under two years and no more than 20 aged between two years to under four years attending the indoor setting, and no more than 36 aged between three years to those attending primary school should attend the indoor/outdoor service. Children must have access to the outdoor space at all times at the indoor/outdoor setting.

At the time of inspection, 81 children were registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday, 17 August and Wednesday, 18 August 2026, between the hours of 09:30 and 16:30 on day one, and 09:00 to 17:30 on day two. The inspection was carried out by three 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
- received completed electronic questionnaires from eight families and six members of staff
- spoke with the staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvements are needed throughout this inspection report.

Key messages

- Strong leadership and effective systems helped create positive experiences and outcomes for children.
- A skilled, supported staff team provided consistent care in a caring, inclusive and well-organised environment.
- Children were confident, curious learners who benefited from rich, responsive and child-led play experiences.
- Skilled staff promoted meaningful learning and development through high-quality interactions and personalised support.
- Children felt safe, valued and supported through warm relationships and responsive care.
- Nurturing approaches helped children build confidence, wellbeing and a strong sense of belonging.

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	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources.

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Leaders had established clear values and a shared vision that were understood by staff and reflected in everyday practice. Effective quality assurance systems, staff development opportunities and safe recruitment processes supported positive outcomes for children. There were a few areas where practice could be strengthened to further improve children's experiences.

The service had a clear vision, values and aims which reflected the needs and aspirations of children and families. Children and families had been involved in reviewing and developing these, and feedback demonstrated that they reflected what families wanted from the service. The vision, values and aims were shared with families through welcome packs and displays throughout the setting. Staff were able to explain how they embedded them in their daily work, and we saw evidence of parental feedback informing ongoing review.

Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes were well established. The manager and staff were able to clearly explain how monitoring activities, observations and feedback had led to improvements in practice. These approaches helped ensure children's needs were identified and responded to effectively, resulting in positive experiences and outcomes for children.

Staff demonstrated a good awareness of best practice and national guidance. Training had been undertaken in a wide range of areas to meet children's individual needs, including sling training and breastfeeding support. Staff described how this learning had influenced their practice and enabled them to provide more responsive care and support.

Staff deployment was effective throughout the day. There were sufficient staff available to meet children's needs and support their care, play and learning. Staff breaks were organised in a way that maintained continuity of care and minimised disruption for children. Parents shared: "The staff have been wonderful! My child has struggled due to previous nursery closure last year. Going to a new nursery was upsetting however the team at Kids Ahoy have been amazing settling my child loves going and is always talking about their days, teachers and friends;" and "The staff are absolutely fantastic. They're so friendly and caring, and I love getting regular updates throughout the day on the app."

Staff meetings were used effectively to support communication, reflection and professional development. Staff spoke positively about opportunities to share ideas, discuss practice and plan improvements together.

Safe recruitment practices were in place and staff completed a thorough induction programme. This helped ensure staff understood their roles, responsibilities and expectations. Leaders also shared their plans for ongoing improvement and workforce development.

Staff interactions were largely warm, respectful and responsive, supporting positive experiences for children. The service should continue to build on this strong practice to ensure all interactions consistently promote

children's wellbeing and respond to their needs at the earliest opportunity.

Staff generally responded appropriately to children's wellbeing and safety needs. Leaders should continue to support staff through guidance and monitoring to further strengthen confidence and consistency in responding promptly to situations that may arise.

Children's views were captured effectively through the "Big Book" at Kids Ahoy. The service should continue to build on this approach to ensure children's voices remain central to planning and improvement activities.

As a result of effective leadership, a skilled and supported staff team, and well-established quality assurance processes, children experienced a caring, inclusive and well-organised environment where they were supported to thrive.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Staff consistently supported positive outcomes for children through high-quality play and responsive interactions. They demonstrated a strong understanding of when to extend learning and when to step back, enabling children to lead their play, make choices and explore their interests independently. Staff built effectively on children's interests, such as planning learning about the eclipse in response to children's curiosity about the sky. As a result, children were relaxed, confident and highly engaged in meaningful experiences that supported their learning and development. The service had identified an opportunity to further enhance staff understanding of higher-order thinking skills to extend children's problem-solving, critical thinking and learning.

Children benefited from a range of indoor, outdoor and fully outdoor learning experiences that promoted confidence, curiosity and independence. A parent commented, "The indoor-outdoor flow of the nursery means that the opportunities to learn from the natural world are fantastic." Resources, including small world play, a home corner and cosy spaces, small and large loose parts alongside outdoor obstacle courses, water play and creative areas, were age appropriate and carefully planned to support risk-benefit play, investigation, creativity and physical development. As a result, children led their own learning, developed confidence in assessing and managing risk, and extended their skills through rich and stimulating play experiences.

Planning reflected a well-balanced approach that combined intentional and responsive learning. Staff provided opportunities that reflected children's interests, family connections and stages of development. Observations, children's interests, skills tracking and national guidance informed children's targets and next steps. This ensured children experienced personalised learning and made progress at a pace appropriate to their individual needs.

Children's progress and achievements were well recognised and recorded. Individual learning records demonstrated progress towards personal targets, while the recently introduced Children's Voice book captured wider learning experiences. Consistent recording approaches provided a clear overview of

children's views, learning and staff reflections, making progress easy to track. Children benefited from an organised, child-centred approach that valued their voice and supported ongoing development.

Staff promoted children's language, literacy and communication skills through consistent use of verbal communication, Makaton and visual supports. Language, literacy and numeracy were embedded within planning, targets and next steps. As a result, children communicated confidently, shared their views and actively participated in learning experiences that reflected their needs and interests.

The Famly app was used effectively to strengthen communication with families and keep them informed about children's progress and achievements. Information shared through the app aligned with children's learning records, helping parents understand and support their child's development. Parents' evenings provided further opportunities for families to discuss learning, progress and next steps with keyworkers.

The service had identified opportunities to further strengthen parental involvement in planning children's next steps and capturing learning from home. We discussed ways to more consistently record parental contributions from the Famly app, consultations and ongoing communication within children's learning records. Further development in this area could enhance shared planning, support more personalised next steps and improve continuity in children's learning between home and the service.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support.

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced wellbeing through warm, nurturing relationships, responsive support and consistent care. Evidence demonstrated how staff promoted positive outcomes for children by meeting their individual needs, supporting emotional security and creating an environment where children felt valued, respected and safe. This was informed by observations of practice, discussions with staff and management, and a review of relevant documentation.

Children experienced warm, caring and responsive relationships with staff. We observed staff interacting with children in a kind, calm and respectful manner, helping children feel secure, valued and supported. Staff knew children well and demonstrated an understanding of their individual needs, preferences and stages of development. As a result, children appeared confident within the environment and sought reassurance and support from familiar adults when needed.

Staff used nurturing approaches effectively, including singing, Makaton, visual supports and verbal reassurance to support communication, emotional wellbeing and engagement. For example, children were using the colour monsters and signing how they were feeling with support from the staff. These approaches promoted a sense of belonging and helped children develop positive relationships with others.

Staff were knowledgeable about children's individual care and support needs and worked closely with families to ensure children received appropriate support. Information gathered through discussions with parents, observations and assessment processes informed planning and helped staff respond sensitively to children's needs.

There were occasions where responses to children's needs could have been more timely. For example, we observed a child walking around while eating. Although staff intervened appropriately, the response was delayed. The service should continue to support staff to develop confidence in identifying and responding more promptly to situations that may impact children's wellbeing, safety and learning.

Children's wellbeing was central to practice within the service. Staff created an inclusive environment where children were encouraged to express their views and make choices throughout the day. Children's voices were captured through a variety of approaches, including Big Books and other consultation methods, which helped children contribute to decisions about their experiences.

Staff wellbeing was also a priority of the management team and there had been a lot of work put into place to ensure staff feel supported and included in the journey the service has been on.

The use of visual supports, Makaton and responsive communication strategies promoted inclusion and ensured children could participate meaningfully in daily routines and learning opportunities. As a result, children were supported to develop confidence, independence and positive self-esteem.

Positive relationships had been established with families. Parents were kept informed about their children's care, wellbeing and progress through ongoing communication and shared documentation. Families contributed to planning and assessment processes and were involved in discussions about their children's achievements and development. Parents told us: "I am able to talk to the after school staff at pick up, I can message her group and management on Famly at any time which also goes to my email. They have always responded quickly;" and "Staff have always kept me up to date with updates on my child, I feel the staff are approachable and easy to get in touch with via famly app or phone call. My child has expressed many times how much she likes the staff."

The service should continue to strengthen opportunities for parental involvement by building on existing approaches and increasing family contributions to children's next steps and wider wellbeing planning. This would further support collaborative working and ensure care and support continue to reflect the needs and aspirations of children and their families.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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