Kirkcolm Under 5's
Day Care of Children

Kirkcolm Primary School
Main Street
Kirkcolm
Stranraer
DG9 0NS

Telephone: 01776 853 232

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 June 2026

Service provided by:
Kirkcolm Under 5's

Service provider number:
SP2003002769

Service no:
CS2003011773

About the service

Kirkcolm Under Five's is situated in the small village of Kirkcolm near Stranraer. The service is provided by a committee and is staffed by a registered manager and practitioners.

The current conditions of registration are as follows:

The service is registered to provide day care for a maximum of 28 children not yet attending primary school, of whom no more than 5 are aged between 2 years 6 months and 3 years.

The service operates from a classroom in Kirkcolm Primary School. It has the sole use of the nappy changing cubicle and up to 2 toilet cubicles located within the primary school girls' toilets opposite the playroom. The service may use the school gymnasium by arrangement with the school. Outdoor play is available in enclosed play area to the rear of the premises.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 16 June 2026 and Wednesday 17 June 2026. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- received one completed questionnaire from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with the manager and staff
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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, some improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within the heading of Leadership.

Key messages

- The management and staff team shared a clear vision for children's wellbeing and were working together very well. There were opportunities to strengthen self-evaluation, quality assurance, recruitment and safeguarding paperwork to improve consistency and outcomes for children.
- Children were happy, confident and engaged in their play and learning. Mealtimes, daily routines and opportunities for choice helped children build important life skills and healthy habits.
- Staff had developed positive relationships with children and knew them well, creating a nurturing environment where children were valued and supported.
- A wide range of child-led and adult-led experiences promoted children's learning, independence and well-being, while strong partnerships with families helped keep parents involved in their child's progress.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

The setting had a clear vision, values and aims statement which were reflected throughout nursery life. These values were displayed in a child-friendly format and were brought to life through "RALPH the Rooster". Children were familiar with RALPH and staff used this approach to help children understand the nursery's values. The values were also linked to the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, supporting positive outcomes for children. Families were encouraged to be involved through the use of the RALPH home-link toy, helping children share their learning and experiences at home.

Staff worked well together and reflected on children's experiences and the nursery day. They met regularly to discuss children's needs, share ideas and plan improvements. Staff were developing their use of self-evaluation and had made a positive start to using the new self-evaluation framework. As they continue to build confidence in this area, there is an opportunity to focus more on understanding why things happen and how changes in practice can further improve outcomes for children.

The nursery had an improvement plan and Standards and Quality report in place which identified clear priorities for development. Staff had also engaged with a range of quality improvement tools and were keen to continue developing their practice. There is scope to strengthen this further through the use of tools designed for younger children, alongside other recognised practice guidance like the Care Inspectorate notes on mealtimes and toothbrushing.

Quality assurance systems were in place through the use of a monitoring calendar which covered a range of areas across the setting. These systems helped staff monitor procedures and identify areas for improvement. There was scope to build on this work by focusing more on how monitoring can be used to evaluate the quality and impact of practice for children. For example, reviewing the consistency of children's personal plans and providing staff with individual feedback following monitoring activities would help support ongoing improvement.

Observations of practice could also focus more closely on areas such as interactions, use of skills and the learning environment to further strengthen outcomes for children.

The acting manager benefitted from support from other managers in the locality and valued these professional relationships. Given the demands of the role, protected time for leadership, quality assurance and self-evaluation would help support ongoing improvement.

The setting is provided by a voluntary committee of parents, who were actively involved in the running of the service and decision-making processes. The acting manager was aware of the need to notify the Care Inspectorate of committee changes and had taken appropriate action following the recent annual general meeting. Parents confirmed that "the staff are always asking for opinions to see if there is ways they can improve" and that there were a variety of ways of being involved including through joining the committee and online apps.

The nursery had experienced some changes within the staff team with further changes expected over the coming year. Despite these challenges, staff remained committed to providing a caring and supportive

environment for children and families. Parents confirmed that they "felt welcomed into the setting" and that "staff are always approachable".

Discussions about recruitment identified weaknesses in the current procedures. While evidence was available to confirm membership of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) register and registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), there was no clear evidence that references had been obtained for all staff members. Following discussion during the inspection, references were obtained for the most recent member of staff. It was clear that the acting manager did not have access to the necessary procedures to ensure that all required checks, including references, were completed and recorded before staff began employment. (See requirement).

Staff files were maintained but did not contain all of the relevant information, and we suggested that a checklist within each file would support better oversight of required information such as recruitment checks, PVG membership and SSSC registration details.

Staff were committed to supporting children's wellbeing and worked closely with families and partner agencies where there were concerns. Systems were in place to record and respond to safeguarding concerns, and in general, referrals had been made appropriately when needed.

There is scope to enhance consistency in recording, particularly in relation to chronologies and the recording of actions taken. Strengthening this area will support clear and accurate records that evidence the support provided to families and the actions taken in response to identified needs or concerns. The acting manager was receptive to advice regarding notification requirements and processes for seeking guidance in situations where additional support may be needed. (See area for improvement 1).

There were appropriate risk assessment procedures in place to support children's safety and wellbeing. A review of some risk assessments would help ensure that they fully reflect current arrangements and any changes within the environment. Staff monitored accidents and incidents and were keen to strengthen how they analysed this information. Doing this will help them identify any patterns and continue to support children's safety and wellbeing effectively.

Requirements

1. By 8 January 2027, the provider must ensure that suitably qualified and competent individuals are working in the care service for the health, wellbeing and safety of the children experiencing care.

In order to achieve this, the provider must:

a) Put in place an updated recruitment procedure which clearly sets out the steps taken to ensure that all staff are fit to be employed in the service.
b) Maintain records of checks undertaken to demonstrate that safe recruitment procedures have been followed for each member of staff.
c) Provide appropriate training for all staff, including those in acting positions, so that they have a confident knowledge of the role and access to the information they need for that role.

This is in order to comply with section 7 of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 and regulation 9 of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that children are cared for in a consistent and safe manner, management and staff should ensure that chronologies and pastoral notes are kept in a way which clearly shows what actions have been taken in response to identified needs or concerns. This will help plan for and safeguard children's needs and support staff and other agencies to work together well.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well".

Children play and learn 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children were happy, settled and enjoying their time at nursery. Throughout the visit, we heard laughter and observed children actively engaged in their play. Most children played well together and had formed positive friendships. We saw children working together in imaginative and complex play experiences, including planning a birthday party, singing songs and creating a beauty salon. These experiences supported children's communication, creativity and social skills.

Staff knew the children well and generally responded effectively to their interests and ideas. They supported children to access resources and extend their play, helping them to develop independence and confidence in leading their own learning.

Staff engaged warmly with children and consistently got down to their level when interacting with them. Children appeared comfortable inviting staff into their play, showing that they had formed positive and trusting relationships. Staff were attentive and encouraging, helping children to feel supported and valued. Parents told us that, "my child loves attending nursery - there has never been a day where they don't want to go. They enjoy the activities on offer and playing with friends. My child likes being able to choose and also likes joining in with planned staff-led activities. My child has really come out their shell in the last year".

There is an opportunity to further develop staff knowledge and understanding of when to intervene in children's play and when to step back and observe. On most occasions staff followed children's interests well; however, there were times when adult questioning redirected children's ideas rather than exploring and extending their thinking. Developing greater use of observation and open-ended questioning would help ensure children's own ideas remain at the centre of learning experiences. Further professional learning around child development, particularly for younger children, would help staff ensure their expectations and responses are consistently appropriate to children's stage of development.

Children could choose whether to play inside or outdoors and all children spent time outside during the day. They were generally busy, motivated and engaged in meaningful play and learning experiences.

A variety of experiences supported children's learning and development across the curriculum. Children had opportunities to develop early literacy skills through stories, songs, mark making, drawing and playdough activities. Numeracy was evident through experiences involving sand, water, shape, volume and discussions about time. There is scope to enhance these opportunities further through the increased use of signs, labels, recipes and other print within play areas, helping children see literacy and numeracy in meaningful contexts.

Children were developing an understanding of the natural world through activities such as planting, learning about seasons and weather, exploring the lifecycle of butterflies. We also saw examples of children showing curiosity and enquiry, for example when exploring a solar-powered fountain. These experiences supported children's understanding of the world around them and encouraged investigation and problem solving.

Staff supported children to develop important life skills, including sharing, turn-taking, tidying up and caring for resources. Conversations between staff and children helped build vocabulary and social communication skills. There were examples of staff encouraging children to think and solve problems for themselves, although this approach was not yet consistently embedded. At times, adults provided solutions rather than encouraging children to consider possible answers themselves. Greater use of higher-order questioning and learning conversations would help deepen children's thinking, confidence and independence.

There was a good balance between child-led and adult-led experiences, with children's interests informing much of the learning that took place. Planned experiences and daily routines provided additional opportunities for learning, creating a balance between intentional teaching and responsive practice.

Children's views were valued, and staff regularly sought their opinions and preferences. This helps children feel included and respected. Some staff effectively encouraged children to reflect on previous experiences and learning. Building on this further through regular learning conversations could support children to become more involved in identifying what they would like to learn next.

Parents were kept informed about their child's experiences and progress through a variety of communication methods, including informal discussions, messaging and the online learning journal. Families also had opportunities to participate in nursery life through events like stay-and-play sessions and yoga activities, helping to strengthen partnerships between home and nursery.

Children also had opportunities to be involved in their local community, including participating in a beach clean and welcoming visitors to the nursery. These experiences helped children develop a sense of belonging and connection with the wider community.

Children's learning was recorded using the online learning journal. While there were examples of good quality observations which identified achievements and next steps, there was scope to improve consistency across the staff team. Continued support in observation, assessment and planning would help to ensure children's progress is consistently captured and used to inform future learning experiences.

Staff were tracking children's progress and identifying next steps in learning. There is an opportunity to strengthen this process by ensuring targets are clear, specific and achievable, helping staff and families better understand children's progress and next steps in learning.

Children are supported to achieve — 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children experienced warm, caring relationships with staff who knew them well and worked closely with their families. As a result, children were settled, secure and confident within the setting. They were familiar with routines and expectations and demonstrated a good understanding of routines and expectations and

were supported to develop independence through everyday experiences such as making choices, dressing themselves and serving food and drinks.

Staff knew the children and their families well and valued the strong relationships they had developed. We saw warm and caring interactions throughout the day. Children sought comfort and reassurance from trusted staff when needed, and staff responded sensitively to their emotional needs. For example, children were supported to talk about their feelings and worries, including getting ready for school. Staff praised children and celebrated their achievements, helping to build their confidence and self-esteem.

All children had personal plans which were developed using information gathered from parents and carers and linked to the wellbeing indicators. Most plans were reviewed regularly and updated when children's circumstances changed. However, some plans required further development. Information known by staff was not consistently recorded, and some one-page profiles, personal plans and individual risk assessments lacked up to date or cross-referenced information. To further support consistency and continuity of care, there is an opportunity to strengthen care planning documentation by ensuring relevant supporting documents are reviewed and updated appropriately. This would help all staff, including relief and supply staff, to quickly access key information and consistently meet children's care and support needs.

Interactions were generally warm, positive and respectful, helping children feel valued and supported. There are opportunities to further develop practice around supporting children's behaviour by reflecting on the reasons behind behaviours and recognising behaviour as a form of communication. Although incidents were recorded, evaluations did not always identify strategies to support future positive outcomes. Continued reflection on practice, using the Care Inspectorate's guidance, and additional relevant training would help to strengthen the service's approach to promoting positive relationships and supporting children's emotional wellbeing.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable, providing opportunities for children to develop independence and life skills. Children helped prepare snacks, served themselves food and drinks, and tidied away dishes afterwards. Healthy and nutritious meals and snacks were available, including fruit and salad, supporting children's understanding of healthy lifestyles.

While staff sat with children and encouraged conversation, some opportunities for meaningful interaction were occasionally missed. We saw that some staff focused on tasks, which resulted in a small number of children receiving limited engagement. Reviewing the pace of mealtimes and focusing on responsive interactions would further enhance children's experiences.

Children knew about good hygiene practices through regular handwashing and taking part in the toothbrushing programme. Consideration should be given to further promoting independence through the use of visual timers. The service could improve hygiene practices by reviewing the storage of packed lunches and by providing serving utensils for shared foods.

Appropriate systems were in place for medication stored on the premises. Some improvements were needed to ensure records provide clear, child-specific guidance, including photographs and more detailed instructions for the administration of medication, like inhalers. The medication policy should also be updated to reflect that medicines may be prescribed by a range of healthcare professionals.

At the time of the inspection no children required to sleep during the day. However, the indoor environment did not provide sufficient quiet or cosy spaces where children could rest, relax or regulate their emotions. Noise levels were occasionally high, particularly during transitions, which may impact on children's wellbeing. The service should consider ways to create comfortable quiet spaces and strategies to reduce

noise levels throughout the day. These improvements would help ensure children's emotional and wellbeing needs are fully supported.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good

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

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

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