Howden Playgroup
Day Care of Children

c/o Howden St Andrew's Primary School
Kingsport Avenue
Howden East
Livingston
EH54 6BW

Telephone: 01506 435 520

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 May 2026

Service provided by:
Howden Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003002790

Service no:
CS2003011805

About the service

Howden Playgroup is a daycare of children service provided from St. Andrews primary school in Livingston. All facilities were on one level. Children have access to a spacious playroom, toilet facilities and enclosed outdoor play space. The service is close to local amenities.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 18 children, aged two years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service works in partnership with West Lothian council.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 20 May 2026 between 09:00 and 12:45 and Thursday 21 May between 08:20 and 12:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection information, complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with four children and two of their parent's carers
- we also received four responses to our electronic questionnaire
- spoke with three staff members
- observed practice and how children were supported with their routines and play
- 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 core assurances.

Key messages

- Children were well supported by staff who knew them very well and understood their individual personalities which met their needs, rights and choices.
- Recording children's learning and development could be further developed by ensuring next steps were followed up.
- The well laid out environment meant children settled quickly on arrival and were happy, contented and had fun as they led their own play.
- Staff kept up to date with current practice through training and learning.
- Established relationships with families enabled effective information sharing and partnership working.

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	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted on positive outcomes for children.

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

Children benefited from a management committee, leadership and staff team who were committed to providing a quality service. Staff demonstrated a clear set of values in their daily practice, creating a culture of respect, inclusion and compassion. Positive nurturing relationships supported a child-centred approach that recognised and met children's needs, rights and choices. As a result, children felt safe, valued and secure within the setting. They sought comfort and reassurance from staff who were warm and responsive.

Leadership made good use of national and local guidance to support self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. A range of audits monitored key aspects of the service which assessed performance and identified areas for improvement. While this demonstrated a proactive approach to improvement, the process could be further strengthened. For example, by clearly evidencing how identified priorities were followed up. This would demonstrate how improvement has positive outcomes for children and families.

A culture of openness meant effective partnership working was in place. Various approaches enabled staff, parents and carers to share their views. Parents confirmed were, "Asked for feedback and able to communicate whenever we need to." And "Parents feedback and recommendations are always sought to enhance the experience for all. Mother's day for instance, I was allowed to sit with my child having a little lunch, that was extremely meaningful."

Where new initiatives had been implemented, there were opportunities to strengthen evaluation processes to better measure impact. For example, how initiatives, such as home-link games and cooking packs improved engagement with families. This would enable staff to assess their effectiveness and inform future planning for continuous improvement.

Staff communicated effectively and worked well as a team, ensuring children were supported and supervised throughout the session. Their flexible and responsive approach meant they were able to adapt to changing situations, maintaining continuity of care and supporting children's wellbeing.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted on positive outcomes for children.

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

Children benefited from a well organised and stimulating environment that was arranged to promote their engagement in learning. They settled quickly on arrival as the activities offered were linked to their current interests. Children experienced a good balance of choice and independence, leading their own play and making decisions about their learning.

We saw children had opportunities to use their imagination, play instruments and sing songs. Staff were responsive to children's choices and used these effectively to support learning and development. For example, through quality interactions, they built on children's enjoyment of music to promote speech and language as they encouraged singing. Parents confirmed this as they shared, "My child loves to sing, and they are given the opportunity weekly where they enjoy dressing up singing and dancing, they love the staff joining in."

Staff interactions supported children's development in communication, socialisation and numeracy. As a result, children were actively engaged, demonstrated enjoyment in their play, and developed confidence in social situations. They had fun with their friends, as they were learning to share, take turns as they had their achievements recognised. During their play children were heard to say, "it's my turn" when they participated in games.

Home links were used to share and support children's learning. The development of story sacks and cooking sacks enabled parents to carry out activities at home. Feedback from parents was positive as they shared their child had, "come on leaps and bounds and their speech has developed." To further enhance this practice, children's learning and development could be included within six-monthly reviews. Recording examples of their progress would help form a holistic picture of children's achievements and contribute to their next steps.

Child-centred planning and assessment approaches supported children's learning and development. Staff used observations of children's interests to plan responsive and intentional experiences, helping ensure activities were meaningful, relevant and engaging. Ongoing daily conversations among staff contributed to a shared understanding of children's progress. This enabled their continued progress through a consistent approach.

The service recognised that there was scope to strengthen the links between planning and individual learning journeys. The introduction of floor books was a positive step towards improving this. Staff were piloting this approach to capture children's experiences and identify future learning. We identified that next steps could be more consistently followed up to improve continuity in learning. So, they can be effectively used, we asked the service to review the number of next steps that were in place. Concentrating on significant learning, would support the development of a more coherent and holistic picture of children's learning, achievements and progress.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

Children and families experienced consistently warm, nurturing and respectful relationships, underpinned by a highly positive ethos created by staff. Children were warmly welcomed on arrival and confidently separated from their carers, demonstrating they felt safe, secure and valued. They were happy, settled and motivated to play, actively seeking out friends and familiar adults. As a result, children experienced a clear sense of belonging and their emotional wellbeing was very well supported.

Parents liked, "the way my child is nurtured." And "My child has grown in confidence since he started attending playgroup, they have made solid friendships and speaks fondly of all the staff."

Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to effective partnership working, building highly positive and trusting relationships with families. Feedback from families was positive with parents describing staff as, "friendly, approachable and amazing." Communication was a key strength of the service. Parents consistently received meaningful and timely information about their child's experiences, wellbeing and achievements. For example, one parent shared, "Staff communicate very well, whether it's paperwork, accidents or an achievement, I get to know everything which I appreciate." This strong communication supported effective collaboration, ensuring children's individual needs were well understood and met.

Children were supported through well developed personal planning, which was used effectively to meet their individual needs. Clear strategies and techniques were in place and used to help children have positive experiences. For example, planning settling in visits so that children were supported through transitions. This allowed children to build relationships and confidence and settle at their own pace. Children's progress and achievements were regularly reviewed with parents and carers. This enabled a proactive approach as techniques and strategies could be adapted if needed. As a result, children experienced continuity of care and were supported to make positive progress.

Meal and snack times were positive, social and relaxed experiences, where children were supported to develop independence and life skills. Children were supported to make choices about what they ate, served themselves and encouraged to clear up afterwards. To build on this practice, there was scope to increase opportunities for children to be involved in the preparation of snacks. This would deepen their skills and extend their learning.

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

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

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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.