Ralston Early Learning and Childcare Class Day Care of Children

Ralston Primary School
School Road
Paisley
PA1 3AT

Telephone: 03003 000 175

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 June 2026

Service provided by:
Renfrewshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003388

Service no:
CS2003014762

About the service

Ralston Early Learning and Childcare Class is a daycare of children service provided by Renfrewshire Council. The service is located in the Ralston area of Renfrewshire and is registered to provide care for a maximum of 56 children at any one time.

The service operates from purpose-built accommodation within the grounds of Ralston Primary School. Children have access to two large playrooms and two dedicated outdoor play areas. One of the playrooms provides free-flow access to a spacious, fully enclosed outdoor area, enabling children to enjoy regular opportunities for outdoor play, exploration, and learning throughout the day.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 and 24 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 registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- observed practice and staff interactions with children
- spoke with the leadership team and staff
- gathered feedback from 15 families and one staff member through online questionnaires
- reviewed documents
- spoke with some of the children
- spoke with some parents and carers.

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 experienced warm, nurturing and caring interactions from staff who knew them well. As a result children developed trusting relationships, supporting them to feel safe and secure.
- At times, staff deployment impacted the service's ability to maintain consistent supervision and support across all play spaces, limiting opportunities for sustained engagement and learning.
- The management team and staff were motivated and dedicated to providing a high quality service supporting positive outcomes for children.
- Play spaces would benefit from review to ensure they remain engaging, well resourced and responsive to children's interests.
- Personal plans were in place for all children, containing key information to support their health, safety and wellbeing needs. The service should consider streamlining these to reduce duplication and ensure information remains clear.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	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

Quality indicators: Leadership and management of staff and resources.

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.

The leadership team engaged positively throughout the inspection, demonstrating open, transparent, and reflective practice. They showed a clear understanding of their improvement priorities, welcomed feedback, and viewed the inspection as an opportunity to enhance practice and improve outcomes for children and families. This demonstrated a strong capacity for change and a commitment to continuous improvement.

The service had an established vision, values and aims which focused on providing a nurturing, play-centred environment where children were encouraged to explore, learn and develop. We saw these reflected in practice through warm, caring relationships, positive staff interactions and children who were engaged in their play. As a result, children experienced a welcoming environment where they felt valued, supported and confident to learn through play.

The leadership team had plans in place to review the vision, values and aims following the appointment of a new head teacher. We encouraged the service to involve children, families and staff to ensure these continued to reflect the views and aspirations of the nursery community and current strengths, including partnership working with parents and community engagement.

Leaders had identified clear improvement priorities aligned with the school improvement plan, including outdoor learning, enhancement of the learning environment, and the implementation of nurturing approaches through the Relationship Nurture and Restoration Approach (RNRA).

There was evidence of positive progress in these areas. Outdoor spaces had been developed, including a wild garden and defined learning zones, providing children with increased opportunities for exploration and play. Staff used nurturing interactions and appropriate de-escalation strategies to support children's emotional regulation, helping them feel safe, understood and included.

Further priorities had been identified, including the development of the digital app, planning approaches, and the use of floor books to capture children's voices and learning. Leaders had plans in place to further develop and embed these approaches. This demonstrated a commitment to ensuring practice remained responsive to children's needs, interests and stages of development.

A quality assurance calendar had been developed and some monitoring had taken place, including reviews of learning journals, floor books and play spaces. The service had begun using the Quality Improvement Framework to identify strengths and priorities, providing a more structured approach to evaluating practice. We discussed how monitoring could be strengthened by revisiting identified actions more regularly to review progress and evaluate impact. The service was also encouraged to further develop systems to gather feedback from parents. Leaders had plans in place to review monitoring arrangements to ensure they were more consistent and effective, supporting ongoing improvement in outcomes for children and families.

Regular team meetings and professional development reviews supported clear, open communication across the service and provided valuable opportunities for dialogue, reflective practice and ongoing learning and development. There was a strong sense of teamwork across the service, underpinned by positive relationships and a shared commitment to getting it right for children and families. Staff spoke positively about their team collaboration utilising individual skills and knowledge. This created a positive culture where children were supported by caring, knowledgeable and committed staff who continually reflected on and developed their practice.

Staff deployment, particularly during lunch periods, impacted the service's ability to maintain consistent supervision and support across all play spaces. Leadership capacity was also stretched, with the Deputy Head Teacher responsible for the wider school and the Lead Practitioner undertaking key worker duties, reducing time for effective presence, support and monitoring within the setting. We discussed the need to strengthen staff deployment across all areas, including outdoor spaces and lunch times, and to ensure appropriate oversight and support are in place to sustain high-quality experiences for children.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces — 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces.

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.

Appropriate measures were in place to support children's safety and security. Entry to the setting was secure, and the outdoor garden areas were safely enclosed, providing children with a secure space to play and explore. Daily registers were completed and whiteboards were used to record the number of children in each group. These were not always updated in a timely manner. We discussed the need to ensure recording systems are kept up to date to support effective supervision and safety monitoring.

Children had access to a range of play experiences across two playrooms. Areas were defined and included literacy, role play, creative, block play, woodwork and water play. Resources were displayed at child height, allowing children to make choices about their play. During the inspection, children were observed independently accessing and engaging with most areas.

We discussed that play spaces would benefit from ongoing review to ensure they remain engaging, stimulating and responsive to children's interests and stages of development. For example, the creative area had limited resources to support exploration and creativity. In addition, some areas contained a high level of furniture and duplicated storage units, which reduced space available for play and learning. A review of the environment would help maximise children's access to high-quality play experiences and create more inviting and challenging learning spaces.

Spaces had been developed to support children to rest and relax, including a nurture nook and dens with cushions and soft furnishings. We discussed with the service the suggestion of adding beds to further support safe sleep practices.

Both playrooms had access to dedicated enclosed garden areas. These spaces provided a range of engaging experiences that supported children's physical development, creativity and curiosity. A mud kitchen supported children's imaginative and sensory play, while a climbing frame supported balance, coordination and physical confidence. The newly installed summer house provided a sheltered space for rest, storytelling and small group interactions. The service had identified these areas as an improvement priority and recognised they were on a journey of ongoing development.

Infection prevention and control procedures were in place to support children's health and wellbeing, including handwashing routines, cleaning practices and the use of personal protective equipment. We discussed that closer supervision during handwashing would help further promote consistent hygiene practices. We also discussed reviewing the sliding toilet doors, which opened directly onto the playroom, to reflect current guidance on infection prevention and control.

The service had risk assessments in place to support children's health, safety and wellbeing, with opportunities to further develop these. We discussed that as environments continue to develop, risk assessments would benefit from being regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current layouts, resources and potential hazards. Further strengthening these areas would help provide greater assurance that risk assessments remain current and robust.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

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 observed to be happy, confident and engaged in their play with staff and peers. They led their own learning, exploring a range of experiences linked to their interests, including superheroes, junk modelling, Duplo construction, small world play and storytelling in both small groups and one-to-one interactions. Outdoor play was a strong feature, with children enjoying the mud kitchen, balance beams and digging areas, supporting risk-taking, exploration and imagination. A recently developed "mixology" area provided children with opportunities to develop their curiosity and exploration through mixing, filling and emptying with a variety of materials.

Staff engaged in children's play, joining in experiences with enthusiasm and helping to create a positive and enjoyable atmosphere. We saw staff providing reassurance and encouragement to build children's confidence and learning through meaningful conversations and effective questioning. Children particularly enjoyed "tricky work". As a result, children were supported to deepen their thinking and build early numeracy skills through playful experiences.

Children accessed a range of child-led and adult-supported experiences that promoted engagement, curiosity and enjoyment. They moved freely between areas, made independent choices and interacted positively with others throughout the largely child-led daily routine. The session ended with a whole-group gathering for songs and rhymes. We discussed that the service may wish to consider reviewing this part of the routine, so that it continues to meet children's needs and sustain engagement as children remained seated for an extended period.

Floor books were used as the main approach to planning and recording learning. Staff identified children's interests and "sparks" through play and interactions, which informed meaningful learning experiences and planned provocations. These demonstrated responsive planning, with experiences adapted in line with children's ideas and questions, for example adding grass to an activity in response to children's requests and using an iPad to support their curiosity by researching topics during play.

We discussed that next steps were at times closely linked to planned learning experiences or adult-led activities, and that there were opportunities to further develop a more child-led approach to supporting children's learning.

At times, staff deployment reduced opportunities for sustained interactions and engagement. Some areas and resources were not fully utilised, and certain spaces, such as the woodwork area, were closed. In addition, visibility across parts of the playroom and outdoor areas was limited. The management team were aware of the need to review staff deployment to better support children's experiences and engagement and had made some positive steps to address this, including reviewing the use of the lunch room and making use of part-time staff to support coverage.

The service actively engaged families in children's learning through a range of opportunities, including curriculum evenings, parent consultation meetings and regular sharing of children's learning targets. The use of a digital app kept families informed about activities and supported ongoing communication between the service and home. Home learning bags extended learning beyond the setting, while parents were encouraged to share their skills and expertise, such as leading science activities. As a result, children benefited from strong partnerships between home and the setting, supporting continuity in their learning and development.

Language, literacy and numeracy were naturally embedded within children's play. A range of mark-making opportunities, phonological awareness activities such as syllable work using a drum, storytelling and numeracy experiences were evident across the playrooms. These supported children to engage with literacy and numeracy in meaningful, everyday ways. Digital technology was also used effectively through the smart board to support music, storytelling and number recognition.

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.

We observed warm, caring and responsive interactions between staff and children. Staff knew children well and responded sensitively to their wellbeing needs, providing kind, respectful and nurturing care. Staff worked closely with families and demonstrated strong, trusting relationships. Children and families were welcomed by friendly, approachable staff who greeted them warmly and encouraged open communication. One parent shared "The staff are very kind and caring" and another commented "The relationship between all the staff and children is heartening. They really care about the children".

Staff supported children to manage emotions and resolve conflict using calm, positive strategies, including nurturing language and gentle distraction. Positive behaviour was consistently reinforced, for example through reminders to use kind hands, delivered in a calm and respectful manner. Children regularly sought comfort, reassurance and support from familiar adults, including during personal care routines, reflecting secure attachments. One child shared " My teachers are kind and help me when I need them. They make me feel happy and safe when I am at nursery". As a result, children were relaxed, happy and confident within the setting, benefiting from secure relationships and a supportive environment that promoted their wellbeing and development.

Children requiring additional support had appropriate plans in place to meet their individual needs. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of these and consistently used agreed strategies to support children's learning, wellbeing and inclusion. The service worked effectively with external agencies to ensure children received appropriate support and maintained close partnerships with families to share information and promote consistent approaches across home and the setting. These approaches supported children to receive care that was responsive to their individual needs, supporting their wellbeing and development.

The service provided opportunities for parental involvement, including a community café, stay-and-play sessions and an informal parent committee. One parent shared "I feel the staff always include me in my child day and learning" and another commented "I feel included in discussions about my child's care and development. Staff keep me informed of their progress". These approaches helped families feel valued and supported, strengthening partnerships between home and the setting.

Mealtimes provided a welcoming and inviting experience for children. The environment supported social interaction, allowing children to enjoy conversations, develop friendships and share their lunchtime together. Children were encouraged to make choices, serve themselves and pour drinks, helping to build confidence and self-help skills. Procedures were in place to support children with dietary requirements, including bespoke menus, allergy overview sheets and health care plans. As a result, children experienced mealtimes that promoted independence, social skills and wellbeing.

Personal plans were in place for children and contained a range of relevant information, including wellbeing targets and support plans where required. Children's targets were regularly discussed at wellbeing meetings, and parents were kept informed through the digital app, parent meetings and written reports. We discussed that plans would benefit from being streamlined to reduce repetition and support more consistent recording and review.

Systems were in place for the safe storage, administration and recording of medication. Staff had a good understanding of children's allergies, dietary needs and medical conditions. On day one of the inspection, it was identified that two different medication recording forms were in use. The service responded promptly and updated the documentation. It was suggested that medication records and healthcare plans are included within the service's monitoring calendar to strengthen ongoing oversight and management of these systems.

Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of child protection procedures and were confident in recording and reporting processes. Child protection training had been completed, supporting staff's understanding of their responsibilities. This ensured children were safe and protected.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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.scot

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

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.