Ailsa Family Learning Centre
Day Care of Children

The Loaning
Motherwell
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Telephone: 01698522701

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 July 2025

Service provided by:
North Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003015383

About the service

Ailsa Family Learning Centre is a daycare of children service provided by North Lanarkshire Council and located in the town of Motherwell. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 87 pre-school children. This includes up to six under twos, 25 aged two to under three, and 56 aged three to not yet attending primary school. At the time of inspection 20 children were present.

The centre operates from two single-storey buildings, one mostly for under-threes and the other for three to five-year-olds. Both have direct access to secure outdoor play areas. It is conveniently located near transport, parks, shops, and primary schools.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 14 and 15 July 2025, between 09:00 and 17:30. Feedback was provided to the manager and a representative of the provider on 16 July 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
- gathered the views of 17 families and 14 staff using our online questionnaire
- spoke with most staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

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

- Children were settled and had opportunities to lead their play.
- Staff knew children very well and responded to their individual needs and wishes.
- Children's health and wellbeing was enhanced through daily access to outdoor play.
- Leaders and staff were committed to the ongoing development of the service.
- Personal plans were supporting staff to deliver meaningful care for children's individual needs.
- The nursery is part of the wider community and children access local amenities regularly.
- Strong relationships had been established with families, which resulted in positive outcomes for children.
- Some areas within the building required to be maintained to further ensure effective infection prevention and control practices.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children attending the service were happy, settled and secure. They were confident in their interactions with staff and each other. Staff used meaningful praise, chatting and singing with children as they supported them. When asked about the most positive aspect of their children attending the setting, one parent told us: "Excellent staff who really care and know my [child]". This helped children feel secure and loved.

Children's emotional wellbeing and resilience was supported through positive, nurturing and trusting relationships. Staff knew children well and responded appropriately to their cues. For example, providing reassurance and comfort when a child was upset. This confirmed that children experienced nurturing, warm approaches that supported them to feel secure and build trusting relationships.

Children's personal care needs were carried out discreetly and sensitively, supporting their privacy and dignity. Skilled staff used these opportunities to further build positive trusting relationships with children. Younger children who needed a sleep were supported by staff who responded to individual cues. They experienced sensitive arrangements for sleep routines that were reflective of children's individual needs and family wishes. This ensured their emotional wellbeing being was well supported.

Children benefitted from relaxed, sociable and unhurried mealtimes. Staff were knowledgeable about children's routines and dietary needs. This included supporting younger children with their feeding routines, which helped to ensure their individual needs were met. Older children's independence and skills for life were promoted through self serving opportunities. Lunchtimes were provided from a separate playroom, where staff sat with children and engaged in meaningful conversation, which contributed toward language development and social skills. This also supported effective supervision. We discussed where lunchtimes could be further developed, for example, developing approaches to reduce noise levels.

Staff effectively used personal plans as a foundation for understanding and responding to each child's unique preferences, particularly for children under three. This proactive approach ensured children's individual needs were consistently met. While many parents felt well-informed and actively involved in their child's care through regular discussions and prompt updates, some parents were less clear about how often these plans were reviewed or how easily they could see the latest information. We had highlighted to the service the importance of ongoing, dynamic reviews of these plans for older children. This would enable staff to respond quickly, sensitively and compassionately to changes in a child's life.

Overall, staff were knowledgeable about child protection procedures and clearly understood their roles and responsibilities regarding safeguarding concerns. This meant they were well-prepared to address any concerns should they arise. Staff were also trauma-aware, understanding the impact adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can have on a child's overall development. This knowledge directly helped staff to approach children's needs with sensitivity and insight, which created a supportive and responsive environment that promoted children's emotional well-being and resilience.

Medication was stored and administered appropriately in partnership with families, further ensuring children's safety and well-being.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children benefited from a balance of planned and spontaneous play experiences. Well considered innovations and creative approaches successfully engaged children's imagination which enriched their play and learning. They had opportunities to develop their language skills through a range of opportunities, including singing songs and listening to stories. This resulted in children who were progressing well and were happy and confident in their play.

Resources were available to help children develop their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, books were displayed that children could access independently. We asked that the service consider accessibility to some resources for children who were less mobile. This would further promote the children's autonomy and sense of belonging.

The centre fostered child-led play and learning, with staff who consistently responded to children's ideas and providing open-ended resources. This approach, as expressed by children who told us: "we've got high heels on," nurtured their imagination and curiosity about how the world worked. It also allowed them to explore through repeated behaviours called schemas, and learn at their own pace. Beyond the setting, strong community links further enhanced children's development. Regular outings to places like the library, Asda, and a local café helped children to understand their community and build vital social skills.

Children's play was promoted through kind, caring and sensitive interactions. Staff naturally spoke to children about what they were doing, using individual strategies to support inclusion such as communication books and visual prompts. This promoted a highly interactive environment where children's thoughts, preferences and needs were prioritised, ensuring all children had the foundations for effective communication.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

The comfortable and inviting setting benefited from natural light and good ventilation in most areas. Children's belongings were organised in clearly marked spaces, and the service planned to enhanced this by using photographs to help children easily identify their own items. A staff board also shared personal details with families, collectively creating a welcoming atmosphere that powerfully communicated to children their importance.

Play spaces offered interesting and stimulating toys and materials. To further enhance this, we discussed increasing the provision of loose parts. This child-led approach, where collections of small, open-ended objects are available, encourages children's creativity and engagement as they independently rearrange, redesign, and create. This supports their overall development by nurturing imagination and curiosity.

Children benefitted from a range of quiet and cosy areas to rest, relax and self regulate, which supported

children's well-being. The service recognised the positive impact and agreed to expand these opportunities, ensuring that each play space offered opportunities for quiet reflection and emotional processing. This would further support children's well-being and imaginative play.

Children could freely move between indoor and outdoor spaces. Weather appropriate clothing was available and children were encouraged and supported to ensure they were dressed appropriately to access the outdoors. The enclosed outdoor spaces allowed children to explore and develop their problem solving skills. They had access to a wide range of resources and materials throughout the outdoor space, allowing children to develop their imaginative play, curiosity and understanding of risk.

Children were protected from harm through a variety of safety measures. For example, secure entry to the premises, safe storage of hazardous materials, and appropriate supervision of children. Some measures were in place which helped to prevent the spread of infection. For example, staff wore gloves and aprons when changing children's nappies. However, we identified where improvements were needed to support effective infection control. For example, gaps in the flooring and flaking paint prevented some surfaces from being cleaned effectively, increasing the risk of contamination. We asked that these issues be addressed to minimise the risk of infection. This would provide further assurances that children's health and wellbeing were prioritised (see area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's safety and wellbeing, the provider should ensure all areas of the environment promote effective infection prevention and control measures. This should include, but not be limited to ensuring all areas where children receive personal care are easily cleaned and free from flaking paint, exposed plaster and gaps in flooring.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment" (HSCS 5.22)

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The service had recently reviewed their vision, values and aims. This had included parents, children and other stakeholders. The revised document was displayed within the nursery building and were clearly demonstrated in the ethos of the service. This resulted in a nursery culture that significantly enhanced the quality and inclusion of experiences for all children and their families.

The nursery provided an effective framework for children's early development and learning. Knowledgeable leadership underpinned this and provided a supportive environment for staff. This included the implementation of effective meetings and the presence of positive role models. This approach proved instrumental as the new manager and team came together, developing a sense of team work and effective collaboration. This boosted staff morale, which improved care and learning and benefited children's outcomes.

The manager was proactively building a strong foundation for the service through initial quality assurance and staff support systems. A consistent approach was emerging, evident in the monthly calendar for audits, training, and personal plan reviews. Staff were also benefiting from structured support, including regular monitoring, appraisals, and wellbeing check-ins. These systematic practices will significantly boost ongoing improvement once fully integrated.

The service's improvement plan had been developed and detailed clear aspirations for the service. Staff told us they felt involved in the development of the service with one stating: "Self evaluation is always discussed at meetings and staff always have the opportunity to work together as a team on how to become better". This further demonstrated the services approach to developing a shared commitment to high quality care, ensuring the service is consistently striving to be the best it can be for every child and family.

New staff were supported through North Lanarkshire's induction process and the service had developed their own staff handbook and induction. This demonstrated the services commitment to ensuring positive staff morale, stability and overall quality and consistency of the service provided to children and families. This approach to induction influenced the well-being and effectiveness of the staff, which impacted the quality of care, learning, and safety experienced by children and their families.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator: 4.3 Staff deployment

Staff engaged well in the inspection process and were open and honest during discussions. Staff valued the positive relationships that had developed within the team, and told us: "We are mostly a new staff team and strong, caring and supportive relationships have been built over the last academic year", and: "All staff work very well as a team". This contributed to a solid, open and supportive staff team which created a positive ethos that benefited every aspect of the service and, most importantly, every child in its care.

Families were invited into the service for stay and play sessions, PEEP sessions and during drop-off and pick up times, encouraging positive transitions and relationships. Most families commented positively about connections with staff and were happy with the care their child received. Many described them as caring, friendly and approachable. Comments included: "Staff are friendly and approachable. They are welcoming in the mornings and drop off. I would have liked more feedback regarding my child's progress during the year", and "Staff have been exceptional integrating my child within the room settling. The staff are clear with any instructions they give, prompt at letting us know about any changes and update the parents portal regularly".

Staff regularly updated parents on their child's day, which was a good step toward partnership working. However, we agreed with parents that communication could be better, as some commented on its inconsistency. We discussed this with the manager, who shared plans to strengthen information sharing with parents at key times. This approach should help to further develop connections and meaningful relationships with families.

The staff to child ratio met the minimum requirement during our inspection. Our observations showed a need for more staff at certain times to support individual children. The manager shared their plan to

improve staffing levels and deployment to better meet these needs.

Children benefited significantly from a skilled and continuously developing staff team. The mix of experience and knowledge, coupled with robust support processes, created a dynamic and enriching environment directly impacting their development.

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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