Wallacetown Early Years Centre
Day Care of Children

Queen Street
Ayr
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Telephone: 01292 612 164

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 July 2026

Service provided by:
South Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003269

Service no:
CS2003016143

About the service

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at www.careinspectorate.scot.

This service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

Wallacetown Early Years Centre provides a daycare of children service to a maximum of 170 children at any one time.

No more than 170 are aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school full time.

Adult : child ratios will be:

- 2 to under 3s - 1:5
- 3 and over - 1:8 if the children attend more than 4 hours per day, or
- 1:10 if the children attend for less than 4 hours per day

Wallacetown Early Years Centre is a standalone daycare service for children, provided by South Ayrshire Council. The facility is based within its own grounds in a residential part of the town of Ayr. Staff provide early learning and childcare across four units in the facility. The service operates full and part day sessions, term time, and caters for children aged from two years to school age.

Located in the town of Ayr, the nursery comprises three playrooms, and a secure outdoor play area. The service benefits from a convenient location, with easy access to local amenities, including shops, public transport links, and a range of community facilities.

At the time of inspection, 92 children were registered with the service and 18 were in attendance.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 15 and Thursday 16 July 2026 between 10:00 and 17:00. Feedback was provided to the service on Friday 17 July 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service, we:

- spoke with children using the service
- reviewed electronic feedback from parents/carers
- spoke with staff and the senior leadership team
- observed practice and daily life for children
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals

• 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, 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

- Sector-leading practice in nurturing care and support enabled all children to reach their full potential.
- The service promoted an ethos of love, respect and inclusion.
- Well-resourced, stimulating indoor and outdoor environments promoted curiosity, independence and creativity.
- Staff knew children and families very well and provided the support and care they required in a kind and nurturing way.
- Children were supported and nurtured through their daily experiences, leading to high-quality outcomes.
- Quality assurance and improvement processes were inclusive of staff, children and families.

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	6 - Excellent

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.

The service's vision, values and aims had recently been reviewed and clearly set out their vision of providing continuous improvement, in a supportive aspirational nurturing way to offer inclusive early learning of the highest standard. These, alongside the curriculum rationale, were shared with families through a variety of information booklets and play and stay sessions, which outlined the service's approach to learning, wellbeing and development. Children benefited from warm, nurturing relationships and meaningful experiences that supported their wellbeing, confidence and development.

There was a strong culture of teamwork and shared responsibility across the service, with staff and leaders working collaboratively to support improvement. Staff were open, reflective and fully engaged throughout the inspection process, demonstrating a clear understanding of the service's improvement journey. The newly appointed management team had a clear understanding of the strengths of the service as well as areas for further development. They had used self-evaluation well to identify priorities and take action. Improvement planning was meaningful and linked closely to the vision and aims of the service. Leaders could evidence progress regarding improving lunchtime experiences for children and provide examples of how developments had influenced practice. Children's voices were recognised and valued, helping to shape this improved experience and contribute to service development

Improvements had been implemented at a meaningful and realistic pace, allowing changes to become embedded and positively influence children's experiences. Quality assurance processes were in place to support high-quality experiences for children. These included monitoring practice, reviewing documentation and analysing data. The managers were effective in identifying areas for improvement. Findings from a recent parent consultation were displayed in the entrance area of the playrooms. This showed parents how their feedback had influenced service improvement. For example, in response to requests for more home learning ideas, the equity and excellence lead, applied for funding to purchase additional resources. In the meantime, families were encouraged to speak with staff, who would provide access to existing home learning resources and activities, until the funding arrives. This ensured that changes made from consultation, were relevant and had a positive impact on outcomes for children.

Managers were visible throughout the nursery and playrooms and had warm, positive relationships with children, demonstrating that they knew them well. This helped create a nurturing environment where children experienced stability, consistency and positive relationships. Leadership opportunities enabled staff to lead and champion areas including learning journeys, sustainability, communication friendly, nurture and medication. Staff spoke positively about these roles and the opportunities they provided to share ideas, develop confidence and support colleagues. This strengthened practice across the service and enriched children's learning experiences.

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.

The service demonstrated a very good standard in supporting children's playing, learning and development. All children were observed to be actively engaged, highly motivated and enjoying their time within the setting. They were busy, inquisitive and fully involved in a wide range of experiences that supported their progress across all areas of learning. The environment had been thoughtfully developed to provide a rich variety of opportunities for children to explore, create and use their imagination. Resources were accessible and well- matched to children's stages of development, allowing them to make independent choices and take ownership of their play.

Improvements to the layout of spaces indoors and out had supported a more open and flexible approach, enabling children to move freely between areas and follow their interests. This contributed to a calm and purposeful atmosphere where children could sustain their involvement for extended periods of time. Staff in the 2-3 room had implemented a new planning approach to enhance children's learning experiences and improve outcomes. The impact of this practice will be shared with other South Ayrshire Early Years Services. In the 3-5 room, staff have focused on increasing high-quality provocations to enrich play experiences, promoting greater engagement, curiosity and deeper learning for children.

Staff interactions were of a consistently high quality. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of children's individual needs and interests. Following on from the service's achievement of their "Communication Friendly Accreditation," all staff used skilled communication strategies to effectively support children's speech, language and learning. Sensitive, responsive interactions and strong relationships helped children feel secure and confident, leading to very good outcomes in their wellbeing, communication and development.

Children led their own play and learning and were encouraged to explore their ideas and interests. They were observed engaging in imaginative and creative play, often collaborating with others and developing their own narratives. Staff recognised these opportunities and extended learning in meaningful ways, ensuring children remained at the centre of the learning process. There was a clear focus on promoting independence, curiosity and problem-solving skills for children. As a result, children became more confident and capable in leading their own learning and tackling new challenges.

Children are supported to achieve 6 - Excellent

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Strong, trusting relationships with families were a cornerstone of the nursery's approach. Staff actively encouraged family engagement throughout the year, holding regular meetings to discuss children's personal plans, learning, and development. Practitioners demonstrated a deep understanding of each child's individual needs, responding with sensitivity and professionalism. Staff knew children very well and were very attentive to children's needs, offering warmth, support and cuddles when required. Paying attention to children and families' emotional wellbeing was embedded in the service ethos and staff practice. One parent commented, "The staff are always easy to approach with any issues to do with my daughters care. The parent zone learning journals online are updated daily with my daughters progress and what she has been doing."

It was clear that the skilled and professional staff had high aspirations to enable children to be successful. For example, inclusion was strongly embedded within the service ethos and staff practice. Strategies for children with additional support needs were identified, with support from external agencies. This supported families to meet children's needs at home. The speech and language therapist developed a resource to support the team in auditing the environments to ensure that they were neuro-affirming and strong communication friendly environments. This meant that the service was able to meet the needs of all children within the setting to a sector leading standard, supporting them to meet their full potential.

Children's and families' health and wellbeing was at the heart of the service. The service had as part of their team a visiting speech and language therapist, inclusion staff and a family support worker who worked with children and families within the service. This unique practice helped encourage consistently positive outcomes for children and families. One parent commented, "It's not only a nursery, it's a support provider too. They link in with partnership agencies to support the parents in every way they can - they are exceptional at what they do in every way possible." This highly effective and creative partnership ensured that children and families received the highest quality of care and support when they needed it.

Highly effective personal plans and wellbeing plans were in place. Children across the nursery received exemplary care and support from a team of kind, nurturing, and highly attentive staff. Plans contained the relevant information to ensure staff could meet children's individual needs. Meaningful partnership working with families and professionals enabled staff to get a clear understanding of strategies to support the holistic needs of each child and help them reach their full potential. One parent commented, 'My son is autistic and this nursery is absolutely amazing at meeting his needs and understanding him.' A holistic approach to working with parents and professionals also helped staff to regularly update plans to reflect the changing needs of the children. Achievements in development were recognised and tracked. Older children were able to contribute their own voices to their plans. This helped them to feel they had ownership of their care and learning.

Children's rights were respected as personal care routines were carried out using sensitive and warm interactions. Children's emotional security and wellbeing were supported through sensitive arrangements for daily routines such as rest and mealtimes. For example, staff were aware of children's routines but did not insist on rigidly following rest time: they were respectful of children's choices if they would rather play than sleep so that children were learning to recognise their own body's cues. Routines were reflective of individual children's needs and family wishes.

Mealtimes were a relaxed and unhurried experience for all children. All children were able to develop some independence and life skills by clearing their own plates and serving themselves. Innovative conversation was used by staff to create discussions and engage children throughout the meal. This helped to make lunchtime a sociable experience for children. The recent changes to lunchtime will be discussed at upcoming In-Service Event, in order that children, parents and staff can share views and decide next steps for this part of the child's day.

Parents were welcomed warmly into the service at any time of the day that suited their needs and wishes. Supporting children's emotional wellbeing was a clear priority. Staff used recognised approaches and resources to help children identify, understand and regulate their emotions. These strategies were embedded into daily practice and were understood by children. There was also evidence of strong partnership working with families, with shared approaches used at home to support children's emotional development. Transitions were managed thoughtfully and with care and staff visited the parents' home prior to children starting the service. Staff worked closely with families to support children moving into the service and throughout different stages of their journey. Approaches were personalised and, where appropriate, staff supported continuity by moving alongside children. This helped to reduce anxiety and support children to feel secure during change.

Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and child protection procedures. They were well trained and committed to promoting children's safety, wellbeing and rights. Clear policies and procedures were in place to guide practice, and information for families was displayed throughout the nursery. This helped ensure children experienced care and support within a safe, nurturing and protective environment. Staff interactions were of a consistently high quality.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

Personal plans for children should be further developed to ensure that purposeful individual observations and clearly identified next steps are recorded for each child. Staff should ensure that spontaneous observations are carried out, where appropriate. This will give clear information on children's individual learning and support each child's keyworker to identify individual next steps in learning for each child in their group. Children's personal plans should be reviewed every six months, or when appropriate, with parents.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that "My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices" (HSCS 1.15), and in order to comply with Regulation 5 of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This area for improvement was made on 21 January 2019.

Action taken since then

Personal plans have been updated and audited regularly for all children.
Individual observations are being recorded consistently.
Clear next steps are identified and documented for each child.
Staff are carrying out spontaneous observations where appropriate.
Keyworkers use observations to monitor progress and plan individual learning and development.

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	6 - Excellent
Nurturing care and support	6 - Excellent

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