Aileymill Nursery Class
Day Care of Children

Aileymill Primary School
Norfolk Road
Greenock
PA16 0JG

Telephone: 01475 715 996

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 June 2026

Service provided by:
Inverclyde Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000212

Service no:
CS2003016350

About the service

Aileymill Nursery Class operates within Aileymill primary school in the town of Greenock in Inverclyde.

The service is provided by Inverclyde Council during term time only and is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 80 children aged 3 years and over and not yet attending primary school.

Any other conditions unique to the service:

Adult: child ratios will be a minimum of:
- Under 2 years - 1:3
- 2 years to under 3 years - 1:5
- 3 years 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.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 3 May and Thursday 4 May 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:

- spoke with children using the service
- received 13 completed questionnaires from parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily 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, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Most children were happy, confident and accessed areas independently.
- Staff consistently provided kind, caring and responsive interactions, supporting children to feel safe, secure and valued.
- Management team maintained a strong presence in the setting, they knew children and families well.
- Self-evaluation processes were in place; these require strengthening with a stronger focus on using findings to drive measurable improvement.
- Play experiences lacked depth, progression and challenge.
- The environment and resources were not sufficiently stimulating, with few provocations to promote curiosity and imagination.
- Mealtime experience requires improvements as lunchtime routines did not consistently meet children's needs, with long waiting times and limited opportunities for independence.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: 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 service had experienced a period of change since the previous inspection, including changes in management and staffing. The management team had supported the service through this transition and demonstrated a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children, families and the wider community, while promoting staff wellbeing.

Parents told us, 'Thank you to all the staff for contributing to my child's learning and for all you do for us as a family we really appreciate all that you do every day.' and 'The staff are wonderful with not only my child but all the children in the nursery they are all friendly, nurturing and welcoming.' and 'All staff are friendly and welcoming and easy to chat to.'

The management team maintained an active presence within the service and had a good understanding of the children and their families' aspirations. They were visible during key parts of the day and provided direct support to staff, including during routines such as lunchtime. They undertook learning walks and carried out observations of children, staff and the environment. These approaches contributed to ongoing monitoring and supported steps towards continuous improvement.

The service had not recently reviewed or developed a shared vision, values and aims. The management team would benefit from leading this process in partnership with children, families and staff to ensure that the service direction reflects shared aspirations. This would support a consistent approach to practice and ensure that planned improvements are informed by the views of all stakeholders, strengthening the delivery of high-quality learning and childcare.

The management team had begun to use self-evaluation and quality assurance processes; however, these required to be strengthened and embed further to ensure continuous improvement. The service needs to make more effective use of the Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare (2025), with a stronger focus on evaluating impact. In particular, the team would benefit from referring to the challenge questions and consider "so what" when reviewing practice to ensure that identified actions lead to meaningful improvements. Greater use of key guidance, including the Health and Social Care Standards, Space to Grow and Thrive, and Realising the Ambition, would strengthen staff knowledge and support improvements in practice.

The manager, who also held the role of Head Teacher, provided leadership across the nursery and the school community. Staff described the manager as approachable, supportive and visible within the nursery. They reported that the manager listened to their views and provided guidance when required. All staff had been safely recruited and were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

We discussed with the provider and manager the need to strengthen staff leadership responsibilities. We agreed that staff would benefit from visiting other early years settings to observe well designed environments that promote engagement, independence and sustained play. This includes exploring effective use of provocations and flexible routines, as well as different lunchtime approaches that support children's

choice, independence and social interaction. These opportunities would support staff to reflect on their practice, identify areas for improvement and implement meaningful changes within their setting.

Management and staff should develop effective risk assessments to support a safe and secure environment within the early years setting. Risk assessments should identify potential hazards across indoor and outdoor spaces, carefully considering children's ages, stages of development, and individual needs. These should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the environment, routines, or activities, ensuring that appropriate control measures are in place to minimise risk while still promoting positive, engaging play experiences.

At the time of inspection, the management team advised that the depute was due to leave post. The head teacher along with the provider had started to support this transition to ensure continuity in leadership. However, effective leadership arrangements need to be maintained and strengthened to support the ongoing development of the service and to sustain positive outcomes for children, families and staff

Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality Indicator: Play learning and developing

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

Most children engaged positively in their play and learning experiences. They demonstrated confidence within the environment and moved freely across the playroom, accessing available resources. Staff provided some opportunities for children to develop early skills in literacy, numeracy and creativity. For example, children engaged in mark making and drawing, sorting and using numicon resources, and exploring early mathematical language as staff discussed quantities and amounts during playdough experiences. Children showed enjoyment and engagement while making and playing with playdough, enhancing sensory exploration through the addition of herbs to support their sense of smell and texture. They also accessed opportunities for painting, outdoor play and construction using bricks.

Staff interacted warmly with children and used some appropriate questioning techniques, such as "What would happen if..." and "What about if we...", to extend thinking and support aspects of play learning and development.

However, staff did not consistently sustain or extend children's learning due to competing demands. Observations showed that interactions were frequently interrupted as staff responded to the needs of others. For example, a staff member supported a group of seven children to engage in a focused activity but had to leave to respond to other children. Although the response was caring and appropriate, repeated interruptions limited continuity of learning and reduced opportunities to deepen engagement.

The service had intended to provide targeted support through initiatives such as home link bags; however, this had not been consistently implemented due to staff absences and deployment. This reduced opportunities to support individual learning, attainment and strengthen links between home and nursery.

Staff used observations and planning approaches to consider children's needs, interests and abilities. They displayed evidence of children's learning within the environment and recorded this through online journals and local authority planning processes. However, it was not clearly demonstrated how staff used this

information to plan next steps or incorporate individual targets into daily play and learning experiences. Some adult led experiences were repeated over time, limiting progression and challenge.

The quality and range of play experiences varied across the setting. Staff did not consistently provide rich, stimulating environments or meaningful provocations to spark curiosity and imagination. Some indoor areas were under-resourced and lacked sufficient materials, which reduced the quality of experiences available. As a result, children did not consistently lead their own play or sustain engagement for extended periods.

Some children frequently moved between areas without purpose, indicating that experiences were not always sufficiently stimulating, engaging and challenging. This limited opportunities to develop creativity, choice and deeper learning. To support and enable children to have fun and learn through more purposeful, high quality play experiences, learning should be developed from and clearly linked to children's ideas and interests. (See area for improvement 1)

The management team and staff should carry out a comprehensive environmental audit to improve the quality of play and learning. This should focus on reviewing how spaces are used, increasing access to high quality resources, and creating well defined, inviting areas that support different types of play. Management and staff should also consider factors such as layout, lighting, and spaces for rest and quiet play. Strengthening the environment and ensuring experiences are based on children's interests and ideas would support more meaningful, sustained and high-quality play experiences. (See area for improvement 2)

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to experience enjoyment, engagement and appropriate challenge in their play. The provider should strengthen the planning and delivery of learning experiences to ensure that play is consistently purposeful and of high quality. In particular, practitioners should clearly base learning opportunities on children's ideas and emerging interests, ensuring that these are well tracked and used to inform meaningful next steps in learning.

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 meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19) and 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

2. The provider should undertake a comprehensive environmental audit to improve the quality of play and learning spaces. This should include but not limited to;

• reviewing how spaces are used, increasing access to high quality resources, and creating well defined, inviting areas that support different types of play and offer areas of rest and quiet play.

• review the layout, lighting and overall organisation to ensure it promotes engagement and sustained play.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27) and If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment and can use a comfortable area with soft furnishings to relax (HSCS 5.6).

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

Interactions between staff and children were consistently kind, caring and nurturing, which promoted children's wellbeing. Staff engaged with children at their level during play and daily routines, supporting most children to feel happy and confident. They responded sensitively when children were upset or unsure, offering reassurance, comfort and physical affection when appropriate. These approaches supported most children to feel safe, secure and valued within the service.

Parents told us: 'The nursery is a friendly and welcoming place where my little child is given the opportunity to explore their interests and be part of a community.', 'It's a welcoming environment which my child feels comfortable going to.' and 'All the staff are lovely, welcoming, approachable and very nurturing towards my child and others, it feels like a home from home environment for my child when they come here.'

Children's personal plans contained relevant information regarding individual health welfare and safety needs. Staff communicated regularly with families through daily conversations at arrival and collection times, parents' meetings and the service's online journal. Staff reviewed personal plans, achievements and next steps termly with families. This supported the identification of children's next steps in learning and reflected their interests.

Children with identified additional support needs had plans in place linked to circle strategies. The team actively engaged with other agencies and professionals to support children for example speech and language therapists. However, staff and management should monitor and review strategies for children with emerging or changing needs. For example, further oversight was required to ensure appropriate and responsive support for children experiencing significant life events, to ensure appropriate strategies are in place to support their ongoing health and wellbeing.

Staff carried out children's personal care routines, including changing clothes, with respect for privacy and dignity. They provided reassurance and encouragement during these routines, which supported children to feel safe, secure and cared for.

The service implemented clear procedures for the administration and storage of medication. Staff followed an appropriate medication policy, and they stored medication in line with current best practice guidance. Consent forms were reviewed termly with families to ensure the information was relevant and up to date. Management were advised to strengthen monitoring arrangements by recording expiry dates on their monitoring form and ensuring medication was replaced in advance to maintain safe practice.

Staff recorded accidents and incidents and shared these appropriately with parents. However, management would benefit from introducing the measles monitoring tool to identify patterns or emerging risks on a monthly basis. This would support staff and management to identify trends and take proactive steps to minimise risks and improve children's safety.

Relationships with families was a key strength of the service. Staff actively encouraged parents to participate in their child's care, play and learning through initiatives such as stay and play sessions, sports day, parents' meetings and curriculum evenings. We observed warm, welcoming engagement with parents

at drop off and collection times. These strong relationships supported effective transitions, promoted continuity of care between home and nursery, and enhanced children's sense of security and belonging.

A parent told us: 'From the moment you walk into the nursery there is an instant sense of nurture and care within the environment everyone welcomes you as you come in and I feel I have a strong relationship with my child's key worker keeping her/him up to date on how she /he is over the weekend and she/he will support her/him in the best way they can when she/he attends nursery and needs encouraging.'

The service had recently reviewed their lunch time experience and made changes to the routines and space utilised. However, we found changes did not provide a high-quality experience. Staff interrupted play to tidy areas prior to lunchtime while some children were still engaged. During these times, staff focused on tasks rather than interactions, which reduced the quality of engagement and contributed to increased instances of children wandering and at times engaging in conflict with others.

Observations during lunchtime identified that children waited extended periods to be served. These arrangements did not fully support children's wellbeing or promote independence for example self-serving. We have asked the provider to support the management team to review and improve lunchtime routines in line with best practice guidance 'Setting the Table Nutritional Standards and Practical Guidance for Early Learning and Childcare Providers in Scotland' (2025). Introducing a more flexible, rolling lunch approach to allow children to make choices about when to eat, support independence, and create a calmer, more responsive environment. The development of dedicated snack, baking or food preparation areas would further enhance opportunities for children to develop life skills and engage positively in mealtime experiences. (See area for improvement 1)

Areas for improvement

1. To support opportunities for children to experience choice, independence, and a calm, nurturing mealtime environment. The provider should work with the management team and staff to review and enhance lunchtime routines to ensure they are more responsive to children's individual needs and preferences in line with best practice guidance 'Setting the Table Nutritional Standards and Practical Guidance for Early Learning and Childcare Providers in Scotland' (2025).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state; I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.(HSCS 1.35) and I take part in daily routines, such as setting up activities and mealtimes, if this is what I want. (HSCS 2.21)

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

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

Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Playing, learning and developing	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

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