The Compass School
Day Care of Children

West Road
Haddington
EH41 3RD

Telephone: 01620 822 642

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 September 2026

Service provided by:
The Compass School Board of Governors

Service provider number:
SP2003003572

Service no:
CS2003016994

About the service

The Compass School is an independent school in the town of Haddington, East Lothian. The service is registered to care for 20 children aged between 3 years and primary school entry. On day one of inspection there was 19 children present and on day two there was 18 children present.

The class for the youngest children in the school is referred to as Form One. Form One are accommodated within the school. Premises include a playroom, outdoor spaces, use of the gym hall, music room and toilets.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 14 September 2026 between 08:15 and 17:15 and on the 15 September 2026 between 08:15 and 14:30. One Inspector carried out the inspection. A team manager was also present at the inspection as part of the Care Inspectorate's quality assurance processes.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since registration.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- considered feedback from 15 families through an online questionnaire
- considered feedback from four staff through an online questionnaire
- spoke with management and staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents relating to the care of children and the management of the service.

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

- Strong leadership and a culture of reflection supported continuous improvement and positive outcomes for children and families.
- Children were highly engaged, settled and thriving in a nurturing, child-centred environment that offered rich play, learning and community experiences.
- Responsive planning and strong use of children's voice promoted meaningful learning, wellbeing and positive outcomes.
- Warm, nurturing relationships and strong partnerships with families helped children feel safe, valued and confident.
- Thoughtful transitions promoted children's confidence, belonging and positive wellbeing.

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	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service had clear vision, values and aims that had been recently reviewed through consultation with the whole school community, including Form One children. Children demonstrated ownership of these values through the creation of Ricki the Raccoon, a child-friendly mascot. Values were displayed on posters throughout the environment and were consistently demonstrated by staff through respectful interactions and positive role modelling. The review of values ensured they remained relevant, meaningful and embedded in practice which demonstrated a commitment to achieving positive outcomes for children and families.

Self-evaluation was evolving positively as leaders and staff embedded approaches aligned to the shared Quality Improvement Framework. Families reported that their views were valued and acted upon and commented, "I love that the staff are always open to suggestions and the take these on board and implement changes to ensure the care is always improving". The service had begun to use challenge questions to evaluate practice and consider how they were doing. As the service continues to embed the framework, further consideration to what they are going to do now when exploring challenge questions would strengthen the link between self evaluation and future improvements. The service had already identified greater involvement of children in self-evaluation processes would strengthen practice and had plans in place to develop this.

The service demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement through a culture of reflection. Led by a qualified nursery teacher and supported by leaders, the knowledgeable and experienced staff team demonstrated a strong foundation for continuous improvement through the service improvement plan and smaller improvement projects. Staff identified a range of potential developments which included, intergenerational learning opportunities, developing numeracy resources outdoors, parent stay-and-play sessions and developing the use of floor books to capture ongoing improvement work. An improvement plan focused on developing literacy, science experiences and implementation of the Quality Improvement Framework for self-evaluation. There was clear evidence that improvement actions were having a positive impact on children's experiences. For example, staff spoke confidently about enhanced literacy opportunities, including the creation of a cosy literacy area that encouraged story sharing, engagement with books and literacy-based play. Continuing to record evidence of ongoing improvement activities would further support staff to review impact of changes.

Quality assurance processes were in place and supported by a structured monitoring calendar. Policies were regularly reviewed to ensure they reflected current legislation, best practice and the needs of the service. A small number of policies could be strengthened further to enhance awareness and continue to reflect current guidance. For example, the complaints, whistleblowing and infection control policies. Regular audits were carried out on key areas of practice such as learning stories, termly class observations and evaluations of learning and progress. To strengthen quality assurance further, we discussed introducing regular audits of key areas of early years practice. For example, ensuring medication reviews and administration acknowledgements were completed. Ensuring accidents and incidents were signed by the person collecting the child and audited for any themes and formalising reviews of personal plans. This would ensure practice

continued to align with guidance and sustain outcomes for children and families.

Risk assessment processes were being strengthened through the introduction of a new recording format and review of existing assessments. Children were actively involved as safety officers, helping them develop an awareness of risk and safe practices. The service planned to develop risk assessments for indoor areas. Overall, the service demonstrated a proactive approach to risk management, contributing to a safe environment and supporting children's understanding of safety.

Leaders demonstrated effective leadership through robust safer recruitment. Induction arrangements had been strengthened in recent years. Staff spoke positively about the support they received when joining the service, highlighting welcoming induction experiences, mentoring opportunities and regular support from colleagues and leaders. Overall, staff felt well supported which positively impacted outcomes for children.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

We visited towards the start of term and children were settled, engaged and enjoying a wide range of play and learning experiences. Families described a "happy and well-balanced environment" and valued the breadth of opportunities available. Staff responded effectively to children's interests, introducing experiences such as bridge-building, story-based games to support early numeracy and emotional literacy, and French games that promoted language development. Children confidently explored role play, construction and sand play. Families commented, "I truly believe it's a brilliant start to school life", "Such a varied range of things to do" and "My child has thrived in this setting". Staff planned ongoing evaluation of the environment spaces which would help ensure spaces remained stimulating, purposeful and effective in supporting children's learning and development.

Children also benefited from end-of-day sessions in Compass Care, where they socialised with older pupils and enjoyed a variety of activities in the school. Families valued these opportunities, commenting that "Compass Care options means our kids get to experience a lot of activities". Children enjoyed creative experiences such as making hot air balloons and quiet spaces to relax. Staff knew children well and created a warm, nurturing environment where children felt happy, secure and actively engaged in their play and learning.

The service provided a rich range of experiences that supported children's learning, wellbeing and connection to their local area. Families valued opportunities such as forest school, beach visits, library walks, fire pit Fridays, swimming, PE, judo and 'Walkie Wednesdays', where children visited outdoor locations across East Lothian. Specialist teachers provided learning experiences in judo, music, French, physical education and swimming. These real-life experiences enriched learning while supporting children's development and sense of belonging.

Children accessed outdoor play throughout the session and could often choose between indoor and outdoor experiences. Outdoor play promoted creativity, problem-solving and physical development through loose parts play, planting, growing and sensory experiences. Children were active and engaged as they shared stories, explored musical instruments, made potions and harvested raspberries. Staff had clear plans to further develop the outdoor environment, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing children's learning

and development.

Staff demonstrated an understanding of the importance of uninterrupted play. They aimed to adapt routines to support children's engagement where possible. For example, by offering options for some extra curricular experiences and adjusting group times to enhance children's freely chosen play and engagement. However, there were some opportunities to further increase child-led play and choice. Continued evaluation of routines would help ensure children had greater control over their day and more opportunities for sustained, child led, meaningful play.

Children experienced warm, nurturing interactions from staff who responded to their individual needs. Skilled questioning and sustained shared thinking extended children's play and learning, promoting curiosity, confidence and engagement. Staff worked hard to meet the diverse needs of the room and provided support throughout the environment. Maintaining the high-quality interactions during busier periods would further enhance children's experiences and outcomes.

Planning was a key strength, with children at the heart of decision-making. Their ideas were captured through floor books, responsive planning and ongoing reflection, resulting in highly engaged and motivated learners. Families valued how children's voices shaped meaningful learning and wellbeing, with one commenting, "They very much let the children lead the play. It's such a happy place". Planning clearly identified learning intentions, next steps and curriculum links, while curriculum overviews helped identify gaps in learning. Increasing contributions and ownership of planning from all staff would strengthen continuity of planning approaches during periods of staff change. Overall, the service demonstrated a strong child-centred approach that promoted engagement, meaningful learning and positive outcomes.

Observations and assessments were recorded through learning journals and a digital platform, capturing children's learning and experiences. Staff used observations, tracking and assessment to monitor progress and identify children requiring additional support or challenge. One family commented, "After 3 weeks in the setting we were invited to parents' night and blown away by the observations and work that is done in Form 1. In a short space of time they really know our child." While a broad range of learning was captured, further strengthening personalised observations and links to next steps with subsequent observations would provide a clearer picture of individual progress and support targeted outcomes.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

Staff consistently demonstrated warm, nurturing and respectful relationships, helping children feel safe, secure and valued. They responded sensitively to individual needs, promoting wellbeing, confidence and positive development. Families spoke highly of the staff team, commenting that they, "go above and beyond what is expected of them and they build a level of trust that I have not seen in any other childcare setting. They truly care for the children and that shines through" and "we have been blown away by the generosity, kindness and service provided by the staff". Children appeared confident, emotionally secure and well supported. This enabled them to engage positively in learning and build strong relationships.

Carefully planned transition arrangements were a key strength. Families attended transition visits before the summer break, enabling children to meet staff, become familiar with the environment and build

relationships. Staff also visited children in their previous settings and shared story videos over the summer to maintain connections. These approaches helped children feel familiar and connected before starting, resulting in confident and settled transitions. One child shared, "I have been here a couple of days, and one day I forgot to give mummy a cuddle, I was too excited to come in". This highlighted the positive impact of the service's nurturing approach in promoting belonging, confidence and wellbeing from the outset.

Opportunities for rest and relaxation were available throughout the environment. This included cosy indoor spaces with bean bags and sofas and an outdoor shed for quieter activities and story sharing. These spaces supported children's wellbeing by providing calm, nurturing places to relax and recharge. To further strengthen practice, the service should ensure sleep arrangements align with safe sleep guidance and provide appropriate equipment for children who may require sleep during the session.

Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and were confident in recognising, responding to and reporting concerns. Regular training ensured practice remained current, and staff understood their responsibility to escalate concerns and take appropriate action to protect and support children.

Medication procedures were in place to support the safe administration of medication. Medication was stored appropriately, with consent. Staff demonstrated an awareness of best practice guidance, including the need for regular reviews. During the inspection, recording formats were strengthened to include signed and dated medication reviews with families to evidence their involvement. We also identified the need to strengthen medication administration records to capture when administration information was shared with families and obtain a signature from the person collecting the child. Overall, systems supported children's health and wellbeing, and these enhancements further strengthened the safe and consistent management of medication.

Snack times were calm and well-established routines. Families valued the opportunities available, with one commenting, "My child LOVES the food choices, along with the opportunity to get involved in making snacks". Children independently accessed snack, choosing when to eat and participated in preparation and clear-up, which promoted choice, independence, confidence and life skills. Staff were exploring ways to encourage children to try a wider range of foods. This supported healthy eating outcomes and further embedding Setting the Table guidance would support this. Children also enjoyed balanced, nutritious lunches in the school dining hall. Consideration should be given to increase opportunities for staff to sit alongside children to promote conversations. Exploring opportunities to further increase self serving and independence at lunch times would further enhance experiences.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. These were developed in partnership with families and reflected individual needs, interests and preferences. Staff used chronologies, regular planning meetings and ongoing reviews to identify and respond to additional support needs. This helped to ensure children received appropriate support. Families were actively involved in the planning process and strongly agreed their views were valued. To strengthen practice and ensure compliance, personal plan reviews should be formally recorded, dated and signed by families, with all elements reviewed at least every six months.

Connections with families were strong and families told us, "The staff are incredibly responsive and supportive, at all times". Regular updates through the digital app, daily conversations and an open-door approach helped families feel informed, involved and connected to their child's experiences and progress. Well-planned transitions and opportunities for family involvement supported strong partnerships and helped children and families build positive relationships from the outset. One family told us about "family Fridays where parents can visit their child's classroom and see how they learn through play". The service

demonstrated a strong commitment to working with families. Continuing to increase opportunities for families to engage in the play environment throughout the year would further strengthen these partnerships and enhance understanding of children's 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	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	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

0345 600 9527

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