Sparklers Private Nursery
Day Care of Children

The Rectory
Annan Road
Gretna
DG16 5DH

Telephone: 01461 338 600

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 July 2026

Service provided by:
Sparklers Private Nursery Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2004005096

Service no:
CS2005098017

About the service

Sparklers Private Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 82 children comprising 12 children 0 - under two years, 25 children two - under three years, 35 children, not yet attending school from aged three years and 10 children, attending school to eight years of age.

Sparklers Private Nursery is situated in Annan Road, Gretna. The nursery comprises two spacious playrooms to accommodate the children attending, a kitchen area, parents' room, sleep facilities, staff room and office space. Children have access to outdoor areas, with the older children having free flow access to outside, when they want to go. The nursery is conveniently situated to places of interest like shops, parks and sports facilities.

The nursery vision is "to create a happy, safe and stimulating environment where children thrive, develop confidence and learn life with love." Their aims include to "provide high quality childcare and early education, support children's emotional, social and physical development, build strong partnerships with families and ensure all our children feel safe, valued and supported".

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 13 July 2026, Tuesday 14 July 2026 and Wednesday 15 July 2026. The inspection was carried out by three 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- received 12 completed questionnaires from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with management and staff
- observed practice and children's 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

- The service has a strong culture of quality improvement, reflective practice and inclusive leadership, which is supporting continuous development and positive outcomes for children and families.
- Children are happy, engaged and making progress through a range of positive play and learning experiences.
- Children benefitted from positive relationships with staff, opportunities to make choices and experiences which supported the development of language, literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- The caring and respectful relationships children and staff had developed, supported children's wellbeing and helped them feel safe, settled and valued.
- Staff knew children well and worked collaboratively with families and other professionals to meet their needs.
- Children were supported to develop independence, enjoy healthy meals, access their community and experience smooth transitions.
- The service demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and had identified areas where practice could be further strengthened to ensure consistency and promote the best possible outcomes for children.

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	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - 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.

The service had a clear vision, values and aims (VVA) statement in place which had recently been reviewed in consultation with children, families and staff. The VVA was displayed in the nursery, and easily accessible online, supporting families to understand the service's approach and what they can expect for their child. We found that the review process had provided meaningful opportunities for everyone involved to identify what was important to them regarding children's care, support and experiences. We could also see that the VVA was embedded across the setting's procedures, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that values underpin practice.

Management and staff were keen to ensure that they provided the best possible quality of care and experience for children and families. They were actively reviewing and strengthening quality assurance systems in line with current good practice. At the time of the inspection, a number of new quality improvement initiatives had recently been introduced and were in the early stages of implementation. Management demonstrated a reflective approach and were evaluating the impact of these developments to ensure they lead to positive outcomes for children.

An updated quality assurance calendar had been introduced, providing a more structured approach to monitoring quality throughout the year. This identified when key audits and reviews would take place, including staff practice, medication, accidents and incidents, and care plans. This should support a more systematic approach to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. We discussed additional areas currently being reviewed during our visit, including the monitoring of absence patterns and the analysis of data from accidents and incidents. These activities support the identification of patterns and trends, inform preventative measures and support compliance with Care Inspectorate reporting requirements. As we had identified incidents that met the threshold for notification to the Care Inspectorate but had not been submitted, management were advised to review notification requirements to ensure all relevant incidents are reported appropriately.

Alongside strengthening quality assurance procedures, supervision processes had recently been reviewed and revised procedures were becoming embedded. Staff practice observations had also been introduced, including peer observations supported by management. This will help strengthen reflective practice and professional learning. We discussed the benefit of ensuring that any identified development actions include clear timescales and review dates so that progress can be monitored effectively and appropriate support provided where required.

Monthly staff meetings had been reintroduced and were providing valuable opportunities to discuss children's needs, share practice developments and plan improvements. Staff had made a start to using the new framework for self-evaluation and were also discussing quality indicators during these meetings. Management were encouraging a devolved leadership approach, encouraging staff to lead specific areas of practice and develop their leadership skills.

Staff reported feeling well supported by management and were confident about raising any concerns. Comprehensive induction procedures had recently been revised and clearly outlined expectations for all roles within the nursery. A mentoring approach had been established, with experienced staff supporting

colleagues through skill sharing, coaching and guidance. This included support for recently promoted staff members, helping to build confidence and leadership capacity across the service.

Training opportunities were actively encouraged and supported. Management told us about plans to further develop professional learning through in-service days and targeted workshops, including training specifically relevant to staff working with children under the age of 3. There was recognition that learning needs varied across rooms and management were sourcing appropriate training to meet these differing requirements. Plans were also in place to develop individual learning plans for all staff, supporting a more personalised approach to professional development.

All staff had had relevant child protection and safeguarding training and we discussed the value of incorporating regular safeguarding discussions into team meetings to develop confidence and provide further opportunities to reflect on practice. Chronologies and pastoral records were in place, demonstrating that concerns were recorded and monitored. A pro forma had been developed to capture actions taken and outcomes arising from concerns. However, we found that this had not been consistently completed in all cases.

Families were consulted regularly about their experiences of the service and were provided with feedback following consultations. Evidence showed that parent views informed both self-evaluation and improvement planning. Complaints were managed appropriately, with learning identified and changes made where appropriate. A clear improvement plan was in place which reflected feedback from families, staff and partner professionals, alongside information gathered through quality assurance processes. The plan was easily accessible for parents, showing that the service was committed to sharing information and involving families in the nursery's development.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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 happy, settled and enjoying their time at nursery. They engaged confidently in play and interacted warmly with staff. Children arrived happily and were observed having fun throughout our visit. Parents told us, "There are lots of different things to do, it changes every day", and "There's so much for my child to do and lots of messy play and opportunities they don't have at home. So pleased my child is socialising".

Children had access to a variety of play experiences and resources which supported their interests and learning. During our visit, some resources, such as paint and junk modelling, were not available due to the holiday period. Management should continue to ensure that children have consistent access to a full range of resources to support creativity and exploration.

Children in the 3 - 5 room had a variety of opportunities to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills through play and everyday experiences. Staff engaged children in conversations and supported language development by describing what children were doing and introducing new vocabulary. Some signing was used effectively, particularly during group experiences. We discussed how staff could further strengthen communication by greater use of visual supports and signing to help children understand routines, express themselves and access information.

Children enjoyed looking at books independently and frequently sought out stories to share with staff. Some opportunities for mark making were available and could be developed further across the play environment. Numeracy experiences included cooking, water and sand play, and making playdough. The service had identified literacy and numeracy as areas for improvement and plans were in place for staff to participate in relevant training opportunities.

Children were developing important life skills. In the older children's room, they were encouraged to take responsibility for tidying resources before moving on to other activities. This supported independence and respect for their environment. Staff should ensure that such responsibilities are shared fairly amongst children.

We observed examples of cooperative and increasingly complex play, particularly within the 3 - 5 room. Children worked together, shared ideas and used their imaginations in their play. Staff were engaged and interested in children's experiences, however there were occasions when opportunities to extend their thinking and learning were missed. Continued focus on the role of the adult in play will support staff to observe, respond and sensitively challenge children's thinking to deepen their learning.

We discussed the importance of using a balance of questioning and description, particularly with younger children. At times, staff working with younger children relied on questioning rather than using descriptive language to model vocabulary and support learning. In the older children's room, there were opportunities for staff to further develop the use of higher-order thinking to encourage curiosity, problem-solving and critical thinking.

Children were regularly offered opportunities to make choices about their play and learning. Younger children who required support to access different areas of the playroom were helped by staff, enabling them to follow their interests. In the 3 - 5 room, children were also encouraged to make choices, however there were times when staff directed children's decisions rather than supporting them to make independent choices. We discussed the importance of balancing children's choices with staff understanding of developmental needs. At times we observed younger children displaying behaviours which suggested that they may have benefitted from access to outdoor play and physical activity. Children's behaviour is a form of communication and can provide important information about their needs, interests and wellbeing. Staff who use these observations, alongside their knowledge of child development, are better placed to make responsive decisions which support positive outcomes and ensure children remain engaged in meaningful learning experiences.

The service had recently introduced new planning approaches and staff were evaluating their effectiveness. As this work develops, planning should remain focused on outcomes for children and the impact on their learning and development, rather than being on the environment and resources.

Each child had a learning story, which captured observations, achievements and next steps and was shared with families. This supported parents to be involved in and informed about their child's learning. Staff had undertaken training to improve the quality of observations and were increasingly recording observations in a more factual and evaluative way. This positive work should continue to be embedded consistently across the nursery.

Systems for tracking children's progress were at an early stage of development. As these become embedded, they should support staff to monitor children's learning more effectively, identify patterns and trends, and ensure appropriate support is provided when required.

Management had already identified the need for next steps to be individualised and tailored to the individual needs of children and were supporting staff to develop their understanding of the difference between developmental milestones and achievable learning targets. Continued support will help ensure that targets are realistic, enabling children to experience success and progress.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

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 happy, settled and confident within the setting. We observed warm, caring interactions between staff and children, with staff engaging positively at children's level and responding sensitively to their needs. This helped children to feel secure and supported in their play and learning.

Positive relationships were clearly valued across the setting. Management and staff had worked hard to strengthen partnerships with families and had introduced some opportunities for involvement, including "Brew and Blether" sessions and stay and play opportunities. Families told us they valued these opportunities to engage with the nursery. A range of home-link resources were also being developed to strengthen learning between nursery and home. We discussed the benefits of using the Me, My Family and Childcare Setting resource to further review parental involvement and identify ways to increase opportunities for families to be routinely involved in the setting.

Staff knew children well and confidently described their individual needs, interests and preferences. Each child had a keyworker and management were thoughtfully considering future keyworker allocations to help ensure that children were matched with the member of staff best placed to support them. We saw strong attachments between children and staff, and that children were also developing friendships with their peers.

Staff treated children with dignity and respect. Children were given choices, provided with information about what was happening next and supported to understand routines and transitions. Personal care was managed in a respectful manner, helping to protect children's dignity and privacy. Children were helped to settle when starting nursery and were given opportunities to visit new rooms and schools before moving on. At the end of the day, children from different rooms came together in one area. We discussed the value of providing a greater range of purposeful experiences during this time to ensure that children remain engaged and occupied.

Personal plans were in place for all children and contained comprehensive information about their individual needs and circumstances. Management were reviewing the format of these to make key information easier to identify and access. Personal plans were reviewed and updated with parents, however these reviews were not always signed. The service should ensure records clearly show parental involvement in the review process.

Where appropriate, children had additional plans and communication diaries to support partnership working between home and nursery. Staff worked collaboratively with a range of professionals and were implementing agreed strategies to support individual children. To ensure consistency, management should ensure that updated information and recommendations following reviews are easily accessible to all staff working directly with children.

We also identified opportunities to strengthen risk assessment arrangements for individual children. For example, we found information relating to children's individual needs contained across several documents.

Bringing this information together into a single, comprehensive risk assessment within the care plan format would improve clarity, consistency and accessibility for staff. We signposted management to the Care Inspectorate's Reducing Restrictive Practice guidance as a useful resource to support this work.

Mealtimes were positive occasions where children enjoyed a wide variety of healthy, tasty and nutritious food. Children enjoyed their food and ate very well. Parents told us, "We love the home cooked meals at nursery as they are all made from scratch and we have been asked to send in ideas for dinners too which is a nice personal touch as I know my child will be eating something they like". Another parent told us, "My child is happy that says it all. My child has lots of friends and likes Sarah's lunches too and eats everything which is not like at home."

Management had placed a strong focus on improving mealtime experiences and encouraging staff to reflect on their practice. However, changes in practice were not fully embedded, for example some children were expected to remain at the table until others had finished eating. Children were developing their self-help skills by being encouraged to serve themselves. They were becoming confident using cutlery and would benefit from further opportunities to develop skills like cutting up their food. There were further opportunities to involve all children in food preparation and mealtime routines, for example helping to set tables. Staff should continue to reflect on how mealtimes can promote children's choice, enjoyment and positive relationships with food.

Drinking water was available to children throughout the nursery. In the under-3 room, however, water was not always easily accessible when children were indoors. Staff should ensure that all children can independently access drinking water whenever they need it.

Infection prevention and control practices were generally effective and the nursery was clean, well maintained and welcoming. We identified a small number of practices which could be improved, for example the use of gloves when carrying out tasks like applying suncream and the use of nailbrushes. Whilst children did wash their hands before meals, handwashing after eating was not consistently embedded. Staff acknowledged this and were responsive to feedback during the inspection.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of safe sleep practice. They knew children's individual sleep preferences and recognised when children were tired and needed to rest. Individual sleep information was available to support consistency of care. We also noticed a musty smell within the sleep room and discussed the need to review ventilation and freshness of the environment.

At the time of the inspection, no medication was being stored in the service. Appropriate arrangements were in place for the safe storage of medication when required. Medication records had recently been updated and we discussed including a section to record signs and symptoms to strengthen record keeping and ensure safe administration.

Children benefited from regular opportunities to engage with their local community. They enjoyed visits to local shops and community facilities including the fire station, church, library and tennis courts. These experiences helped children to develop a sense of belonging within their community and broadened their understanding of the world around them. Parents told us, "My child liked going for snack to the shops and cafe. He got to pay for it with a card".

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	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good

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

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