Mid Annandale Playcare
Day Care of Children

Harcourt Place
Lockerbie
DG11 2AH

Telephone: 01576 204 707

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 November 2025

Service provided by:
Mid Annandale Playcare Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003002738

Service no:
CS2007143645

About the service

Mid Annandale Playcare is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 86 children at any one time. No more than 24 children are aged under 3 years with no more than 9 aged under 2 years. No more than 62 children are aged 3 years to those not yet attending secondary school.

The service is in partnership with the local authority to deliver Early Learning and Childcare. The service is provided by a voluntary Board of Directors. The service is based in a purpose built facility which is conveniently situated close to local shops, parks and schools. Children are cared for in four playrooms and enjoy their meals in a separate lunch room. Children benefit from access to a large, secure outdoor area.

At the time of our inspection there were 106 children registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 10 and 11 November 2025 between 09:15 and 17:45. 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:

- observed and spoke with children using the service
- received completed electronic questionnaires from 26 families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- 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.

During this inspection we 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 experienced warm and nurturing care that supported their wellbeing.

• Service values such as, 'caring, happiness and compassion,' were clearly visible in the way staff supported children and developed positive relationships.

• The service was in the early stages of their improvement journey. The leadership team had clear plans in place for service development.

• Staff communicated well, were flexible and worked together to support each other. This contributed to a positive team ethos.

• The service should embed newly developed planning and monitoring processes to consistently provide play experiences that spark children's curiosity and provide appropriate challenge.

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	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 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.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service aimed to provide nurturing and inclusive care in which children thrive through fun and engaging experiences. They had recently revisited the service vision, values and aims in collaboration with staff, families and early years children. One parent told us, "The staff are amazing and so passionate about their jobs. It's a wonderful environment and my [child] has really thrived in the year [they have] been going". This created a meaningful approach that reflected their commitment to providing a quality service for children and families.

Values such as, 'caring, happiness and compassion were clearly visible in the way staff support children's wellbeing and nurtured positive relationships. Outcomes for children were strengthened by this consistent approach. We discussed including the aspirations and views of school-aged children. This would ensure a whole service collaborative approach and promote a sense of belonging for all children. We also asked the service to assess the individual risk to school-age children with permission to walk from school to the service alone, including clear contingency plans. This would ensure children's safety.

Staff benefited from plenty of opportunities to be included in self-evaluation processes. Their voices were clearly included through improvement planning and they all felt professionally valued and supported to implement positive changes. This ensured a collaborative, meaningful approach to service development. Children and families were regularly consulted and a clear feedback cycle had been implemented. One parent told us, "We give feedback in regards to proposed changes and its often displayed in the foyer. We also voted for playroom names." This inclusive approach ensured that changes reflected what mattered most to people using the service.

The service engaged well with the inspection process and acted quickly on suggestion made during our inspection, such as developing a CCTV policy. This demonstrated a commitment to improvement. Quality assurance processes to monitor some areas of service delivery were in place. These were beginning to have an impact on positive changes in the service. Some areas of service delivery had not yet been monitored, for example personal plans, resulting in some inconsistencies. The service was at an early stage in their improvement journey with clear plans for development in place. The leadership team were realistic about the pace of change and committed to continuing to embed their processes. These will support them develop measurable improvements and impact positively on outcomes for children and families.

The service had recently experienced some challenges with recruitment. They were working hard to overcome these with minimal impact on the quality of children's experiences. Recruitment and induction processes were in line with safer staffing guidance. This meant that children's safety and wellbeing was central. We discussed the benefits of including children and families in the recruitment process. This would increase collaboration and help to ensure new staff reflect the values of the service. Newly recruited and trainee staff benefitted from ongoing mentoring. This helped them to build confidence in their practice. We suggested formalising protected time to meet with their mentors and complete induction processes. This would help provide more time to reflect and consolidate their learning.

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Children benefitted from a staff team who were keen to provide a quality service and committed to professional development. There was a mix of staff skills, knowledge and experience within the staff team and they were keen to support and learn from each other. They had regular opportunities for online training and professional discussions. This supported them to consider the impact of their practice and share ideas for improvement. This collaborative approach supported a culture of continuous learning and impacted positively on outcomes for children.

Staff benefitted from opportunities to reflect on their knowledge and skills individually with their manager through annual appraisals and progress reviews. This helped them to identify strengths and key areas of development. We suggested increasing management input with clear actions and timescales to support the achievement of next steps. This would further support staff in continuous professional development. All staff felt professionally and personally supported. One staff member told us, "Management are very open and supportive with an open door policy I feel I can go to them with both personal and professional worries and we can talk these through. These are always followed up too." This positive culture of support promoted confidence, wellbeing and consistency in practice.

The service made effective use of the diverse experience, knowledge and skills of staff when planning deployment. This ensured that early years children benefited from consistent support and were always cared for by staff who knew them well. One parent told us, "Our children love coming to MAP and have a great relationship with the staff which is lovely to see. They often share stories about their day and seeing the way the staff respond to them and genuinely care is so important to us." Continuity of care for school age children could be strengthened. Some children were not always familiar with who would be caring from them each day. The service told us they planned to improve this to ensure positive outcomes for all children. Families were welcomed into playrooms to chat with staff informally during drop off and collection times. This helped families to feel included in their children's day and supported the development of meaningful relationships.

Staff communicated well, were flexible and worked together to support each other. This contributed to a positive team ethos. Staff breaks were managed in ways that supported wellbeing whilst having minimal impact on children's play experiences. We discussed ensuring consistency of staffing during children's mealtimes. Some staff changes were made while children were eating their lunch. This interrupted their conversations and caused some disruption during transitions at a time where children are at an increased risk of choking. Consistent staffing during mealtimes would increase the quality of their experience and ensure their safety.

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.

Playing, learning and developing

Children's right to play was recognised and promoted by staff who demonstrated an understanding of child development. This meant that play was valued as central to learning and development. One child said they liked, "Playing outside with friends, dancing and singing." Another child told us, "I like playing with my friends and playing in the home corner. I like doing fun things." We observed most children laughing and having fun. Some children's engagement varied across the day and increased when adults were present to

support and extend play. We also found some inconsistencies in observations, leading to gaps in recording children's progress and next steps. The service had recognised there were inconsistencies in tracking and monitoring processes. They had also identified that play environments and experiences could be improved. As a result, new planning and tracking processes had recently been developed and were in the early stages of implementation. We discussed embedding these, as-well-as streamlining their processes for identifying meaningful next steps and monitoring children's progress and achievements. This would support staff in developing consistent approaches to provocations and experiences that reflect all children's interests and spark their curiosity and creativity **(see area for improvement 1).** Overall, school aged children were happy and having fun. Experiences could be improved through providing them with more independence, challenge and choice. This would add depth to their play and enhance their engagement.

Staff interactions were responsive and caring. This supported children's wellbeing and their sense of belonging. Effective use of language and tone encouraged children to wonder out loud and share ideas. This helped children develop communication, confidence and language skills. Some staff used questioning effectively to extend children's thinking. This helped them develop their problem solving skills. Some staff would benefit from further training and development in this area. This would ensure a consistent approach to supporting children's learning and development.

Children were able to choose freely between indoor and outdoor play. This was beneficial to their health and wellbeing. Children had fun during plenty of opportunities to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills. For example, we observed children mark making, playing number games, identifying colours and reading stories. This helped children to learn new skills through play. Consideration on how children could add depth to their learning through digital technology would further enrich children's experiences.

Families were encouraged to be included in their children's play, learning and development through stay and play sessions and open evenings. This supported families to understand the benefits of play-based learning. Some families told us they would like to see more online updates. One parent stated they would like, "More updates/pictures of what the children are doing through the day." It was also not clear if all families had been included in developing children's next steps. The service had responded to this feedback, and were continuing to consider ways to strengthen information sharing. This would ensure all families felt included.

Areas for improvement

1. To improve outcomes for children, the service should develop consistent quality of play experiences for children of all ages. These should be linked to children's interests and stimulate their curiosity and creativity. Planning, resources and staff interactions should add depth. monitor progress and provide appropriate challenge to children's play, learning and development.

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).

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.

Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, nurturing care that supported their wellbeing. One parent told us, "It's a really nurturing and caring environment, where my child is always happy to go. The staff are happy and open and genuinely care for the children in their care." This helped children to feel safe and secure. Staff had built strong, respectful relationships with children and responded sensitively to their individual needs. Staff working with younger children were skilled in using rights-based language. This helped children to recognise their rights in everyday routines. Children's privacy and dignity had been considered when making changes to playrooms, rest areas and changing facilities. Children were sensitively supported during settling in processes and when they were tired. This meant that children benefitted from responsive care and support, suited to their needs.

Children benefitted from sociable and unhurried mealtimes. Food choices were plentiful and reflected individual children's dietary requirements. Fresh water was available throughout the day for all ages. This supported children to stay healthy and hydrated. Younger children were supported to self serve, pour their own drinks and clear their plates. This supported independence and the development of life skills. The service should develop opportunities to promote school age children's involvement and independence in mealtimes. This would enhance their experiences.

Staff were supported to meet children's needs through personal planning. A new format had recently been developed and implemented. Whilst staff knew all children very well, we found some inconsistencies in the quality of the information recorded. We discussed the importance of robust monitoring of personal plans and clearly including families. We also suggested developing closer links with other services that children may attend to ensure information and strategies are consistent. This would promote a collaborative, consistent approach to meeting children's individual needs.

The service has created a welcoming environment where almost all families felt included and valued. Families needs had been well considered when developing a welcome area in the foyer and relevant information was easily available. This helped families understand how to be included in the service, and provided information on children's daily routines. Families were actively encouraged to come into playrooms daily. One parent told us, "I like coming into the playroom to drop off and collect. I am well informed by staff about my child's day." This provided informal opportunities to chat with staff and promoted a sense of partnership. Families were encouraged to share younger children's interests and successes from home through an online application and an achievement book. This helped staff to build on children's experiences and celebrate successes. We suggested developing this process for school aged children to enhance their sense of belonging. This would further support the development of meaningful connections with all families across the whole service.

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

The service provider and management should ensure that are sufficient numbers of staff who are deployed appropriately to meet the individual needs of all children across the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My needs are met by the right number of people" (HSCS 3.15) and 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19).

This area for improvement was made on 25 September 2024.

Action taken since then

The service was staffed appropriately to ensure children's individual needs were met throughout our inspection. Staff communicated well, supporting each other when required. The leadership team were visible in playrooms and provided additional support and guidance when needed. This ensured children's needs were met at the right time.

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
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - 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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