Bellsmyre ELCC
Day Care of Children

Howatshaws Road
Bellsmyre
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Telephone: 01389 773 919

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 September 2026

Service provided by:
West Dunbartonshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003383

Service no:
CS2016346434

About the service

Bellsmyre ELCC, operated by West Dunbartonshire Council, is registered to provide daycare services for up to 110 children aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is located within a shared campus alongside St Peter's and Aitkenbar Primary Schools. The nursery includes three spacious playrooms, break out spaces, access to the school gym hall and direct access to outdoor facilities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which was carried out on 22 and 23 September 2026. Two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate conducted the inspection. At the time of inspection, 51 children were in attendance.

In preparation, we reviewed a range of information about the service, including previous inspection findings, registration details, documentation submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the previous inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- gathered feedback from 13 families through online questionnaires
- spoke with five families
- spoke with staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within Children are supported to achieve.

Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and compassionate in their interactions, helping children feel welcome, safe and secure.
- The service demonstrated good and supportive leadership during a period of change, with management and staff working collaboratively to maintain stability and drive improvement.
- Children experienced a rich, stimulating and nurturing play environment, particularly during the morning session, where they were engaged in good-quality indoor and outdoor learning experiences.
- Strong partnerships with families were evident, with families speaking highly of the supportive, inclusive approach taken by the nursery.
- The service should now focus on improving consistency in children's experiences throughout the day and strengthening key care practices for example personal plans.

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

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

During the inspection, the management and staff team engaged positively. They demonstrated openness to advice and a strong commitment to improvement. We acknowledged the leadership changes that had taken place in recent months, with roles and responsibilities evolving during this period. The manager had returned to work and was complimentary towards the acting manager and staff team for maintaining stability within the service, providing effective leadership, and supporting continued improvement during their absence.

There had been a focus on revisiting the service's vision, values and aims, with the views of children, families and staff meaningfully informing this process. A commitment to creating a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment, where children feel happy, safe and nurtured, was evident throughout the setting. This shared understanding of the service's vision and values was beginning to influence practice and contribute to a positive culture for children, families and staff. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will help ensure that the service's vision, values and aims remain embedded across all aspects of the provision. This will support consistency in practice, inform decision-making and help drive continuous improvement.

Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were at an early stage of development through the use of the Quality Framework. The evidence provided demonstrated that management and staff were identifying, reflecting upon and documenting areas requiring further development and support. Several of the priorities identified during the inspection aligned with the service's self-evaluation outcomes. This indicated a clear understanding of the service's strengths, as well as areas for improvement, and provides a good foundation for ongoing development and positive outcomes for children, families and staff.

We suggested that the service begins to reference the new headings within the Quality Framework and discontinues the use of the numerical indicators associated with previous frameworks. This will help ensure that self-evaluation activity is aligned with current guidance and supports a consistent approach to improvement planning. The service should consistently date all evidence gathered through its self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. This will provide a clear chronology of progress, support effective monitoring of actions, and demonstrate how evidence is being used to inform ongoing improvement and evaluate the impact of changes over time.

Ongoing strengthening of self-evaluation and quality assurance arrangements will help support continuous improvement and ensure that planned actions result in meaningful and sustained positive outcomes for children, families and staff.

During the inspection, we identified areas for improvement in the safe management of medication. These messages were directed to the provider, who reassured us that new medication paperwork would shortly be introduced to strengthen recording and monitoring processes. The provider demonstrated a willingness to address the issues identified and implement the necessary improvements in a timely manner.

Staff had embraced leadership responsibilities and were motivated, enthusiastic and keen to take on additional roles within the nursery. Examples included champion roles for Forest School and Creativity/ Community, which incorporated an intergenerational programme involving local residents and community groups. These leadership opportunities were helping to build capacity across the nursery, promote greater staff engagement and support continuous improvement through a shared sense of responsibility and accountability.

Staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The service had developed an in-house induction programme, with reference to the National Induction Resource to support new staff in their roles. Staff also participated in annual professional review and development meetings.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

During the inspection, observations of children's play and learning differed somewhat between the morning and afternoon sessions. We discussed this in depth with the management team and highlighted the need for greater consistency in the delivery of play and learning experiences throughout the day. In particular, we explored how staff deployment, interactions and the planning of experiences could help ensure that children remain engaged, challenged and supported to achieve positive outcomes, regardless of the time of day.

Management demonstrated a clear understanding of the issues identified and reflected thoughtfully on ways to strengthen practice. A continued focus on monitoring the quality of children's experiences across the day will help ensure consistency and support the delivery of high-quality play and learning.

During the morning session, most children were happy, engaged and actively involved in their play, whether independently, with staff support or alongside their peers. They interacted positively with one another, demonstrating developing friendships, cooperative play and, at times, the ability to lead their own learning. Staff supported children appropriately when required.

Staff had planned learning environments thoughtfully and provided a wide range of experiences that encouraged children's exploration, curiosity and creativity. Provocations were used effectively to stimulate children's imagination and support open-ended play. These included potion-making experiences in both the creative and sand areas, well-resourced loose parts play, and block play, where children enthusiastically and imaginatively recreated the story of The Three Little Pigs. Staff also considered individual needs by creating small, nurturing spaces that provided quieter areas for children who benefited from reduced stimulation.

Outdoor play formed a central part of children's learning experiences. Staff used the outdoor environment effectively to support children's physical development through balancing, climbing and loose-parts play, encouraging imagination, curiosity and exploration. Children engaged enthusiastically with the natural environment, searching for insects and using magnifying glasses to observe them more closely. Others explored a variety of natural materials, including leaves, pinecones and acorns, which a member of staff had thoughtfully introduced to stimulate discussion about colour, texture and the natural world.

Children benefited from opportunities to develop their social, imaginative and early numeracy skills. For example, a small group worked cooperatively in the mud kitchen to create a café, confidently taking orders, preparing imaginative lunch dishes and using mathematical thinking to calculate prices. These experiences supported children's creativity, communication and problem-solving skills while promoting sustained engagement in play.

Families spoke positively about the outdoor environment. They told us:

"[Child] really enjoys having the opportunity to play outdoors, although [child] isn't always keen on getting too dirty! It's lovely to hear when [child] has been outside and [child] often comes home telling us about new areas or things they have in the garden. [Child] particularly loved the Forest School experiences, where [child] was able to explore and enjoy being outdoors in a different environment."

"[Child] has been practising [their] gross motor skills through use of the bikes and scooters within the garden. [Child] was eager to show me the chalk drawings [they] had done within the garden. [Child] enjoys playing at the mud kitchen and water."

Most staff effectively scaffolded children's learning, promoted language development through meaningful conversations and responded sensitively to children's cues and interests. These interactions extended children's thinking, encouraged communication skills and supported their confidence and independence.

Planning had evolved over time and remained a key focus, particularly in reflecting children's interests and needs. Staff told us that observations informed planning and captured children's voices meaningfully. Staff developed area plans over approximately two-week periods, allowing time for observation, implementation, reflection and evaluation.

Staff used floorbooks to document the planning cycle and record a range of learning experiences, with a focus on teaching and learning. They also recorded and shared children's learning through learning journals, which provided families with opportunities to engage in and contribute to their child's learning and development. We saw evidence of literacy and numeracy experiences within both floorbooks and learning journals, with links made to the Curriculum for Excellence.

The service should continue to strengthen planning approaches to ensure sufficient breadth, depth and challenge across the curriculum. This should include consistently identifying and tracking children's next steps in learning, continuing to capture and value children's views, and further enhancing family engagement to support a holistic approach to learning and development. This would enable staff to demonstrate children's progression over time and ensure children received appropriate support and challenge.

Children are supported to achieve — 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Staff were kind, caring and compassionate in their interactions, helping children feel welcome, safe and secure. Staff provided comfort, praise and reassurance, supporting children's emotional wellbeing.

Staff had developed strong relationships with children and families. Families told us: "It's an amazing nursery with fantastic staff that make you feel like you're part of their family, the staff really get to know your child and family." And "A really lovely nursery with great staff. My child enjoys attending goes in with a smile and always says they've had fun! [Child] has built nice friendships along the way."

Overall, staff were calm and gentle in their manner, which contributed to a relaxed and reassuring environment for children. We discussed the differences observed between the morning and afternoon sessions, as some staff appeared to become more task-focused as the day progressed, with fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with children. This indicated that the quality of children's experiences was not always consistent throughout the day. We explored with the management team the importance of maintaining high-quality interactions at all times, recognising that responsive engagement from staff plays a key role in supporting children's wellbeing and sense of belonging. Continued focus on staff deployment, routines and reflective practice should help ensure consistent, purposeful interactions throughout the day.

Mealtime experiences required improvement. This was discussed with both the provider and the service during the inspection. Staff were observed making efforts to create positive social experiences and provided opportunities for children to develop independence through serving food, making choices and participating in mealtime routines. However, children did not consistently experience mealtimes as relaxed, unhurried and enjoyable occasions. We observed that the current approach did not always support a calm dining atmosphere, and some children experienced interruptions to play and learning as a result.

We suggested that the rolling lunch approach is revisited, with consideration given to introducing a quieter and more sociable mealtime experience. This would encourage conversation, allow children to eat at an unhurried pace and support safer eating through improved supervision. Reviewing mealtime arrangements would strengthen children's wellbeing, independence and social development.

Staff carried out personal care routines, including nappy changing, in a caring and responsive manner. We discussed the importance of maintaining children's dignity and privacy during personal care experiences and suggested that staff adopt a more discreet approach when advising children that they require changing. This would better protect children's dignity, comfort and wellbeing while ensuring personal care remained sensitive and child-centred. Personal plans were in place and followed the local authority format. The format provided good capacity to record relevant information about children's care, support, learning and development needs, and to track progress over time.

The quality and level of detail within the sampled plans varied, with some containing more comprehensive information than others. We identified opportunities to further strengthen target setting and the identification of children's next steps in learning and development, ensuring these are clear, meaningful and regularly reviewed. There is also scope to further develop the recording of children and families' views within personal plans, ensuring their contributions meaningfully inform planning, support and decision-making. This would strengthen the person-centred approach and ensure plans reflected children's needs, interests and aspirations.

Not all personal plans contained evidence of review. We discussed the importance of ensuring plans are reviewed and updated within required timescales, in line with legislative requirements and best practice guidance. Regular review and evaluation will help ensure that information remains current, relevant and effective in supporting positive outcomes for children, while also providing a clearer record of progress and any changes in identified needs (see area for improvement 1).

Families were involved in a range of meaningful ways, including Stay and Play sessions, Peep Learning Together Programme sessions, breakfast opportunities, curriculum events, home-link activities, and through the warm, welcoming interactions that take place at the beginning of each day. This demonstrated the service's commitment to family engagement and partnership working. Family comments included: "Would happily be more involved however drop off is always so busy with people coming and going and pick up is outside so doesn't leave much time to have much chat. Would welcome some sort of change to allow this to happen i.e. pick up from the room instead of outside."

We suggested revisiting end-of-day arrangements and considering whether families could be supported to enter the setting to collect their child. This would create more opportunities for informal communication and information sharing between staff and families. It would also allow children to share their learning environment and achievements, strengthening links between home and the setting.

Building on existing positive relationships in this way could further enhance partnership working with families and support a shared approach to promoting children's learning, development and wellbeing.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children receive appropriate care and support, and that their health, welfare and wellbeing needs are consistently met, the provider should:

a) Ensure personal plans clearly identify and reflect each child's current health, wellbeing, care, play and learning needs, including agreed strategies, identified next steps and how these will be supported.

b) Ensure personal plans contain detailed and relevant information regarding any additional support needs, including agreed interventions and support strategies, and that this information is used effectively to plan for and meet children's individual needs.

c) Ensure personal plans are regularly reviewed, evaluated and updated in partnership with parents and carers, in line with legislative requirements and best practice guidance, so that they accurately reflect children's current circumstances, progress, needs and preferred supports.

This is to ensure that 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).

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	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	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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