Little Staggies ELC
Day Care of Children

10 Fodderty Way
Dingwall
IV15 9XB

Telephone: 01349 865 783

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 July 2026

Service provided by:
Little Staggies ELC Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2019013402

Service no:
CS2019377651

About the service

Little Staggies ELC is situated on the outskirts of the town of Dingwall, in the Ross-Shire area of the Highlands. It is provided from purpose built premises comprising of three playrooms, nappy changing and toilet facilities, office, staff room and kitchen. There is a large fully enclosed outdoor area accessible from each of the three playrooms. Staff also make use of the local area for walks and visits to places of interest.

The service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 20 December 2019. The service is managed and provided by a private provider and is in partnership with the Highland Council to deliver funded early learning and childcare. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 48 children at one time. Of those no more than nine are ages under two years, no more than 15 are aged two to under three years and no more than 24 are aged three to those not yet of an age to attend primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9 July 2026, with feedback on Friday 10 July 2026. This inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke/spent time with the children present during the inspection
- received seven questionnaires completed by parents
- spoke with staff and the management team
- 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.

Key messages

- Children experienced consistently kind and caring interactions from staff who knew them well.
- Children benefited from daily access to the outdoors.
- Work was still needed to ensure the setting and resources were consistently inviting, well resourced or purposeful enough to support curiosity, choice and deeper play.
- New planning processes had only recently been introduced and were yet to be embedded.
- Management and staff demonstrated a clear commitment to continuous improvement and positive outcomes for children and their families.
- Quality assurance processes were improving but were not yet robust enough to improve outcomes for children and support continuous service improvements.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated different parts of this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate and good with an overall evaluation of satisfactory/adequate. There were several important strengths taken together which just outweighed areas for improvement.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

The management team demonstrated a commitment to improvement and were now more reflective in their approach. Staff were positive about the service and felt included in the improvement journey, fostering a shared sense of responsibility and a positive team culture. Management and staff fully engaged with the inspection process and demonstrated a positive attitude towards change and improvement.

The management had recognised that the vision, values and aims for the service did not fully reflect the ethos or aspirations of the service and needed to be updated. During the review process, they had actively involved the children, families and staff. We were able to to see how families had been involved and the suggestions they had put forward. Having a shared vision, values and aims should support a clearer, shared understanding of expectations and a more consistent approach to practice.

The management and staff actively listened to and respected the views of children and their families and acted on their feedback. Working in partnership with families continued to be a priority. They recognised the importance of having strong partnerships with families and having opportunities for parents to visit the setting and share in their child's care and learning. There was an open door policy and good use was also being made of an online app to share information and maintain links with families. Parents commented that they were invited to offer their views and feedback and felt involved in a meaningful way to help development the service. The service should continue to develop partnership with parents in all aspects of nursery life.

Since the previous inspection, self evaluation and quality assurance were becoming more embedded in practice as management and staff were becoming more confident in implementing relevant processes and being more reflective in their practice.

Outcomes for children were supported by a relevant and achievable improvement plan. This was aligned with key priorities identified at the previous inspection. The areas for development the service had been working on included improvements to personal planning; observations, monitoring and tracking children's progress; family engagement and quality assurance. We were able to see the improvements which had been made since the previous inspection and how they had impacted positively on children's experiences, their play, learning and development. For example, improvements to the personal care plans now ensured that children were being consistently provided with the individualised care and support they required to meet their needs.

Quality assurance processes had been developed and supported children's wellbeing. There were quality assurance systems in place including audits for accidents, incidents and medication, alongside some formal monitoring of practice. These helped to identify what was working well and areas for development to support improvement of the service. We discussed with the management team how they could continue to develop auditing processes so that they were more robust and the evidence they produced was sufficient to draw conclusions about the quality of the provision and identify suitable approaches to improvement.

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

The service had made positive progress in developing a more stable and consistent staff team since the previous inspection. This had contributed to a positive ethos across the setting, where staff worked collaboratively and demonstrated a commitment to providing nurturing care and support for children. As a result, children benefited from more predictable routines and secure relationships with familiar adults who knew them well.

Staff had been recruited safely and in line with safer recruitment guidance. Appropriate checks were completed and staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as required. This helped to ensure that children were cared for by suitable staff and supported the delivery of safe care. New staff benefitted from a programme of induction and opportunities to shadow experienced colleagues. This supported new staff to settle into their role and become part of the staff team.

Staff were motivated to provide a quality service to the children and their families. They engaged with the inspection process, demonstrated a positive attitude towards change and improvement, and a willingness to learn and develop their practice. They were responsive to suggestions made during the inspection to continue to improve outcomes for children and families. Overall, staff were nurturing, caring and committed to meeting children's care needs. Parents described staff as being friendly, loving, attentive and supportive.

There was a range of opportunities available for staff to have professional discussions and use these to inform practice, for example, regular team meetings. Professional development reviews were completed for each member of staff on an annual basis. These provided an opportunity for staff to be involved in professional dialogue with the management team, reflect on their own practice, recognise their strengths, identify their goals and any training needs. The management explained that they were also introducing individual support and supervision meetings with all staff on a quarterly basis. These would allow for regular check ins and work based discussion and would help strengthen practice and consistency across the team.

Staff had completed core professional training including first aid, food safety, health and safety, and infection prevention and control training. This training helped to support children's wellbeing and enhance staff knowledge. Staff had completed child protection awareness training and ensured that they attended refresher training on a regular basis. Staff were able to confidently discuss what they would do should a child protection or safeguarding concern arise. We discussed with the management team the benefits of introducing a system to record post training reflection and evaluation. This would demonstrate how learning had enhanced staff knowledge or informed changes to practice.

Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate/satisfactory for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

Playing, learning and developing

Children experienced child-led play and were happy, settled and confidently moved around their playroom and outdoors. Most children were busy and were able to make independent choices about how they spent their time and confidently accessed the various play areas demonstrating a sense of belonging within the service.

Each of the three playrooms opened directly onto the outdoor play area and children's wellbeing was promoted through free flow access to the outdoor areas. It was very sunny on the days the inspection took place and the children in all three rooms spent a great deal of time outdoors. Staff had made sure that there were suitable shaded areas for the children as well as ensuring the children were wearing sun cream and sun hats. Staff had moved various resources and activities outdoors giving children choices as to what they would like to do. The children all enjoyed the opportunity to spend extended periods of time outdoors and take part in physical activities. They enjoyed running, climbing, water play, digging, mark making, ball games and using wheeled toys. For the majority of the time, children benefitted from uninterrupted play, allowing them to be engaged in their play.

Staff were warm, kind and caring in their interactions. They responded to children's needs and provided reassurance when required. Most staff positioned themselves at children's level, showed genuine interest and encouragement during play. More staff were beginning to demonstrate a good understanding of when to join in with play and when to step back. There were examples of positive practice across the setting. Some staff used effective questioning and extended children's learning, for example open ended questions and 'I wonder' statements, and allowed enough time for children to think and respond. However, there were also missed opportunities when skilled interactions and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills and promote development of imagination. For example, some children were less engaged and frequently moved between experiences, indicating that more timely and responsive adult support was needed.

Since the previous inspection, there had been some improvements made to the layout of the rooms and the range of resources available in each of the playrooms and outdoors. The rooms were better organised and good use had been made of soft furnishings to make areas, for example the story corners, cosy and inviting. There were more messy play activities available and there were more resources and activities to reflect children's current interests. For example in the baby room their focus area was the nursery rhyme, Five Little Ducks, and there were puppets, toys, illustrations and books to reflect this. Staff also supported the younger children through experiences that promoted schematic and sensory play. Management acknowledged that further resources were required to support children's play, learning and development across each of the playrooms and outdoors, especially in relation to extending children's numeracy, literacy and language skills. (see area for improvement 2 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

Approaches to planning, assessment and recording children's learning were not yet consistent across the service. Planning approaches had only very recently been reviewed to strengthen child-centred approaches. They were not yet fully embedded in practice and routinely evaluated to inform children's progress and next steps in learning. While staff responded to children's ideas and interests, experiences did not always offer sufficient challenge or depth. Strengthening the use of observations and tracking would support more targeted planning and enable staff to better monitor children's progress.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where there were important with the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Nurturing care and support

Children and their families all received a warm welcome when they arrived. Children were happy, settled and confident in the nursery and experienced nurturing, caring and responsive interactions from staff who were attentive to their individual needs. This helped children to feel safe and secure. Staff knew the children well and recognised their cues and responded sensitively, providing comfort, cuddles and reassurance when needed. Children approached staff with ease, demonstrating trust and positive attachments. Feedback from parents supported this. Comments made included: "staff are very attentive and caring", "supportive to families", "my daughter's keyworker knows her so well", "they are always so very friendly and have built up a rapport with my child" and "we have always felt that they genuinely care for our child".

Establishing and maintaining good working relationships with parents continued to be a priority for the management and staff. Connections with families enhanced engagement and contributed positively to children's experiences. The service operated an open door policy where they welcomed families to spend time in the setting and staff made time to speak with them individually. They were hoping to encourage families into the playrooms on a regular basis by introducing stay and play sessions, which would help strengthen partnership working. Good use was being made of an online app to share information between the setting and home.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning approaches. Since the previous inspection, work had been completed to improve personal plans. All children had a personal plan in place which set out how nursery staff would meet their individual health, wellbeing and safety needs. Staff were able to confidently discuss the care and support needs of the individual children in their care. Plans were completed and routinely reviewed with parents. This resulted in children receiving consistent care and being effectively supported to reach their full potential. (See area for improvement 1 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement made at or since the last inspection')

The management team explained that they had continued to review and develop transitions processes and procedures. Staff understood the importance of supporting transitions, whether it was a child starting nursery, moving between rooms, moving to school or during daily routines. Transitions were flexible and supportive. Staff worked with parents to understand preferences and needs. Settling in visits were flexible and informal. Children were provided with a timetable of settling in sessions which was specific to them and which went at a pace which was right for them. (See requirement 2 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection')

Snacks and mealtimes were calm and sociable, with staff sitting alongside children. They were relaxed and unhurried, allowing children to enjoy eating and chatting with friends and staff. Children were provided with home cooked lunches which took account of children's allergies and dietary requirements. Fresh water was readily available throughout the day to help children remain hydrated. Independence was promoted as children collected their plates and self served their food, giving them a sense of responsibility and ownership of routines. Staff sat with the children which provided opportunities to form and maintain relationships, and support the development of language, communication and social skills.

Personal care routines were carried out sensitively, in a nurturing and respectful manner, which supported children's dignity and promoted good health and hygiene habits. Safer sleep practices were promoted, and staff were attentive to children's individual needs. Sleep routines reflected family preferences and home practices, for example specific sleep times and comforters. This helped to create a sense of continuity, consistency of care and security for children. The layout of the toddler room had been reviewed and changes made to ensure that sleeping toddlers were safe at all times. The area was now more inviting and cosy with good use being made of soft furnishings. For those toddlers who still needed a longer sleep, where possible, the sleep room in the baby room was used.

Following the previous inspection, a requirement had been made in relation to medication. This had been fully actioned. Medication processes now supported staff with the safe administration of medication. Forms were in place which gathered appropriate information with parent signatures and dates. Medication was stored in line with good practice guidance, ensuring it was secure but accessible. Regular audits and reviews were completed to ensure that records were up to date. This meant staff had the information they needed to promote children's health and safety. (See requirement 1 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements made at or since the last inspection')

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 31 March 2026, to ensure children's medication needs are met and children are safe, the provider must ensure that medication is safely managed and is in line with best practice guidance.

In order to comply the provider must, at a minimum ensure:

a) Accurate and up to date records are maintained of all medications on the premises for the children's use including details of when medications are returned to parents/carers.
b) For all children requiring medications, all necessary information is recorded and is available to staff upon the child's admission to the service or when the condition first becomes known.
c) Staff must have a demonstrable understanding of the appropriate procedures to follow to ensure the safe administration of medication including the need for accurate, legible record keeping.
d) There is a robust auditing system of all medication held.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1)(a) - requirement to make proper provision for the health and welfare of service users - of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (4.27).

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that: 'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective' (HSCS 1.24).

This requirement was made on 14 January 2026.

Action taken on previous requirement

As part of the inspection we looked at the service's policies, procedures and completed records in relation to the administration, storage and auditing of medication.

Since the previous inspection, the management had reviewed and update their procedures in relation to medication. All children who required medication had a health care plan in place and all relevant paperwork relating to the administration of medication was completed and signed by parents and staff.

There was now a more robust audit of medication completed on a monthly basis which ensured that management were aware of what medication was being stored at any given time.

This requirement has been met.

Met - within timescales

Requirement 2

By 30 June 2025, children must experience high quality care and support based on individual needs, legislation, guidance and best practice and be accepted and valued.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:
a) ensure all staff have the ability to provide developmentaly appropriate, balanced and wide ranging support for individual children.
b) ensure all staff can demonstrate age and stage appropriate knowledge and understanding of supporting children.
c) use and explore further al pre-registration information to make informed decisions about a child's care and support, and plan a meaningful transition based on the child's individual needs.
d) review policy and procedure for inclusion, transition and admissions, these must be underpinned by legislation, national standard and best practice.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard 3.14: I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.

This is in order to comply with: Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland(Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011 / 210)
Requirement Category

This requirement was made on 14 May 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

The transition policy and procedures were now more fully embedded and were being consistently used by staff. There was a clear process in place to record how settling in visits and transitions were progressing and how the service would meet the individual needs of the children should the placement proceed.

Staff confidently talked through a transition plan which had been recently put in place for a child moving from one room to another and showed us the corresponding recording for the plan as it progressed.

This requirement has now been met.

Met - outwith timescales

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

To meet children's health, welfare and safety needs, the manager should continue to review and develop children's personal plans and identify appropriate strategies to meet children's needs, support progress and help children to achieve their full potential. These plans should be reviewed at least every six months.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) 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 1.1)

This area for improvement was made on 30 January 2024.

Action taken since then

As part of the inspection, we looked at a selection of personal plans for children in each of the playrooms. The plans we looked at were all completed and routinely reviewed at a minimum of every six months. There was evidence that parents had been involved in the development and review of their children's individual plans.

The management team routinely audited personal plans and other written records and continued to support staff to ensure all plans were up to date and reflected the children's current needs and how they will be met.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote their individual learning and development, the manager and staff should provide children with a choice from a rich variety of experiences. They should create an environment which inspires children's imagination and provides children with more challenging opportunities to discover, explore, experiment and problem solve.

Consideration should be given to:

- Supporting children to lead their own learning by ensuring they have the resources to do this
- Developing opportunities which stimulate creativity and curiosity in the play environment
- Re-establish effective planning cycles to ensure all children are receiving a wide range of play and learning experiences.

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

This area for improvement was made on 30 January 2024.

Action taken since then

We were able to see that some work had been done to improve the setting and the range of resources and experiences available to children, especially indoors. The playrooms were now better organised and there was a more homely feel. Good use had been made of soft furnishings and lighting to make the rooms feel more cosy. The layout of the rooms now allowed for easily identifiable areas including home corner, role play, construction area, story and cosy corner.

The manager acknowledged that further work was still needed, especially outdoors, to extend the range of resources and experiences available to children which offered challenge and stimulated children's natural curiosity, play and learning. They were also looking to fully embed language, literacy and numeracy across the whole setting, particularly outdoors.

A new system of planning had only recently been introduced and was yet to be embedded into practice. It was too early to assess it's impact on children's experiences.

This area for improvement has only been partially met and will be continued.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	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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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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