Reay ELC
Day Care of Children

Reay Primary School
Reay
Thurso
KW14 7RE

Telephone: 01847811550

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 May 2025

Service provided by:
CALA Direct Management Services

Service provider number:
SP2010011106

Service no:
CS2022000229

About the service

Reay ELC is a daycare of children service registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children from age two years to not yet attending primary school at any one time, of whom no more than five are aged two years to under three years. At the time of inspection, there were eight children in attendance. Reay ELC is provided by CALA Direct Management Services.

The nursery is located in the village of Reay, close to the town of Thurso. The setting is provided in a purpose built building, situated in the grounds of Reay primary school. Children have access to a large playroom including cloakroom area, toilets and an enclosed garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 29 May 2025 between 8.45am and 2.30pm. The 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 information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service;
- reviewed feedback received from four families;
- spoke with four staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have 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; and
- 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

• Staff nurtured children with genuine warmth and compassion that supported their overall wellbeing.
• Children experienced long periods of uninterrupted play, allowing them to become fully engaged in their chosen activity.
• Children benefited from a setting that was well furnished, comfortable, and homely, which gave children the message that they mattered.
• Effective quality assurance and self-evaluation processes supported the manager and staff to deliver high quality care and support.
• Staff interactions were compassionate, warm and caring which contributed to the strong relationships that had been built with children and their families.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff nurtured children with genuine warmth and compassion that supported their overall wellbeing. They supported children to recognise and manage their emotions throughout the day. Interactions were well considered and calm, which contributed to children feeling safe and secure, and close bonds between children and staff.

Effective use of personal planning information meant that staff were able to anticipate children's individual needs and give them the right support, at the right time. Staff spoke knowledgeably about each child, recognising them as individuals who were listened to and valued. Personal plans were developed with families to ensure that children received consistency of care. Daily communication contributed to effective sharing of information. This meant that children received appropriate care from staff who were able to respond quickly. Parents' comments included:

"Teachers are always lovely and welcoming, very good at giving feedback."

"All of the staff are very welcoming and I know if there was anything I needed to discuss with them I could do."

Snack and mealtimes were relaxed and calm experiences for children. They had opportunities to develop their independence through helping to prepare food, serving themselves, pouring their own drinks and tidying away. Fresh water was available throughout the day to help children keep hydrated. Staff recognised these daily routines as an opportunity to support children to develop healthy eating habits, ensuring children had time to enjoy their meals. They engaged children in conversations about themselves, discussing families and what they were enjoying in the setting. This supported children's developing language and communication skills, as well as consolidating learning. As a result, children benefited from positive social experiences.

Staff supported children to achieve their potential by working closely with children, their families and other professionals. When children needed additional support, strategies were developed and put into place. Staff reviewed the effectiveness of strategies used regularly, to ensure that they were continuing to meet the needs of children. This meant that any interventions used supported positive outcomes.

Effective procedures were in place to safeguard children. Staff were confident in discussing the processes and procedures they would follow should they have any concerns about a child's health and wellbeing. This contributed to children being protected from possible harm.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun as they experienced high quality play and learning opportunities. They were meaningfully leading their play, supported by staff who knew when to stand back and when to get involved, sharing the children's sense of fun. Children experienced long periods of uninterrupted play, allowing them to become fully engaged in their chosen activity. This resulted in children having full ownership of their play, while receiving an appropriate level of support.

Children were engaged through a variety of creative approaches to play and learning. Staff used skilled interactions and questions to support and extend children's thinking and understanding. They supported developing language, literacy and communication skills by introducing new words, recalling past events and talking with children about their play. They naturally introduced mathematical language, such as measurement, size and positioning into conversations. For example, children had found snails in the garden and were comparing sizes, supported by staff. Literacy and numeracy were embedded across the setting, with relevant materials in all areas to support children's learning. As a result, children were developing a broad range of life long skills.

Children's play and learning opportunities were enhanced through strong connections to their community. They took part in community events, and visited local places of interests, such as the local museum. This contributed to their developing understanding of the world around them.

Planning approaches had been further developed, and were child led, with a balance of intentional planning to bridge any gaps. Staff extended children's interests, with learning recorded in floor books that captured children's learning. One parent told us "My child talks enthusiastically about things they have learned". Staff had developed their skills in making observations. They used these to inform achievable, individual targets for each child, in core curriculum areas. They ensured that children received an appropriate amount of challenge to meet their individual learning needs. This meant that all children were supported to reach their potential.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children benefited from a setting that was well furnished, comfortable, and homely. Staff had worked hard to create an environment where children felt welcomed. Children could rest and relax when they wanted to, as there were now a number of calm, quiet spaces available. Real life items enhanced the homely feel of the playroom. This gave children a strong message that they mattered.

Children experienced an exciting and stimulating environment. Staff had developed their skills around play provocations, which contributed to children being excited to explore their environment. Well considered resources, including natural items, loose parts and real life materials to support learning were accessible to children both inside and outside. Children could freely access a well-resourced, securely enclosed garden area. They had opportunities to develop their imagination and creativity, alongside opportunities to develop gross motor skills, through planting, digging, running and climbing. The layout of the playroom was well considered. Resources were displayed to interest and engage children, located at their height, which promoted ownership of their chosen play experiences.

Staff worked very well together to ensure children were accounted for at all times. Staff supported children to take risks in a safe environment, checking for potential risks and taking any necessary actions. This meant that children's play and learning was not compromised as they developed their personal resilience.

The setting was well maintained, clean and tidy. Staff followed best practice guidance, ensuring a safe play and learning environment. Robust infection control practices minimised the potential spread of infection, for example children were confident in their hand washing routines at snack and lunchtimes.

Arrangements for storage of children and families' personal information was well managed. Information was stored securely in line with guidance. This contributed to children and families' confidentiality being maintained.

How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The setting's vision, values and aims were reviewed annually with children and their families. This ensured that everyone knew what they could expect from the setting, and that the aspirations of families were reflected in the service provided.

The views of children and families were valued. There were a number of opportunities for them to be involved in the life of the setting and to share their views. All parents who responded strongly agreed or agreed that they and their children were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. One parent told us they were "Involved in fundraising activities and asked about what we feel children need." Families were asked to give feedback on different aspects of the setting, such as the end of term trip. The manager told parents how they had used any feedback given to inform change. This supported them to be meaningfully involved in shaping the setting.

Effective improvement planning was leading to improved outcomes for children. The manager considered relevant data and feedback received from other professionals, when identifying key areas of improvement. Robust formal and informal quality assurance processes allowed focussed, and meaningful opportunities for the manager and staff to review and monitor various aspects of the service. This resulted in areas for development being identified promptly.

Staff regularly reflected on their practice, considering national guidance and best practice documents, such as 'Setting the Table' and 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare'. They used these reflections to bring about positive change for children and their families. As a result, children were benefiting from high quality care and support.

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Staff interactions were compassionate, warm and caring. The staff team had high aspirations for all children, and this was evident in the care and support they received. They had developed good relationships with children and their families. Parents commented:

"All the staff are very friendly, welcoming and approachable."

"They are always friendly and helpful. We get along very well with the staff."

Staff provided individualised support to children, taking time to listen to their views and understand their emotions. As a result, children felt valued and loved.

The setting was effectively staffed, with a very good balance of skills, knowledge and experience, to meet the needs of children. The staff team worked closely together, ensuring that children's needs were not compromised when they were undertaking any tasks, such as personal care or preparation of activities. Staff recognised where gaps might exist, moving about the setting and giving careful consideration to where to position themselves, to ensure children's high-quality experiences were maintained.

Children benefited from consistency of care across the day, from a stable staff team who knew them well. Staff's wellbeing was a priority, with breaks planned to minimise the impact on children's experiences. This contributed to positive outcomes for all.

There was a very positive atmosphere within the setting. Staff interactions with each other were respectful and they worked hard to ensure there was effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day.

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 support children to achieve, the provider should improve the approach and skills of staff in relation to planning for children's learning and tracking and monitoring their progress. This should include, but is not limited to, supporting staff to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps.

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

'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me.' (HSCS 1.27).

This area for improvement was made on 22 May 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff had made improvements in their approach to planning for children's learning, and tracking and monitoring progress. This mean that children were being supported to meet their potential as meaningful next steps were being identified. This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure all children experience an environment which is welcoming and homely, the management and staff should review and make changes to the environment. This should include, but is not limited to, providing cosy areas for children to rest and relax.

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

'If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment and can use a comfortable area with soft furnishings to relax.' (HSCS 5.6).

This area for improvement was made on 22 May 2024.

Action taken since then

The manager and staff had reviewed and made significant changes to the layout of the setting. They had increased the number of real life items, natural resources and loose parts which was contributing to children having high quality play and learning experiences. Cosy spaces had been developed which meant children had sufficient areas to rest and relax in. This area for improvement has been met.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.