Wooddean ELC
Day Care of Children

Wooddean Early Learning Centre
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 April 2026

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2024000291

About the service

Wooddean Early Learning Centre is a purpose-built, standalone daycare of children service provided by South Lanarkshire Council and located within the Bothwell area.

The service is registered to provide care for a maximum of 60 children aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time, with no more than 15 children aged 2 years to under 3 years.

Children are accommodated on the lower level of the setting. The layout supports easy access to all areas, including children's toilets and changing facilities, a sensory room and two spacious playrooms. Both playrooms have direct access to a fully enclosed outdoor area, enabling children to move freely between indoor and outdoor environments.

The setting overlooks Wooddean Park, providing children with valuable opportunities to access and explore nearby green spaces as part of their play and learning. The service is also situated close to local amenities and public transport links, supporting accessibility for families.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 29 and 30 April 2026. 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 registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since registration of the service

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with a small number of children using the service
- spoke with two family members of children using the service
- spoke with staff and management present on the days we visited the service
- gathered feedback from staff members using a questionnaire
- gathered feedback from 15 family members using a questionnaire
- observed staff practice and children's experiences
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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's vision, values and aims had been created in consultation with staff and families, and were reflected in everyday practice, creating an inclusive ethos.
- Management and staff showed a strong commitment to reflective practice and continuous improvement, with families' views welcomed and valued across the service.
- Children were highly engaged, confident and motivated in their play, leading their own learning indoors and outdoors in ways that promoted independence, curiosity and creativity.
- Literacy and numeracy were woven through daily routines and the learning environment, supporting children to develop confidence and early skills.
- A wide range of high-quality resources, digital tools and community experiences provided meaningful opportunities for learning.
- Children were happy and settled and consistently experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care that supported their emotional security, sense of belonging and inclusion.
- Staff worked in close partnership with families to ensure children's individual needs were met, this was clearly reflected in their personal care plans.
- Well organised settling in experiences and transitions supported continuity of care and helped children and families feel secure from the earliest stages of their nursery journey.
- Strong relationships and close community connections created a welcoming environment where children and families felt respected, valued and at the heart of the service.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

Staff and families worked together to develop and embed the service's vision, values and aims. This shared approach, established when the service opened, ensured that children's experiences reflected the views and aspirations of those who know them best. As a result, the values of togetherness, inclusivity, nurture and diversity were clearly reflected in daily practice, with children and families welcomed, included and treated with care and respect.

The leadership team provided strong, values-based leadership throughout the inspection process and showed a commitment to continuous improvement. Leaders were approachable, reflective, and visible within the playrooms, supporting staff and promoting a positive culture across the service. Professional dialogue was welcomed, and feedback shared during the inspection was responded to positively. Staff spoke warmly about the support they received from management and felt respected, valued and motivated within their roles. This contributed to a positive culture of reflective practice and improvement across the service.

Management had a clear understanding of individual and shared strengths across the team, enabling responsibilities to be allocated and supporting staff to confidently lead areas of practice such as outdoor learning, Forest Kindergarten, Bookbug, block play and home learning. Positive and respectful relationships supported collaborative working and consistency across the service. Leaders used coaching, mentoring and modelling of practice to support staff confidence, wellbeing and professional development. As a result, children benefited from high quality learning experiences provided by a confident and well-supported staff team.

A quality assurance calendar supported ongoing self-evaluation and informed improvement planning across the service. Leaders showed awareness of the pace of change and reflected realistically on the service's improvement journey since opening. Staff were currently reviewing the lunchtime experience within the 3-5 room, where positive improvements had already been made. Further development was discussed, and the service remained open to continuing this work to enhance children's experiences.

The introduction of outdoor snack time had been a positive change, supporting smoother transitions and increasing children's choice and independence. Staff spoke positively about this development, highlighting its impact on children's engagement and daily experiences. Staff were passionate in their roles and actively involved in self-evaluation processes, with a strong shared focus on getting it right for the children.

Systems were in place to monitor key areas such as accidents, medication, risk assessments, policies and maintenance, supporting a safe environment for children. During discussion with management, it was agreed there was scope to further strengthen medication systems, particularly around the oversight of expiry dates, to continue to support safe practice and promote children's health and wellbeing.

Improvement plan priorities were progressing well, with developments positively supporting children's experiences and wellbeing. This included SIMOA safety awareness (Look, Think, Act), supporting children's understanding of keeping safe. Children were involved in risk assessments, and a SIMOA home links bag was

planned to further support families and extend children's awareness of safety messages. The SIMOA elephant display and toy reinforced these messages in an engaging way. Team meetings were regular, with reflective discussions recorded in minutes and clear action points agreed to support ongoing improvement.

Staff also participated in Up, up and away! training, supporting professional learning and strengthening practice. There was clear evidence of reflective practice and a shared commitment to high quality care, support and learning for children. Leaders continued to take a proactive approach to monitoring practice and sustaining improvements over time.

A range of communication methods, including daily conversations, surveys, emails and the learning app, supported open communication with families. Parents spoke positively about the leadership team and felt listened to, with feedback helping to shape improvements. For example, a suggestion to offer events on alternative days and times was taken forward, showing families' views were acted upon and helping to strengthen families' connection to the service.

The service demonstrated a commitment to maintaining a suitably qualified, skilled and supported workforce. Staff were appropriately registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), supporting safe practice and ongoing professional learning across the setting. Staff described positive induction experiences which helped them understand their roles and responsibilities. We discussed how further use of national induction resources could support consistency and ongoing professional learning across the team.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces — 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

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 environment was clean, welcoming and well-organised, helping children feel secure and comfortable. An attractive cloakroom area provided information for families alongside photographic displays of children's experiences. Individual labelled coat pegs and trays supported independence and a strong sense of belonging.

Children's health, safety and wellbeing were promoted through secure and well-maintained practice across the service. Systems were in place for recording and responding to maintenance issues in a timely way. A minor maintenance issue within the toilet area was identified during the inspection and was promptly addressed, demonstrating a responsive approach to maintaining a safe environment for children. Secure entry systems, fully enclosed gated outdoor areas and daily safety checks further supported children's safety and wellbeing.

Risk assessments were in place across indoor and outdoor areas, supporting children to explore safely while building confidence and independence. Where appropriate, individual risk assessments supported children's specific needs and ensured safe participation in play. One parent commented that their child had been involved in risk assessing the garden and was now showing a positive awareness of safety at home, reflecting the impact of this involvement on their learning. We discussed further development of the garden risk assessment to ensure it fully reflects current resources and includes consideration of loose parts and risky play experiences.

Staff used space well to create inviting environments where children could confidently choose where they played. Cosy, calming areas, including a sensory room, supported children who needed rest, relaxation or emotional support. Cushions and blankets added comfort and opportunities for quieter play, contributing to a nurturing atmosphere.

A wide range of open-ended, loose parts and digital resources supported creativity, exploration and challenge. Resources were easily accessible through low-level storage, promoting independence and choice. Additional storage allowed resources to be rotated and extended children's play and engagement.

Outdoor spaces supported children's wellbeing through opportunities for fresh air, movement, relaxation and exploration. Children benefited from views onto nearby green space, enhancing their outdoor experience. They were confident moving freely between indoor and outdoor areas, with staff valuing outdoor play and ensuring regular access. Sheltered areas supported experiences in varied weather, while a courtyard space provided a calm setting for quieter play and relaxation.

An outdoor cloakroom supported access to waterproof clothing and wellies, encouraging outdoor play in all weather. Staff also considered children's comfort and wellbeing throughout the session, and ensured they had access to drinking water throughout the day, keeping them hydrated.

Staff had completed child protection training and understood their responsibilities in keeping children safe. Policies and guidance supported this practice. Accident forms were completed, shared and signed by families, with head bumps and injuries monitored closely by staff in line with procedures. Medication procedures were in place with safe storage and administration records completed. Staff were knowledgeable about children's individual dietary requirements and healthcare needs. This ensured children's health, safety and wellbeing were well-supported.

Infection prevention and control practices supported children's health and wellbeing. Staff promoted good hand hygiene and used appropriate protective equipment, including aprons and gloves during personal care. We discussed ensuring toilet doors were consistently monitored and kept closed to support a safe environment.

Sun safety arrangements supported children's wellbeing during outdoor play. Children were encouraged to remain hydrated, and staff worked in partnership with families to support the safe use of sun cream. Consideration of UV guidance helped ensure children could enjoy outdoor experiences safely and comfortably.

The service was registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) which helped ensure that personal information was managed safely and in line with data protection requirements. This supported the secure storage and careful handling of children's information.

Children play and learn — 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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.

Children experienced high quality play and learning opportunities. They moved freely between experiences, demonstrating curiosity, concentration, creativity and enjoyment throughout the session. This enabled children to sustain their play, explore their ideas in depth and follow their interests independently. As a result, children were highly engaged and confidently led their own learning.

Interactions were consistently nurturing and responsive. Staff listened carefully and extended learning through open-ended questioning and meaningful conversations, helping them to think, explore and develop their ideas. They demonstrated a strong understanding of play types and child development. Some staff had received training in block play, strengthening practice in this area. A wide range of differently shaped and sized blocks supported creativity and construction. Staff supported schematic play, helping children build ramps and roll cars and balls, exploring concepts such as speed and cause and effect, including discussions about which cars travelled faster. As a result, they were motivated and engaged, developing creativity, confidence, and resilience through their play.

Staff used child-centred approaches to planning, valuing children's right to play and responding to their emerging ideas. Planning reflected children's needs and interests, with staff adapting experiences based on children's choices so that learning remained relevant and led by them. For example, additional materials such as tape and string had been introduced within the block play area to extend children's creativity, with their ideas and creations clearly evident. Planning also showed how outdoor experiences had been developed, including the use of wood and tools to support children to create grips for pallets following their interest in climbing. Skilled staff offered support and extended learning at appropriate times, enhancing children's thinking and problem-solving. As a result, children were highly engaged, sustaining their play and making meaningful progress in their learning.

Floor books supported this approach, showing clear links to national guidance and capturing photographs, children's comments and their voices. This provided a clear record of learning, including identified next steps and achievements, demonstrating how learning was built upon over time. Children were supported to revisit and reflect on their learning, which contributed to inclusive, engaging experiences and positive outcomes.

Children's learning journals reflected their individual journeys and progress across all areas of development. Achievements were recorded and shared with families through regular updates, supporting strong communication and partnership working. Parents reported feeling well- informed, and children's successes were celebrated, helping to build confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of pride in their learning.

Literacy and numeracy were embedded naturally throughout children's daily play experiences. Staff supported early language, communication, and mathematical development through songs, rhymes, stories, conversations, and meaningful play opportunities. For example, children explored time by making their own clocks and using real clocks, while also observing the weather and talking about temperature, supporting early understanding of time and measurement in a meaningful context. Younger children used props and puppets during songs and rhymes, which helped to extend engagement, support language development and enhance enjoyment.

Children across both playrooms benefited from a rich mix of play experiences which supported creativity, imagination and skill development. They engaged in construction and imaginative play, making good use of well-resourced areas. For example, children were observed drawing, sticking, painting and creating paper mâché models, showing creativity and sustained involvement. Children aged 2-3 particularly enjoyed colour mixing, exploring and predicting how colours changed when combining materials.

Opportunities such as cooking, baking and woodwork supported children to develop confidence and practical skills. In the 3-5 room, children particularly enjoyed imaginative play, including making their own money to use in the role play area, as well as engaging with large floor puzzles, block play, the smart board and handheld digital games. These experiences supported creativity, social interaction and problem solving.

Parents provided very positive feedback and were impressed by the range of experiences available. They highlighted opportunities such as construction, imaginative and group play, as well as cooking, baking and woodwork. One parent shared: "I am always blown away by the experiences my child gets at nursery. The woodwork area is incredible and they have learned so many skills." While another commented: "There's a really nice mix of experiences on offer." Children also told us about their experiences, with one sharing their favourite thing was playing with cars, while another enjoyed the home corner and playing outdoors with friends.

The outdoor play space was very well used, offering a wide range of experiences which supported imagination, exploration and learning. We received positive feedback from parents, reflecting the range of opportunities available outdoors and the accessibility of outdoor play in all weather conditions. Outdoors, children created 'pizzas' and 'cupcakes' in the mud kitchen using a variety of materials, developing creativity and problem-solving skills. They also engaged in quieter experiences such as looking at books and painting, alongside more active play including obstacle courses, water play, planting and exploring a selection of loose parts materials supporting creativity, curiosity, cooperation and enjoyment across the outdoor environment.

The service made very good use of the wider community to enrich children's play and learning experiences. Children regularly accessed local green spaces, nature trails, the library, shops and parks, supporting learning through real-life contexts. Positive links with the local crochet club supported intergenerational experiences and extended children's social awareness. Forest visits further encouraged curiosity, resilience, independence and confidence, strengthening children's understanding of the world around them.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

A welcoming and friendly atmosphere was created by staff who greeted children and families with smiles, helping them feel relaxed and at ease. Parents were invited into the playroom each day at drop off and pick up times. Parents spoke positively about the strong connections they had with staff, describing it as a "home from home environment".

Close, trusting relationships were evident between staff, children and families, with a strong emphasis placed on developing these from the earliest stages. Parents strongly agreed, with one commenting that staff "go out of their way to make me and my child feel valued and included". They also highlighted how staff take time to build genuine, caring relationships with children and families, showing a genuine interest in their lives and helping to create a strong sense of community. Another parent told us that staff knew their child very well, which they described as "really very touching as a mum to hear". Parents further described staff as "like family" and "the best thing about the nursery", reflecting the strong connections they experienced.

Children experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care, staff consistently showed kindness, respect and patience. They knew children extremely well and were highly attuned to their individual emotional cues, preferences and needs. We observed staff offering cuddles, comfort, and reassurance, alongside moments of happy laughter and positive interaction. These caring interactions helped children feel valued, included and emotionally secure.

Personal plans were in place and were developed and reviewed regularly in partnership with families. These included key information about routines, interests and care needs. Strong communication between home and nursery supported continuity and partnership working. Families told us they valued the regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress and wellbeing. One family member commented: "Conversations are always focused on my child's development and feel very personal, which helps us understand how best to support my child at home." Additional support plans were in place where required, developed in collaboration with other professionals to meet children's individual needs. As a result, children were supported at a pace that was right for them and met their individual needs.

Settling-in arrangements were well-planned and tailored to the needs of children and families. Staff made contact with parents prior to starting and used the information shared to thoughtfully shape visits, helping children feel comfortable, secure, and reassured from the outset. Parents told us they felt included and valued throughout, appreciating the ongoing communication and support. One parent highlighted how personalised resources linked to their child's interests helped them settle quickly and confidently.

Children experienced smooth, well-supported transitions within the nursery. Consistent caring relationships and familiar routines helped them feel confident when moving between playrooms. Free-flow access and shared outdoor play encouraged children of different ages to interact naturally, supporting friendships and helping them become familiar with staff across the service. Parents shared that this helped children know all staff well and supported positive transitions. Transitions to school were managed sensitively in partnership with families and school colleagues, with teachers visiting the nursery to build early relationships and help children feel confident, reassured, and ready for school.

Mealtimes were calm, relaxed and unhurried, with staff sitting alongside children, chatting with them while ensuring their safety. Praise and encouragement were given where needed. Children were encouraged to make choices and develop independence through self-serving using appropriately sized jugs and tongs. Younger children used cutlery well, with support provided when required. Children took part in simple routines such as tidying, helping to build responsibility and confidence.

At snack time, children were actively involved in preparing fruit and vegetables, including chopping ingredients to make fruit and vegetable infused water. They enjoyed discussing the different items used, with children noting they particularly liked the cucumber water. This supported life skills development and encouraged them to try new tastes in an enjoyable and engaging way.

Personal care routines were carried out with dignity and respect. Children were encouraged to use the toilet independently, with staff offering praise and support when needed. Younger children's care needs were met sensitively.

Children and families were at the heart of the service, with regular opportunities to be involved in nursery life. Bookbug sessions, forest visits, themed stay-and-play events, and an open-door approach helped create a welcoming and inclusive environment. Parents felt included and spoke positively about stay-and-play sessions and opportunities to attend celebrations such as World Book Day, Burns Day, and Christmas carols. As a result, children benefited from strong family involvement and community connections, supporting their sense of belonging.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the service registered. Details of upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children experience high quality spaces	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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