Montgomerie Park Primary Early Years Class Day Care of Children

Turnpike Way
Irvine
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Telephone: 01294 324067

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 May 2026

Service provided by:
North Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003327

Service no:
CS2024000330

About the service

Montgomerie Park Primary Early Years Class provides a care service to a maximum of 46 children not yet attending primary school at any one time - no more than 46 are aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school full time.

The service is provided by North Ayrshire Council and is situated within a residential area of Irvine. It is well placed in relation to local amenities, including shops, public transport links, green spaces, and a range of community facilities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 5 and Wednesday 6 May 2026 between 09:30 and 16:00. Feedback was provided to the service on Thursday 7 May 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- reviewed electronic feedback from 11 parents/carers
- spoke with staff and the senior leadership team
- observed practice and daily life for children
- 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, some improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within the Children are supported to achieve section.

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
- 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

• Leaders demonstrated a clear and shared vision that supported positive experiences for children and guided staff practice.

• Systems and self-evaluation processes were in place and developing, further strengthening of quality assurance and consistency would support sustained improvement.

• Children experienced a welcoming, well-resourced environment that supported independence, engagement and meaningful play.

• Further development in the use of outdoor spaces and resources could support the consistent extension of learning experiences, helping to build on children's thinking.

• Children were actively engaged in a range of play experiences, supported by positive staff interactions that promoted confidence, independence and enjoyment in learning.

• Learning was more consistently extended indoors, with opportunities to further strengthen outdoor experiences and ensure planning more fully reflected children's individual progress.

• Overall, warm and nurturing relationships had a positive impact on children's wellbeing, helping them feel secure, valued and included within the setting.

• While positive practice was evident, greater consistency and strengthened oversight would further enhance outcomes for all children.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator - Leadership and management of staff and resources

There was a clear commitment to a shared vision, reflecting positive standards for children and their families. Children, families and staff were involved in its development, contributing to a more consistent approach across the setting and informing staff practice.

Leaders enabled staff to work in line with the vision, contributing to a well-organised environment and generally effective use of resources. As a result, overall, children benefited from a safe, nurturing and fun environment where they felt included and respected. This promoted positive experiences and informed practice that was largely consistent and responsive to children's needs, with opportunities to further strengthen the use of resources across all areas.

The service's values were displayed within the wider school environment and were reflected in the improvement plan, helping to guide ongoing development and prioritisation of resources. While these influenced practice, we suggested displaying them within the nursery so staff could refer to them more readily. This would have helped to reinforce the shared vision and further promote consistency in practice.

Staff had engaged in self-evaluation using the new Quality Improvement Framework and identified relevant areas for improvement, including the lunchtime routine and the development of more defined play spaces to enhance children's learning experiences. These were at an early stage and beginning to meet children's needs and interests. This demonstrated developing confidence among staff in reflecting on practice and contributing to improvement.

Communication systems, including an information wall in the cloakroom and the use of regular voting systems and questionnaires, encouraged some family involvement and information sharing. There was scope to further ensure that feedback consistently resulted in positive change.

Quality assurance processes, including monitoring and auditing, were in place and were beginning to inform improvement. However, it was not always clear how findings were followed up with staff or what actions were taken as a result. We discussed strengthening this by ensuring that actions and outcomes were more clearly recorded and evidenced following monitoring activity.

Staff were recruited in line with local authority procedures and were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council, ensuring compliance with professional standards. Staff and students reported feeling personally and professionally valued by the leadership team. Induction and mentoring processes helped staff build confidence and develop positive relationships with children and families. As a result, staff were supported to develop professionally, including through early-stage leadership roles such as outdoor learning and STEM.

Staff valued opportunities to meet as a team, although this was limited due to working patterns. Leaders made good use of communication systems to share information and were beginning to develop these approaches to strengthen collaboration, promote greater consistency in practice and enhance staff engagement.

Overall, strengths in leadership, staff development and improving systems contributed to positive outcomes for children. Further strengthening quality assurance processes could promote greater consistency in staff practice and provide clearer evidence of sustained improvement over time.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces — 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator - Children experience high quality spaces

The purpose-built environment provided a welcoming, well-equipped space that promoted children's learning and overall development. Clearly defined indoor play spaces offered a range of engaging experiences, with resources that were varied, accessible and responsive to children's needs and interests. As a result, children made independent choices and engaged meaningfully in their play.

Children were encouraged to lead their play, with staff providing sensitive guidance that promoted independence. For example, children were enabled to take responsibility during snack preparation, which helped to develop confidence and self-help skills. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of children's interests and used this effectively to inform the environment. For example, one child engaged in sustained block play linked to an interest in transport, which enhanced language development, storytelling and concentration. Other children independently accessed resources such as threading materials, promoting fine motor skills and creativity.

Recent professional learning had positively influenced practice, leading to a more intentional use of provocations and improved organisation of play spaces. This enabled children to sustain their play and deepen their learning experiences.

Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities for maintaining a safe and secure environment. Children were appropriately supervised, and security arrangements were robust. As a result, children were kept safe in their care.

The environment was well maintained and generally promoted the comfort and wellbeing of both children and staff. Children had access to drinking water both indoors and outdoors, promoting hydration. However, indoor temperatures were difficult to regulate at times, resulting in conditions that were uncomfortably warm for some children and staff. Leaders had recognised this and had appropriately raised the issue with the local authority. There remained scope to introduce more systematic monitoring and mitigation strategies to further strengthen comfort and wellbeing for both children and staff.

Infection prevention and control practices were implemented effectively. Staff training helped maintain a clean, safe and hygienic environment, contributing positively to children's health and wellbeing. Personal information was managed securely, with appropriate systems in place that enabled staff to meet their responsibilities.

The outdoor environment was inviting and provided valuable opportunities for physical and sensory play, while also encouraging children to explore nature. As a result, children developed an early awareness of sustainability and respect for the environment.

The layout of the setting enabled children to move freely between indoor and outdoor areas, promoting choice and decision-making within safe boundaries and promoting independence. Children accessed some resources that encouraged early literacy and numeracy, including mark-making and water play. There was scope to further develop the use of resources and the environment to more consistently support and extend early literacy and numeracy experiences, particularly outdoors. This is explored in more detail under the Children Play and Learn section.

Staff demonstrated an understanding of their responsibilities for keeping children safe on outings and carried out appropriate risk assessments. This enabled children to explore the local environment, build independence and experience manageable risk while remaining well supervised. Leaders recognised that opportunities for risk-benefit play within the setting could be further developed, and plans had been identified to extend this both indoors and outdoors, building on children's confidence, decision-making and resilience through everyday play experiences.

Overall, the setting demonstrated clear foundations that promoted quality experiences for children. Leaders had identified appropriate plans to develop the areas highlighted during and prior to the inspection, which had the potential to support continued improvement and the further embedding of high-quality practice.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator - Playing, learning and developing

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of how children learned and progressed, which effectively informed their day-to-day interactions and planning. They provided a balance of intentional and responsive play experiences that promoted children's engagement and enjoyment. As a result, children were motivated and actively engaged in play opportunities indoors and outdoors, demonstrating growing confidence, independence and choice.

There was some evidence of early literacy experiences, such as story time and drawing, which promoted language and communication. Numeracy was more consistently embedded indoors, with a clear focus on developing children's understanding of number, including subitising, reflecting a recently identified improvement priority. As a result, children were developing early mathematical awareness in meaningful contexts.

Practitioners engaged positively with children during play, using open-ended questions and commentary to encourage thinking. At times, this led to sustained shared thinking, with staff working alongside children to explore ideas and solve problems. For example, children engaged in outdoor mark-making using chalk, confidently representing their ideas through symbols and marks. Planting activities further enhanced language development and understanding of the world and introduced concepts such as sequencing and cause and effect.

While more consistent practice was evident indoors, where literacy and numeracy were intentionally promoted, outdoor experiences were more variable and often more incidental. For example, indoors, children measured and counted ingredients while making playdough, with staff reinforcing concepts such as quantity, sequencing and number in meaningful contexts. However, this practice was not yet consistent across all areas of play. As a result, there was scope to ensure that high-quality interactions were consistently used to extend children's thinking.

There were further opportunities to develop learning outdoors. For example, during play in the mud kitchen, children transported water using jugs; more intentional adult interaction could have strengthened early literacy and numeracy through the use of language around measure, capacity and quantity, alongside counting and mark-making. This could also have enhanced transferable skills such as problem-solving, communication and applying learning in different contexts.

Overall, children were at the centre of planning, with staff taking account of their needs and interests. Observations informed experiences, and floorbooks effectively captured children's learning and responses, supporting staff to plan relevant and engaging experiences. However, the evaluation of children's learning was not yet consistently strong enough to support the revisiting and extension of experiences over time. Frequent staff rotation across play spaces could have limited opportunities to build on prior learning for children, particularly where information was not consistently shared, and improved communication could have supported greater continuity.

Trackers were used alongside floorbooks to identify children's learning targets. However, these were often used in a way that focused on progressing through set next steps, rather than fully reflecting children's individual strengths, interests and achievements. As a result, learning was not always fully personalised or representative of each child's progress over time. There was potential to use trackers more effectively to capture and demonstrate individual progress, supporting more responsive planning.

Approaches to documenting children's learning, including floorbooks and personal learning plans, varied in quality across staff. There were opportunities to strengthen consistency in practice through increased moderation and peer support, helping to develop a shared understanding of expectations and approaches to planning. This could have supported more effective identification of next steps for children, ensuring appropriate challenge and clearer progression in their learning.

Where additional support for learning was identified, staff responded appropriately in partnership with families and relevant external agencies to ensure children's needs were met. This supported a shared understanding of children's needs and helped ensure consistent approaches to their care and learning. Staff shared information about children's progress and celebrated achievements through approaches such as online learning journals and ongoing communication. There was potential to further strengthen how this information informed ongoing planning and supported children's progress over time.

Overall, the quality of children's play and learning was good. Positive outcomes for children were evident, underpinned by supportive practice that was becoming increasingly consistent. Continued development in extending learning, particularly outdoors, and strengthening personalised planning could further enhance the breadth and balance of learning and support ongoing improvement.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator - Nurturing care and support

Staff demonstrated an understanding of the importance of nurturing relationships for children's wellbeing and development. Overall, children experienced warm, responsive care, which supported their sense of security, wellbeing and ability to express themselves. Staff were attentive to children's emotional needs and provided reassurance when needed. The setting was welcoming and inclusive, offering a range of spaces that supported social interaction, emotional regulation, and opportunities for both individual and group play.

Children's privacy, dignity and independence were respected, with care and support provided in a way that reflected their individual needs and stages of development. Staff adapted their responses appropriately, demonstrating reflective practice during daily routines and interactions.

Transitions, including welcome and home time, were managed by familiar adults and consistent routines, helping children feel secure within the setting and reflecting best practice guidance. Staff communicated regularly with families using a range of approaches, including verbal exchanges and written information. Families were involved in discussions about their child's learning and wellbeing, and information shared from home was considered when supporting children's care and experiences. Positive relationships with families contributed to children's wellbeing, with staff responding sensitively to individual circumstances to build trust and encourage engagement.

Some families identified scope to further strengthen communication at handover times. Staff recognised this and introduced clearer information in the cloakroom about children's learning, which helped to strengthen shared understanding and continuity between home and the setting. Staff demonstrated an understanding of the important influence of family, community and life experiences on children's development. Opportunities such as stay-and-play sessions encouraged family involvement and ensured families were included and able to engage in their child's experiences.

Mealtimes were generally positive social experiences, with children benefiting from staff sitting alongside them to provide reassurance, support and positive role modelling. This helped children feel safe, included and engaged in social interaction. Children were encouraged to develop independence through self-help skills, such as pouring their own water and clearing away dishes and food waste, supporting confidence and a growing sense of responsibility.

The quality of interactions at mealtimes varied, and children did not always experience consistent levels of nurturing, socially engaging interaction. This was discussed with the leadership team on the first day of the inspection. When mealtimes were revisited on the second day, improvements were seen in how staff engaged with children. There remained scope to build on this through more consistent monitoring and support to ensure all children experienced high-quality, nurturing mealtime interactions.

Meals were provided in line with guidance, with children's allergies appropriately considered. The lunch option was discussed in response to observed food waste to better reflect children's preferences and promote positive relationships with food.

Medication was stored safely; however, some inconsistencies were identified in medication administration records, where documentation did not fully align with prescription labels. Strengthened monitoring and regular auditing of medication records would help ensure greater consistency and further safeguard children's health, wellbeing and safety.

Overall, children's wellbeing was supported through personal planning that reflected their care and support needs. Plans guided staff practice and were reviewed regularly to reflect changes over time. Children were recognised as individuals, with their rights, voices and identities respected in daily practice. However, there was some variation in the quality of plans across staff. Strengthening moderation, peer learning and leadership oversight would support greater consistency and help ensure a more consistently high standard of care planning, leading to more consistently positive outcomes for children.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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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