

Early learning and childcare setting shared inspection report

Springside Early Years Class

North Ayrshire Council

24 February 2026

In December 2025, a team of inspectors from HMIE and the Care Inspectorate visited Springside Early Years Class. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

Key inspection findings

- Staff prioritise wellbeing and relationships with children and families. This is resulting in confident, motivated children who make good progress in their learning.
- Staff's development of the outdoor space supports children to play and investigate together well and encourages the development of problem-solving skills. Staff should make increased use of the local community to develop a wider range of high-quality, real-life learning experiences for children.
- Staff make regular and motivating use of song and rhymes to support children's language and communication development. Children engage well in these sessions and, as a result, are making good progress.
- There was a strong culture of nurturing, respectful interactions with staff consistently showing the values of the setting, particularly kindness and respect. This supported children to feel safe, valued, and emotionally secure.
- Strong, trusting partnerships with families supported children's wellbeing. Parents were warmly welcomed into the service, enabling meaningful sharing of information that helped staff enrich learning and ensure continuity of care.

HM Inspectors and the Care Inspectorate gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the setting's work using four quality indicators from [the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors](#).

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	good
Learning, teaching and assessment	good
Nurturing, care and support	very good
Children's progress	good

Summary of inspection findings

Key contextual Information

Springside Early Years Class is part of Springside Primary School and provides early learning and childcare (ELC) in the Springside area. The setting is registered for 16 children at any one time. It caters for children aged three to those not yet attending school. There are currently 13 children on the roll. Children attend between 9 am and 3 pm, during term time. The headteacher of the school has overall responsibility for the setting, supported by a principal teacher and two part-time senior practitioners. Further staffing includes one part-time practitioner and one full-time early years assistant. There is currently a vacancy for a part-time early years practitioner which is in the process of being filled.

The headteacher and senior early years practitioner have taken up post within the past year following a period of unsettled staffing. The building consists of one playroom with direct access to an outdoor area. Children make use of a dedicated early years lunch space four days a week and they use the school hall for lunch on a Friday.

Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Leaders made transparent and considered decisions about staffing, using the team's skills and experience to meet children's needs effectively. Staff worked collaboratively, communicating well and demonstrating flexibility to support each other, which contributed to a strong sense of teamwork. New or less experienced staff received appropriate guidance and support from colleagues, which promoted confidence, consistency, and quality in children's care and learning.

Staff communicated effectively throughout the day, ensuring continuity of care. For example, when a staff member went to lunch, they informed children that another adult would support them, and this was promptly actioned. Tools such as the whiteboard and group chats supported ongoing information sharing, though further consideration of formal communication methods could help ensure all staff remain fully informed as new team members join.

Arrangements for planned and unplanned absences were well managed, minimising disruption for children and families. Parents were kept informed of any changes, whether temporary or permanent, which supported continuity of routines and relationships.

Staff were vigilant in monitoring the exit door to ensure children remained safe throughout the session. The team were aware of the potential risks and had deployed themselves effectively to minimise these, maintaining close supervision at key transition points. We would encourage the provider to continue with their plans to enhance the door entry and exit system, which will further support a safe and secure environment for children.

Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how children learn and develop, which was evident in the experiences provided. Professional learning was well planned and linked directly to improving outcomes for children and supporting the service's improvement priorities. Examples included training in food handling, creating enabling environments, Bookbug, and literacy, with staff able to describe the impact of this learning on their practice.

There was a strong culture of openness and shared values. The newly formed leadership team had worked hard, with the support of staff, to drive improvements at pace since the summer. Staff felt confident to celebrate success, reflect on challenges, and learn from mistakes. Achievements were recognised, and opportunities for informal reflective discussion supported honest dialogue, professional development, and improvements to the overall care and learning of children at Springside Early Years Class.

The senior staff member provided effective day-to-day support; however, limited time for leadership and managerial tasks continued to be a challenge. Staff also had

reduced opportunities for more formal, meaningful reflection and professional dialogue. Although progress had been made, dedicated time for reflection was still required to ensure improvements were fully embedded and to strengthen overall team effectiveness.

Children play and learn: Learning, teaching and assessment

All practitioners have nurturing, supportive and positive relationships with all children. As a result, children are confident and enjoy making choices as they play indoors and in their outdoor space. Most children engage well in play with their friends, negotiating and taking turns. They engage for more sustained periods of time in the outdoor space where they investigate, problem solve and lead their own learning. A majority of children are interested in new learning and ask questions to deepen their understanding. As planned, staff should create opportunities to use the local community to enrich learning, for example, visits to the sheltered housing. This would increase the range of real-life experiences on offer to children.

Staff have audited the indoor and outdoor environments for learning and, as a result, have made positive changes. Children access a range of rich, open-ended experiences in the outdoor space which develop their investigation and problem-solving skills. Staff should continue their work to further develop high quality indoor play spaces that challenge and engage children through the resources and experiences on offer. This should include consideration of how areas are organised to ensure children can independently access the resources and tidy them away.

Staff know children well and interact with them in an enthusiastic, positive and calm manner. Staff have benefitted from speech and language service training to support early language skills and interactions. As a result, most interactions include the use of high-quality questioning and commentary to support, extend and challenge children's learning. Senior leaders should support staff to continue to embed this learning to improve further how they interact with children as they play. Children are at the early stages of accessing digital technologies. For example, they enjoy using digital devices to take photographs of each other as they play and record videos of learning. Staff should continue this positive start by introducing a wider variety of digital technology to support and extend children's learning.

Staff and senior leaders have revised their approaches to document children's learning using an online platform. This includes photographs and significant observations of children's learning. Children are involved in uploading their photographs which supports them to talk about their developing skills and learning. Staff have reviewed their approaches to planning to ensure an appropriate balance of intentional and responsive learning. As planned staff should continue to evaluate and develop the systems in place, in particular how daily responsive learning is

recorded. This should support staff further to follow children's interests and deepen learning.

All staff benefit from termly learning conversations with senior leaders. They use their assessment information to make considered judgements about progress and any gaps in learning. Staff identify and plan well for individual children's next steps in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They have recently made use of local authority tracking systems which has supported further the formulation of appropriate next steps for individual children.

Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, consistent, and responsive care that supported their wellbeing and helped them feel safe and valued. Staff demonstrated values of kindness, respect, and compassion in all interactions with children, families, colleagues, and visitors. As a result, children benefitted from nurturing relationships where they were listened to, comforted, and genuinely cared for.

Observations showed us that respectful and compassionate interactions were a clear strength of the service. Staff responded sensitively to children's cues, which enhanced their emotional security and sense of belonging. For example, children were encouraged to manage personal care confidently, with staff stepping in sensitively when needed, such as supporting a child to wash their face while maintaining her dignity. This meant that children's privacy and dignity were upheld at all times, with staff skilfully balancing independence and support.

Transitions were well planned and tailored to individual needs, ensuring children experienced continuity and emotional security. Personalised approaches, such as the use of a transitional object were used to support children when moving around the setting. This demonstrated staff attentiveness to children's individual needs.

Daily routines, including mealtimes and personal care, were used as meaningful opportunities to connect with children and build independence. Food and drink provision was nutritious, culturally appropriate, and aligned with current guidance. Children had continuous access to fresh water, and mealtimes were calm, sociable experiences. Offering additional responsibilities, such as 'lunch helper' roles, could further promote children's independence and further support positive mealtimes.

Each child had an up-to-date personal plan guided by best practice and the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) framework, including wellbeing indicators to support assessment and planning. Personal learning plans and targets were in the process of moving to an online format, promoting easier access for families. Care plans were also used to hold key information about each child, ensuring staff had a strong understanding of individual needs. Overall, plans were generally effective and

included strategies to promote wellbeing, development, and learning. Staff knew children very well and used these plans to inform daily practice, supporting children to engage safely and confidently in their experiences. While plans captured relevant information, next steps and targets were not consistently clear, and further streamlining would help ensure personal plans provide precise, practical guidance for supporting each child's progression in their development and learning.

Children and families were actively involved in creating and reviewing care plans, ensuring their voices were valued and respected. Parents were meaningfully engaged in updating personal plans, which helped ensure these reflected children's current needs, preferences, and routines.

Staff worked collaboratively with families and other professionals to identify support needs and implement strategies for care and protection. Where concerns arose, staff engaged appropriately with external agencies, ensuring children's needs were understood, monitored, and addressed in a timely way.

Parents were genuinely welcomed into the playroom and encouraged to settle their children at the start of each session. Staff offered sensitive, attuned support, providing reassurance and guidance as children engaged with their first activities. This approach contributed to a calm, positive transition and supported children to feel secure, while reinforcing strong, nurturing partnerships with families.

Communication systems were effective, enabling both formal and informal exchanges of information to support continuity of care. Families had been encouraged to share updates about their child's interests and experiences outside the setting, and staff had used this information to enrich learning opportunities. Staff had used insights from families to inform care and create culturally sensitive, accessible spaces that reflected children's identities and experiences. Home-link activities, such as bird feeder kits and Christmas decoration bags, had strengthened connections between home and nursery and supported children to extend learning across environments.

Children are supported to achieve: Children's progress

Most children make good progress across the curriculum as a result of the experiences on offer to them. They talk confidently to their friends about their learning and make choices about what they would like to learn next. Staff use attendance data well when considering individual children's progress and next steps. They take good account of any barriers to attendance for families and address these.

Staff prioritise the wellbeing of children and families which is leading to children who are motivated and ready to learn. Most children are able to independently follow simple routines, for example, getting their wetsuits on to play outdoors.

Most children are making good progress in early language and literacy. Almost all children take part confidently in a wide range of songs and rhymes, supported by the song tree. This is a strength of the setting. Staff have made effective use of the speech and language therapy service to support children and families. This is impacting positively on children's progress. A majority of children confidently approach staff to ask questions. They enjoy finding out about new ideas and facts. They are using an increasing range of vocabulary in their daily play conversations with familiar adults and friends. Most children are exploring making marks in the different areas of the playroom. They use a range of fun, motivating materials which are tailored to their stage of development. A few children enjoy writing for a purpose when creating their own stories and writing invitations.

Most children are making good progress in early numeracy and mathematics. They recognise numbers to 10 and can use these in their play and routines. A majority of children confidently count backwards from 10. Most children use mathematical language accurately in context, for example, offering simple directions on the go kart and when talking about volume in the water tray. They recognise and recreate pattern and use this in their play when decorating the Christmas tree.

Most children are curious and eager to learn about the world around them. Almost all children have shown an interest in living things and have used research books and checklists to take part in bird spotting from their nursery window.

Children's individual successes are valued and celebrated within the setting. Families share their children's achievements from home which are displayed on the 'wow wall' and within the online journals. Staff should now consider how this information could be used within the setting to better inform planning to consistently build on prior learning and skills. Further use of the local community would broaden the experiences on offer for children and lead to further opportunities for achievement.

The staff take positive steps to ensure equity for all. All staff know their children and families well and use this information to ensure the right support at the right time for families. Staff make effective use of specialised support from partners, for example, arranging drop-in sessions with speech and language therapy for families. Children who require additional support with their learning have appropriate strategies in place to ensure they make continued progress.

Safeguarding (HMIE)

- Inspectors discussed safeguarding and child protection information provided by the ELC setting with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the ELC setting and the education authority.

Outcome of inspection

We are confident that the ELC setting has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection.

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