

# St. Helen's Primary Out Of School Care Day Care of Children

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
21 June 2023

**Service provided by:**  
St. Helen's Out Of School Care

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000988

**Service no:**  
CS2003004765

## About the service

St Helens after school care is provided from St Helen's primary school, which is located in the village of Condorrat, near Cumbernauld, North Lanarkshire. St Helen's Out of School Care is a voluntary group overseen by a voluntary management committee.

The service is registered to provide a care service for 30 children of primary school age and operates during term time. Care is provided from the dining hall within the primary school. The service also has access to a large outdoor space, which includes school static equipment.

The service is close to a quiet residential estate, transport links, schools and local amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 19 June and Wednesday 21 June 2023. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. Feedback was provided to the manager on Wednesday 21 June 2023.

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, and five of their family members;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- Staff were warm, caring and kind and their interactions were unhurried and responsive to children's needs.
- Children were happy and confident within the setting, they were playing with friends and staff and having fun.
- The management and staff team had created a welcoming, inclusive, nurturing, safe and caring environment for children.
- Staff were flexible and supportive of each other. They worked well as a team to support and care for children as individuals.
- Children benefited from regular access to outdoor play spaces.
- Children's snack time experience could be developed to promote children's independence and skills for life.
- Quality assurance processes should be further developed to support continuous improvement in 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy and settled in the service. They were developing friendships with peers and having fun together. Children told us they enjoyed attending the service and were happy with the play opportunities available to them.

Children experienced nurturing care and support from staff who took time to listen and respond to their needs and wishes. This supported children to feel valued and respected. Parents told us staff knew their children well and supported their needs and interest. One parent described staff as "just wonderful people who really care about the kids they look after".

The service had developed snack since the previous inspection, ensuring healthy and nutritious options were available to children. We discussed with the service how staff should use snack time as an opportunity to sit with children and have conversations to encourage and promote language and social skills. Further opportunities should also be available for children to be more involved in the preparation of snacks to develop life skills. The service agreed to review this.

Staff knew children well and confidently discussed individual personalities and need. They had worked in partnership with children to gather information about their current needs, interest and goals. Staff used praise and encouragement to support children in a meaningful way which helped develop their confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Personal plans were in place for children. Staff worked closely with families and children to gather a range of information which supported children's health and safety needs. This included medical requirements, allergy information and emergency contact details. These were frequently reviewed to ensure children were receiving the support that was right for them. One parent told us "One of the things I really love about the after school care at St Helens is the quarterly check-ins and plans we have on our daughter's progress".

We discussed with the service how personal plans could be further developed to ensure strategies to support children were clear and linked to wellbeing indicators. We signposted the service to the Care Inspectorate's 'Guide for providers on personal planning', which can be found on the Care Inspectorate hub.

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children had developed positive peer relationships and laughter, chatting and joy was felt within the service. When children arrived from school, they were keen to engage with toys and materials straight away. Children told us "I like the creative stuff. We get to do so much. Its always fun" and "I love it here. The ladies are nice and they let us play".

We observed good quality play, learning and development opportunities for children. Children were empowered to lead their play and learning through the support and interactions of staff. The manager and staff provided a stimulating, creative setting that supported children to engage in self-directed play. Children played independently and in small groups. We saw them relaxing with friends, playing imaginatively and enjoying group games outdoors.

Staff listened to children and encouraged conversations to support play. Staff engaged effectively using appropriate language and questioning to extend discussion and learning. Children were involved in play experiences that helped develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy, for example, discussing sequences when creating patterns whilst using the hama beads.

Children were able to freely select toys and resources. However, toys and materials mostly had one use, meaning that opportunities to build challenge and curiosity into play were limited. Open ended resources were very limited. We discussed how toys and material should be reviewed to help ensure they support and extend children's learning and play. Providing rich, meaningful toys and materials would contribute to support children's natural curiosity and stimulation, for example, developing natural materials to extend children's play and learning and a more varied range of toys and materials.

Planning approaches were a balance of intentional and responsive, centred around individual interests of the children. The service had developed approaches to consult with children using a floorbook approach. However, we found that further improvements were needed to the quality of the weekly planning evaluations. The service should continue to embed this approach, ensuring children are involved in evaluating and identifying next steps in their play and learning.

## How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

A safe, welcoming and organised environment had been created for children. This was bright, clean and well ventilated. Children had access to a spacious area where they had room to move, play and socialise with their peers.

Children engaged well with experiences and opportunities that were table based. Staff could consider how to make best use of spaces to offer further opportunities for children. For example, further development of cosy spaces, would help provide children with opportunities to relax in quiet, comfortable spaces. This would help contribute to children relaxing after a day at school.

Resources were well organised and easily accessible to children. This supported their choice and independence. A range of play activities had been offered to children within the service. However, play experiences could be further developed with the offering of natural and open-ended materials. The 'Loose parts play: A toolkit' available on the Care Inspectorate HUB would support this by encouraging children to develop their imagination and critical thinking skills.

The service had developed a forest area for children and had plans to further develop areas for children, including the development of a fairy area to support literacy, numeracy and imaginative play outdoors. We agree these would be beneficial in supporting children's learning and development.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through regular exercise and fresh air. Children benefitted from opportunities to play outdoors daily. The service delivered 'Forest School' days. These were provided on a rotating rota to ensure inclusion for all children using the service.

We saw children having fun outdoors, enjoying the freedom to run around with friends. Children used resources to create obstacle courses, demonstrating high levels of team work and co-operative play. We discussed with the manager how the garden could be further developed with more opportunities to promote risky play.

Staff carried out visual checks of the environment daily and risk assessed all areas of play to ensure they were safe for children. Written risk assessments were in place to support these checks, recording any risks and how they were minimised.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place. Handwashing routines took place at relevant times throughout the session, for example, before eating. Cleaning of surfaces took place before and after food was served. This helped reduce the potential spread of infections.

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The staff team had experienced some changes since the previous inspection. The manager should use this time to review the service's vision statement with children, parents, staff and the provider to develop a shared vision and aspirations for the service.

The manager was motivated to facilitate continuous improvement and support improved outcomes for children and families. The manager had aspirations for the service. They planned to regularly engage with children and parents to encourage them to share in their child's learning and inform planning and development of the service.

Families spoke positively of the regular service updates they received through social media, emails, texts and daily verbal communication. This approach helped families feel included in their children's daily experiences. Parents told us "they communicate really well with us" and "The communication with both staff members, either at pick up or via newsletters and emails is great".

The staff team met on a regular basis to discuss children's experiences and we observed staff consulting with children throughout their session acting on their ideas for play. To support meaningful reflections, staff and management should make use of best practice documents to help support meeting children's needs and interests. .

Some quality assurance processes were in place, including an improvement plan. We discussed with the service how this could be further developed to ensure the improvement has clear priorities and the service were ensuring these were evaluated regularly. (See area for improvement 1).

The management team and staff were reflective of their practice and were keen to make changes to ensure positive outcomes for children. As a result, we were confident that the service was well placed to continue to develop practice with a focus on improving outcomes for children. This should include developing system to ensure all quality assurance process are being documented.

We found that there was some processes in place for monitoring staff practice. The management team should develop and implement system's for monitoring the quality of the service, this should include developing a monitoring calendar which identifies actions to be undertaking by management and staff. This will enable reflective discussion to support continuous improvement.

Staff appraisal had been developed since the previous inspection. These supported the progression and development of staff, ensuring they could identify training needs to support their learning and development. Staff training plans clearly identified training that was provided to support the needs of the staff team. A clear evaluation of training was recorded, with staff sharing what knowledge they had taken from training.

We discussed how the manager and staff could use Care Inspectorate guidance, 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' as a tool for self evaluation and include children and parents in this process.

### Areas for improvement

1. To support continuous improvement of the service, management should continue to develop their quality assurance processes. This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring a detailed improvement plan is created, reflections on changes made and the resulting impact on experiences and outcomes for children and families.

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

### 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.

#### 4.3 Staff deployment

Children enjoyed warm, nurturing care from the responsive staff team. Strong relationships were established due to positive engagement from staff who were genuinely interested in and knew children well. Parents described staff as "very professional caring and dedicated" and "wonderful people".

Staff were deployed appropriately throughout the service, which ensured children were safe and cared for. Staff moved fluidly in response to children's needs and requests. During outdoor play, staff discussed boundaries with children when using wide open spaces and maintained a good overview of children's play. This contributed to children remaining safe.

Staff communicated well with each other and ensured tasks were carried out without any disruption to children. Staff presented as happy in their work, were respectful towards each other, flexibly working together as needed. This contributed to creating a nurturing space for children.

An effective induction process had been introduced since the last inspection, which meant staff were appropriately mentored and supported during their induction. As a result, staff were confident in their roles.

Staff had a good understanding of how to support children's varied developmental stages and were enthusiastic in their approaches when joining play experiences. Children told us that they enjoyed attending the service, staff were friendly and that the staff took care of them. Parents agreed, commenting, "My child absolutely loves the after school club at St Helens. [staff members names] come in everyday with fun things for the kids to do. I factor in the experience my [child} has into her overall school experience and the St Helen's afterschool definitely compliments it". and "It's really the best decision we've made to have our [child] attend the afterschool care at St Helen's".

## 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

The service should ensure that the areas for development are clearly identified within the service improvement plan. An evaluation of how effectively priorities are being achieved should be reflected in staff meeting minutes. The plan should be continually reviewed to ensure that it reflects the ongoing needs of staff and service users.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 13: Improving the Service.

**This area for improvement was made on 7 November 2017.**

#### Action taken since then

Although the service had taken steps to develop their improvement plan, further consideration should be given to ensure areas for development are specific and measurable. The service should develop system to ensure regular evaluations of their progress is recorded. This will contribute to continuous improvements within the service.

**This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

Staff appraisal records should reflect how relevant training is to be accessed. Monitoring records should reflect that training needs have been met within relevant timescales.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 13: Improving the Service.

**This area for improvement was made on 7 November 2017.**



**Action taken since then**

The service had developed their appraisal systems to ensure staff could identify training needs. These were successfully planned for and were recorded within staff development records.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

**Previous area for improvement 3**

The service should ensure that food and drinks offered at snack time are healthy and nutritious.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 3 Health and Wellbeing.

**This area for improvement was made on 7 November 2017.**

**Action taken since then**

The service had developed their snack menus to ensure snacks were healthy and nutritious. Staff used best practice guidance such as 'setting the table' to support their menu planning.

**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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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