

# Summarised inspection findings

**Argus Playgroup**

Scottish Borders Council

4 February 2025

## Key contextual information

Argus Playgroup is situated within Argus Community Centre owned by Live Borders in Selkirk. The playgroup provides early learning and childcare (ELC) placements for children living in Selkirk, Lilliesleaf, Kirkhope, Galashiels and Yarrow. The playgroup is run by a group of parent volunteers who form a committee, consisting of a Chair, secretary and two treasurers.

Children can attend the playgroup from the age of two until starting primary school. The playgroup is registered to provide places for 24 children at any given time. There are currently 42 children on the roll. Children attend during term time from 8.30 am to 3.00 pm for four days per week and 8.30 am to 12.30 pm for one day per week. The majority of children experience split placements in a variety of other settings. There is one playroom which is set up and packed away every Tuesday in the main hall area. Children do not have direct access to the outdoor area, situated behind the hall, due to building constraints. Children can access the outside area every day, with older children accessing a local woodland once per week. The acting manager is supported by three full-time practitioners, a visiting early years teacher and a cook.

### 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

**very good**

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

### Children aged two to three years

- Most children show engagement in their play and can concentrate well for short periods of time. Highly skilled practitioners value and respect children and are closely attuned to children's ideas, feelings and ways of thinking. As a result, the playroom provision for two to three year olds is very age-appropriate and highly child-centred. Practitioners make detailed observations which help identify areas for future focus and gaps in learning. They responsively and sensitively plan learning and sensory play. They should continue to develop approaches to planning in order to extend children's individual learning experiences further.

### Children aged three to five years

- All children enjoy their time in the setting and are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Almost all children engage well for extended periods of time in thoughtfully developed indoor and outdoor environments. Local authority staff support environmental audits which result in the staff team's appropriate development of resources and learning experiences. Highly skilled practitioners maximise play opportunities using loose parts, natural and open-ended materials. Most children benefit from spending time outdoors daily, walks in the local community and regular visits to nearby green spaces. This develops well their cooperative and team-work skills and gives them a strong sense of the playgroup's place in the local community.
- All practitioners are nurturing, responsive, calm and respectful in their interactions with children. All children display positive engagement and behaviour which supports high levels of engagement and learning. Practitioners enact the values of the setting in their everyday actions, and deliver the shared vision of 'a happy family, learning and growing together'.

- Practitioners provide supportive commentary and extend children's learning and thinking using open-ended questions and responsive interactions. They take time to carefully listen to children and provide them with very positive role models.
- Children, with the support of practitioners, use recently purchased tablet computers to access matrix bar codes. They use electric scales, keyboards and a device that shares children's stories and songs. Practitioners are aware of the importance of digital technology and plan to develop further use for a variety of purposes.
- Practitioners very effectively record regular observations of significant learning experiences in individual learning journal folders. Practitioners' observations show children's progress over time and link to tracking information recorded on local authority documentation. This results in very effective individual planning for challenge or any gaps in children's development. Practitioners regularly discuss children's progress with parents. Senior leaders plan to more regularly share children's experiences and progress using an online platform to enable parents to support children's learning further at home.
- Practitioners meet regularly to plan and discuss how best to support and challenge children's learning. They respond very well to children's interests. In addition, they very effectively use and ensure breadth and coverage of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) early level experiences and outcomes. Practitioners have recently started to share tracking documents with a local setting for children on split placements. This is improving the planning and progression for individual children. The acting manager and practitioners should keep under review planning and tracking documentation. They should ensure clarity of information, that shows how much progress over time children are making.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The setting submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the setting and the education authority.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Children aged two to three years make good progress in their development from their starting point at playgroup. Practitioners focus on developmental milestones, ensuring that children are progressing well emotionally, socially and physically. Overall, almost all children are making good progress in communication, early language, numeracy, mathematics and health and wellbeing. Children who require additional support are well supported by practitioners, who work in close partnership with parents and carers.
- Most children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. They cooperate, share, take turns, independently select a healthy snack, pour water and clear their dishes after lunch. Most children are aware of how to keep themselves safe during walks and in risk assessing the outdoor area. Children visit local businesses and understand the skills needed in work and life. They confidently use their bodies to jump, climb, run and negotiate different outdoor surfaces. Children use the language of wellbeing and are developing their awareness and understanding of emotions. Children understand the importance of regular handwashing and tooth brushing.
- Most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They can count within 10 and a few beyond 10. Older children use concrete materials to support subitising, counting and early addition. Most children talk confidently about seasonal changes and the weather and use appropriate mathematical language when building with blocks or making playdough. Children need more opportunities to develop further their skills in symmetry and information handling.
- Most children make good progress in early language and communication. They talk confidently to familiar adults and visitors. Children request and enjoy opportunities to share a familiar story, non-fiction books and explore sounds, rhymes and songs. Most children understand that signs and symbols give messages. They recognise their names and letters within it. A few children use this knowledge to attempt to write individual words. Children should continue to be supported to develop how they use this knowledge in different contexts.
- Practitioners effectively use praise to support and encourage children as they play and learn. Children's achievements from within the setting are recorded in learning journals and displays. Practitioners encourage parents to share achievements from home. They now need to identify and track the skills being developed through these achievements.
- Practitioners, with the support of the committee, have created a strong sense of community where children and families are valued and respected. The acting manager and practitioners understand their roles in promoting equity and they provide sensitive, valued support to

families. They know the community very well and use this knowledge when planning events and offering support. All parents comment very positively on how staff support them to feel meaningfully included in their child's early education.

## Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.