

# New Deer School Nursery Day Care of Children

New Deer School  
New Deer  
Turriff  
AB53 6TB

Telephone: 01771 644 265

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
4 October 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeenshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000029

**Service no:**  
CS2003015737

## About the service

New Deer School Nursery is provided by Aberdeenshire Council. The service operates from within the local primary school and is close to local amenities like shops and parks. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children, aged between two years and primary school entry at any one time. Of those 32, no more than five are aged two years.

New Deer School Nursery operates from a dedicated classroom within the primary school. The premises consist of an entrance area and an open-plan playroom. Children have direct access to toilets, nappy changing areas, and kitchen facilities. The service has free-flow access from the playroom to an outdoor shelter and enclosed garden area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 2 October 2024 between the hours of 08:30 and 18:00 and 3 October 2024 between the hours of 08:30 and 13:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

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 during their play
- spoke with staff and management
- received 14 parent/carer online questionnaires
- received eight staff online questionnaires
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- Children were very settled and happily engaged in play and learning.
- Children led their own play through a well balanced mix of activities, both indoors and outside.
- Children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well.
- The staff team were motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to continue to take on training to develop their practice.
- The setting provided high quality care and experiences for children, self evaluation and quality assurance should continue to be a focus to sustain this.

**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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very 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?

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.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm and nurturing care from staff. Children were very settled, relaxed, and confident. When children needed reassurance or support, we saw that staff were responsive to their needs. Positive attachments had been formed which supported children to feel safe and secure.

Staff knew children very well and were able to confidently discuss their interests, likes, dislikes, and support that had been put in place. Parents felt they had a strong connection with the staff. One parent said, "The staff are welcoming and friendly, they really feel like an extension of our family and of course our [child] loves them all". Another said, "An excellent staff team! They are very nurturing towards the children and ensure they know their children well".

Personal plans were in place for all children. The format included the wellbeing indicators which helped the setting to gather meaningful information, supporting children to receive care and support that is right for them. Support plans were in place for children who required one. Ensuring clear strategies were in place for all children would further support staff to tailor individual care. Evaluating and reviewing these plans regularly with families meant they contained relevant and most up-to-date information.

Mealtimes had been an improvement focus for the service. Staff sat with children, supporting them as they ate which provided a nice social experience. They chatted together about families and activities the children enjoyed. Children ate food that was nutritious and supported their preferences and dietary needs. There were lots of opportunities for children to develop independence through preparing snack, serving food and drinks, and scraping and washing dishes. Staff used this time as learning opportunities, talking about what they were doing and asking children questions. Parents told us their children could choose from a range of healthy meals and snacks which reflected their individual, cultural, and dietary needs.

Medication was stored safely and securely and was easily accessible to staff but out of the children's reach. Medication records sampled contained relevant information to help staff with safe administration. We found, however, that forms should include more detailed information, particularly around the use of inhalers. We asked that the service ensure their auditing systems take this into account, to ensure information provided is clear for staff.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun and were fully engaged throughout the inspection. Staff were very responsive to children's interests and supported their choice in where they wanted to play.

The pace of the day was very relaxed and unhurried which meant children had time to explore their ideas. Children had opportunities to lead their play and we saw children problem solve and use their imagination. One child was trying very hard to move a wheelbarrow filled with sticks and large pipe on top of a palette. They tried different approaches and said "it's too heavy". After thinking for a moment, the child took the pipe and sticks out of the wheelbarrow and was then able to lift the wheelbarrow.

They went onto thinking about securing it and attached clips that other children were using for a tarpaulin. Children were using the wide range of resources available to them well and this supported their curiosities and thinking skills.

Staff interactions were calm, patient, and encouraging. During discussions with children, staff adapted their pace and language, which supported children's understanding and language development. Most staff were skilled in using open-ended questions to support children's learning. For example, when playing in the sand pit children were digging holes and filling them with water from the water butt. Questions and language, such as "what do you think will happen?" and "let's experiment", were used which developed their thinking and supported their engagement in the activity. This ensured learning was meaningful and provided appropriate challenge for children.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were embedded within the environment and children's play. Children engaged very well with real resources in the home corner, such as the old phones, using them to call each other. Adults sang and read stories with children in groups. Numeracy and language were being supported through play and experiences. For example, when cutting the fruit for snack an adult said, "I'm cutting this orange in half, how many pieces will I have?". Children benefited from a variety of mark making materials available throughout the environment and used these well to support their play and learning. This ensured there were lots of opportunities available for literacy and numeracy within play spaces and experiences.

Planning processes were effective and a planning wall supported the contribution of all staff. Staff worked together to promote a balance of intentional and responsive learning experiences for the children. This was evident in the approach to learning during the inspection. Big books were being used to gather children's ideas, evidence learning, and reflect on this. These books were shared with parents and children were able to reflect on these encouraging life skills, such as questioning, memory, investigating, and explaining.

Learning journals were being used to capture children's learning and share their 'focus week'. This also provided an opportunity for families to see their child's play and learning in more detail. Staff had recently accessed support and training on writing observations and next steps. The observations we sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress, allowing them to plan the next steps with children and their families. The setting was successfully tracking children, which allowed them to tailor support and challenge and identify gaps in learning and support transition. They plan to use the local authority 'bench marks' to widen the curriculum on offer, providing more experiences for the children.

Children benefited from very good connections with the school and wider community. Children had access to areas within the school and the eco garden which offered a large grassed area with trees. Children enjoyed regular wellbeing walks within the community and visits to the local care home, park, and shops. The setting also spent time exploring a nearby village, in which some of the children stay, allowing them the opportunity to walk to nursery and show their friends where they stay. The service utilised experiences within their rural community very well. For example, they took a phone call during the inspection to say that a combine harvester was in the field across from the nursery. Children were asked if they would like to watch and went across to the field together. Children from a farming background were able to share their knowledge with their friends. The farmer took time to stop and speak to the children about the barley and the harvesting process. Children were very interested, asking questions and went back to the nursery to create their own combine with the wooden blocks and reels. This contributed to children's sense of belonging and supported them to have opportunities outwith the setting.

## How good is our setting?

## 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.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced an environment that was very well furnished and well maintained with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Children's artwork and photographs were displayed, providing children with ownership of their setting as well as creating a sense of belonging. Resources were of a very good quality and included lots of loose parts to promote children's imagination, curiosity, and creativity. Soft furnishings, such as sofas, rugs, cushions, and blankets, provided cosy spaces for children to rest during their busy day.

The layout of indoor play spaces ensured that children could move around areas with ease, allowing them to access resources independently. Children were very confident while moving around these spaces, exploring their ideas and interests. They also had the freedom to transport and move around resources to extend their play and learning further.

Children had free-flow access to outdoors most of the day which benefited their health and wellbeing, extended their play and learning, and gave children choice in where to play. Children spent time making creations in the sand pit, building a house with a tarpaulin, using brushes to sweep sand, and paint with water. They also played imaginative games and ran around enjoying being active. All parents told us their children's development was supported through interesting and fun play experiences and they had the opportunity to play outdoors. One parent said, "Indoor and outdoor. Messy play. Quiet time. Physical activity. Reading. Helping. My child always likes to come home and tell me what [they've] been up to. I have been really impressed with the set up of the nursery and the things they do. [They have] especially been taken by the workbench and learning how to be 'Safe Sam'". Another parent said, "Using imagination for building and creating things in the sandpit, making obstacle courses and risk assessing them, following recipes in mud kitchen, visits to eco garden, visiting places within their local community, such as church, fields during harvest, and further afield such as their 'Maud day' where they spent a day in a neighbouring village and made many links with their local community, including visiting local cafes, fire station etc".

Systems were in place to help keep children safe. Robust risk assessments helped staff to mitigate risk and enhanced children's safety. We discussed considering the benefits alongside these to support risky play and resilience. Children were being involved in developing their skills and awareness of staying safe through opportunities to carry out risk assessments of their play spaces and experiences. They also got involved in head counts and through a developing understanding of the wellbeing indicators using characters such as 'Safe Sam'. We asked that staff consider their use of language when talking to the children, using questions such as "is that safe?" or "what could make that safe?" rather than "careful". This would further support the children's understanding of risk and keeping themselves safe.

Infection control measures were understood and implemented effectively by staff. Overall, handwashing routines were mostly embedded. Staff now need to ensure that the children eat directly after handwashing in preparation for their meal. Staff protected children by providing a clean and hygienic environment and personal protective equipment (PPE) was used at appropriate times, such as during food preparation. This contributed to keep children safe and well.

**How good is our leadership?****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.

**Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well**

The nursery shared the school vision, values, and aims which complement what the nursery was promoting around the wellbeing indicators and the characters. The nursery had their own vision which sat alongside this. The nursery vision was created in consultation with staff, children, families, and the community. This vision had been shared with everyone, ensuring that they are meaningful and capture the needs and wishes of those using and working in the setting.

Children's and families' views and suggestions about their care, play, and learning were valued by staff. The feedback we received from parents highlighted that they felt they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Parent information evenings, stay-and-play sessions, and wellbeing walks included families in their child's experience and provided time for the team to showcase the play and learning offered in the setting. Feedback from various Microsoft Forms surveys were positive and highlighted that parents felt their children's development was well supported and they liked that the setting was being led by the children's interests. Although the setting had not received any suggestions for improvement recently, we discussed ways they could share how these had been acted upon in the future to ensure parents felt listened to and to continue a collaborative approach to improvement.

Staff told us they felt very well supported by leaders in the service and were motivated to improve the service provided. Staff told us that their wellbeing needs and professional goals were recognised and supported by leaders through regular support and supervision and monitoring of practice which they welcomed. One staff member said, "Leaders are always approachable and listen to any worries staff may have and can point us in the direction of any help". Another staff member said, "Our senior lead is extremely good at ensuring the staff's wellbeing needs are met, [they take] time to get to know us, have built positive relationships and continually check in with us. We have regular personal development meetings where we look at our performance in the setting". This contributed to staff feeling supported and valued.

The nursery was using a quality assurance calendar to effectively support procedures, audits, and monitoring within the nursery. These were evaluated and shared with staff to ensure everyone was clear and knew the outcome and the impact of these.

The local authority quality assurance document, known as the 'RAG' document, had supported the setting to identify areas for improvement. Action plans were then used to support improvement and document developments. Utilising different methods of self evaluation and engagement with recognised audit tools, such as the Quality Framework, had allowed the setting to recognise what they were doing well and identify areas for improvement. Through evaluating improvements, it was clear an impact had been made on outcomes for children, their learning, and experiences.

## 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.

### Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff demonstrated warmth and interest towards the children they cared for. Parents told us that, overall, they were happy with the care and support their child receives at the setting. One parent told us, "[My child] is listened to, valued, and given time to communicate [their] thoughts". Another parent said, "The growth in [their] confidence since starting nursery and the ability to play with new toys and make friends away from the family home". This resulted in children who were very settled, happy, and confident.

The leadership team recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed at all times. Overall, the deployment of staff was very effective. They were flexible in their approach while communicating well with each other. Although they had key areas of responsibility, they moved with children, where needed, to support the running of the service and meet the needs of children.

Staff were appropriately qualified. Some were working towards gaining further qualifications and had a very good knowledge of child development. Staff were able to discuss how they had identified individual areas for development and were supporting children with their social skills, confidence, and speech and language. One parent said, "My child is more confident, vocal, and sociable. Close people around our family can't believe how much they have come on but nursery and the ladies there have helped this". Another parent said, "The amazing progress my child has made, both socially and academically. How much more confident [they are], how settled and safe [they are] in the setting, and how enthusiastic [they are] about attending nursery". This resulted in children's experiences throughout the day being positive.

Staff were very committed to their professional development to ensure they delivered a high quality service and improved outcomes for children. Staff had undertaken a range of learning which included formal training, professional discussions, and self directed reading. This supported staff to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, children's care, play, and learning was informed by current research and best practice. The team were now being encouraged to reflect on their professional development, making use of the training logs that were available. This was supporting them to evaluate the impact training had and allow them to identify further training needs.

Staff inductions had supported staff knowledge and awareness of their role and responsibilities. The setting had started using the 'Early Learning and Childcare National Induction Resource' to encourage questions and reflection. This would support staff to have a very good understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and effective ways of working.



## 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

To support children achieve their full potential, the manager should ensure approaches to observation, teaching, and assessment are further developed to show coherence and progression in children's learning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.17).

**This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2019.**

#### Action taken since then

Planning processes were effective and a planning wall supported the contribution of all staff. Staff worked together to promote a balance of intentional and responsive learning experiences for the children. This was evident in the approach to learning during the inspection. Staff had recently accessed support and training on writing observations and next steps. The observations we sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress, allowing them to plan the next steps with children and their families. The setting was successfully tracking children, which allowed them to tailor support and challenge and identify gaps in learning and support transition.

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

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