

# Abernethy Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Abernethy Primary School  
Nethybridge  
PH25 3ED

Telephone: 01479 821 274

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
14 November 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Highland Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001693

**Service no:**  
CS2004074207

## About the service

Abernethy Primary School Nursery is a daycare of children service, registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children. The age range of the children is from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The nursery is provided from Abernethy Primary School, situated in the village of Nethybridge in the Cairngorms. Children have access to a dedicated playroom, toilets, and a separate room for mealtimes, within the school. They also have access to an enclosed, natural garden area, and have good access to local woodlands.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 November 2024, between 9.15 am and 3.00pm. Feedback was given on 14 November 2024. 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 using the service;
- reviewed feedback received from seven of their families;
- spoke with six staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- Children experienced genuine warmth, caring and nurturing approaches to support their wellbeing.
- Staff extended learning through skilled conversation, supporting developing literacy, communication, and numeracy skills.
- There was a strong emphasis on outdoor play, which supported children's overall health and wellbeing.
- Staff enabled children to identify and address risk for themselves, supporting them to push their own boundaries and develop their resilience as they played outside.
- Children, families, and staff benefited from a committed management team, which contributed to a positive ethos.
- Staff were kind, caring, and enthusiastic. As a result, children felt valued and loved.

**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?	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?

4 - Good

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

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced genuine warmth, caring and nurturing approaches to support their wellbeing. Staff took time to get to know children with a focus on building positive relationships. Children were supported to make choices as staff were attuned to their routines and what was important to them. Children were nurtured as they experienced caring, responsive, and compassionate interactions which supported their wellbeing. They were offered comfort, cuddles and reassurance which helped them to feel loved. This contributed to children feeling safe and secure and as a result all children were confident, happy and engaged in their play experiences.

Children's wellbeing was effectively supported through personal planning which was reviewed regularly with families and children. Staff knew children well and were aware of their individual needs. When required, staff worked closely with other professionals. They were skilled at recognising where children may benefit from additional interventions. This was managed sensitively to ensure children received the support that was right for them in a timely manner. This ensured children were supported to achieve their full potential.

Snack and mealtimes were calm and relaxed. Children had opportunities to develop their independence skills, for example selecting cutlery and crockery, and pouring drinks. Children enjoyed their morning snack in the garden, which reduced any interruptions to their play. Staff were focussed on children, recognising the value of these daily routines in building strong relationships, and to consolidate learning through fun conversation. Food offered was healthy and nutritious, following best practice guidance, such as "Setting the Table". Individual preferences were catered for. Changes to where lunch was served supported a much more homely atmosphere. As a result, children enjoyed a positive social experience.

Children were supported with personal care through mindful and respectful interactions, and staff were aware of children's individual preferences. The addition of a new nappy changing area reduced the risk of possible cross contamination. As a result, children's privacy and dignity was respected.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children were having fun as they enjoyed high quality play and learning experiences. They were positively engaged from the moment they arrived at the nursery garden. Well considered arrangements at the start of the day supported children to maximise their time in the setting. For example, storing personal belongings in the garden meant they could get straight into play. They were able to choose where they wanted to play, and choose the resources they wanted, supported by staff who were close on hand if needed. This empowered children and supported their developing sense of independence.

Play experiences supported children's developing imagination and natural curiosities. There was a strong emphasis on outdoor play, which supported children's overall health and wellbeing. Parents felt outdoor play and learning was a strength of the setting, with some commenting, "The children spend time in the outdoor garden every day. It is a huge benefit! The garden is so well set up with a variety of activities for the children. The children also have the opportunity to get involved with planning where things go in the garden." and that children enjoyed "Learning about fungi and local plants and imaginary play in the woods".

Staff demonstrated that they understood when to interact with children to extend their learning, and when to stand back and allow them to become engrossed in their play. They were knowledgeable about child development and children's preferred patterns of play, providing opportunities for children to play and explore in a way that suited them. This promoted children's development, learning and wellbeing.

Staff extended learning through skilled conversation, supporting developing literacy, communication, and numeracy skills. For example, introducing new words, repeating words, and taking the time to explain things, such as how clay dries. They followed children's interests, asking questions about frogs and lemon sharks, giving children time to respond. They introduced new resources to add depth to children's play. All staff used mathematical language in conversation with children, from the weight of the tyre swing to the shape of the chips at lunch time. As a result, children were developing a broad range of life long skills.

Planning approaches were being developed to ensure a balance of responsive and intentional planning. The management team had identified this as an area for improvement, along with the consistency of observations, to support all staff to be able plan appropriately to meet individual children's needs.

## How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

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

The playroom was clean and tidy, and flooded with natural light. Recent refurbishments had enhanced the calm feel of the room. There had been some attention to homely details such as real life objects. We discussed with the management team, continuing to extend and add to these types of resources, to create a warm and welcoming environment.

Resources reflected children's stage of development, offering them a wide range of opportunities to develop their learning. Resources were varied, supporting both gross motor and fine motor skills development. Staff used well considered approaches to ensure that children were curious and excited to explore the indoor and outdoor spaces.

Staff worked well together to identify risks and were vigilant about where children were at all times. They supported children to recognise and assess risk for themselves as they played, and as they moved between inside and outside, for example, demonstrating how to safely cross over to the school. This contributed to children's growing sense of confidence and self-esteem.

Infection prevention and control measures were effective in reducing the risk of possible spread of infection. Children were supported to wash their hands throughout the day, with access to warm water, soap and paper towels outside supporting good hygiene. Staff spoke to children about the importance of good hygiene in reducing the spread of infection, while being sensitive to children's preferences around this.

Staff had a good understanding of arrangements for cleaning within the service, ensuring children were able to play and learn in a safe and clean environment. They followed robust health and safety practices around food preparation that also contributed to keeping children safe, and further reduced the risk of infection spreading.

## How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

### Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality Assurance and improvement are led well

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.

Children, families, and staff benefited from a committed management team. This created a happy and welcoming ethos in the service, promoting a positive atmosphere for children to play and learn. The management team valued the views of children, their families, and the wider community. They were in the process of reviewing the setting's vision, values and aims to ensure they reflected the wishes and preferences of all.

A realistic improvement plan was driving forward nursery developments. Priorities were outcome focused with realistic targets which improved outcomes for children. Ongoing monitoring and reviewing of the priorities meant the manager and staff had a clear overview on their progress. This meant children benefited from a service that continued to improve.

Staff were confident to reflect on their practice, and were self-evaluating against best practice guidance, such as Setting the Table, Animal Magic and A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged children. There was regular time for staff to come together, which contributed to the positive ethos of the nursery and supported staff to drive and sustain improvements. As a result, children, and their families, experienced quality care and support based on relevant evidence and guidance.

## How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

### Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

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.

Staff were kind, caring, and enthusiastic. They demonstrated a high level of motivation in relation to supporting children to have positive experiences. Parents told us "The team here do an exceptional job and our child is made to feel welcome, safe and supported whilst having fun with their peers.", "We absolutely love Abernethy Primary Nursery, the staff are excellent and put so much into their work with our child. We are extremely grateful for everything they do." and "The staff are warm and obviously take their roles very seriously". This meant children felt valued and loved.

Staff deployment throughout the day was well considered, making best use of the skills, knowledge and experience of all staff. Staff had particular strengths in outdoor play and learning, or were enthusiastic about increasing their own skills. As a result, children were well supported throughout the day as they played and learned.

Positive working relationships had been formed between staff which meant they were all meaningfully contributing to the inclusive and positive ethos of trust and respect. They communicated clearly with each other when they were leaving one area to go to another, or when sharing information about children. This allowed routines and key tasks to be carried out whilst ensuring children were appropriately supported and outcomes remained positive.

## 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 nursery should review the learning opportunities and core provision within the setting to ensure that play and learning experiences are relevant and responsive to children's ideas and stage of development.

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

'As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open ended and natural materials.' (HSCS 1.31)

**This area for improvement was made on 23 May 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

The core provision provided children with a broad range of resources to stimulate them. Staff were responsive to children's interests and supported them to extend their play and learning through skilled interactions. This area for improvement has been met.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

Staff should be supported to continue to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence through a variety of professional development opportunities to aid them in their practice and providing positive outcomes for children.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.' (HSCS 3.14)

**This area for improvement was made on 23 May 2018.**

## Action taken since then

The current staff team had a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience to promote high quality outcomes. Robust processes were in place to monitor staff practice and to identify where any gaps in skills may exist. As a result, children were benefiting from high quality care, and play and learning opportunities. 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	5 - Very 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?	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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