

Balmerino Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Main Road
Gauldry
Newport-on-Tay
DD6 8RP

Telephone: 01334 659 450

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 February 2025

Service provided by:
Fife Council

Service provider number:
SP2004005267

Service no:
CS2003015879

About the service

Balmerino Nursery is registered to provide care for a maximum of 18 children at any one time, aged from three years to an age to attend primary school. The service is situated in the small village of The Gauldry, Fife. The service is located within Balmerino Primary School. Children have access to a playroom where they can take part in a wide range of high-quality play experiences. There is a well equipped and fully enclosed outdoor learning environment for children to access throughout their nursery session.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 6 and 7 February 2025 between 09:00 and 16:00. We provided feedback on 7 February 2025. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration and any complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with eight families using the service
- reviewed feedback from four families using MS forms
- spoke with acting head teacher and all staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Children were very happy, confident and having lots of fun.

Children experienced very warm, caring, and nurturing support from staff who knew their individual personalities and needs very well. This contributed to children feeling safe, listened to and loved.

Children's needs were very well supported by effective personal planning. This ensured staff caring for children had a clear overview of their individual needs and preferences.

Staff felt very supported and valued by the acting headteacher and each other. This had contributed to a strong and positive team ethos

Play spaces both indoors and outdoors enabled children to lead their own learning, making choices in their play and to move freely between the two spaces.

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?	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?

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were happy and very confident in the setting. They were very proud to show us round their nursery and talk about their current learning. Children excitedly spoke about an upcoming wedding they were planning. One child told us "I am the groom, and I marry the girl." Children were very well supported by nurturing and caring staff. Staff were very responsive to children's needs providing reassurance and comfort when needed. This approach helped children to feel safe, secure, and loved. Children and their families were welcomed into the service each day, this supported positive connections. Most families who completed our MS Forms online survey strongly agreed or agreed that they have a strong connection with the staff caring for my child. Some comments included:

"The nursery staff are absolutely fantastic. They have a deep understanding of each individual child's needs and truly care for all the children. They have been very welcoming from my child's first day at nursery and are always there if you have any questions. I am so glad my child is lucky to have them as her nursery teachers."

"Very helpful and always share their learning with us."

"I could not wish for better staff to care for my child, they go above and beyond."

"Nursery is a really positive environment for my child to learn and they are very well cared for by great staff."

Personal planning was a key strength. Children's health and wellbeing was very well supported using effective personal planning documents. Key information was gathered in partnership with families and was used effectively to help staff provide individualised care. Staff were knowledgeable about each child's needs and strategies in place to support them. Plans were regularly reviewed and updated with families to ensure children were receiving care which met their current needs.

Children's personal care needs were carried out discreetly and sensitively, supporting their privacy and dignity. Skilled staff used these opportunities to further build positive trusting relationships with children.

Children enjoyed a relaxed, unhurried, and sociable mealtime experience. They chatted happily to their friends and staff. Children had opportunities to be independent. They helped to set up the tables and self served some food. This meant that children were developing confidence and important life skills. Snack choices were nutritious and supported healthy choices for children. There was some scope to further enhance this mealtime experience. We discussed this with the service. We asked the provider and service to consider the current use of space for mealtimes, the size and quality of tables used by children, and appropriate child height/adult sized seating for staff. This would further support a positive mealtime experience for children, whilst enhancing staff's wellbeing by allowing them to sit comfortably with children as they ate together.

Children who needed a sleep were well supported by staff. Staff responded to individual cues, and this ensured their needs were consistently met.

Staff spoke confidently about their role in safeguarding and protecting children. They knew how they would record and report any concerns. Regular safeguarding training helped keep staff up to date and be confident in their roles.

Children's health and wellbeing needs were carefully considered through the correct and well organised storage of medication. All consent forms were completed with families, and were regularly reviewed to ensure information was current.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children actively led their own play and learning throughout the day. They were happy, very confident and engaged. Children benefited from a high-quality play and learning environment both indoors and outdoors. We observed skilled staff interacting with children to enhance and extend their play and learning opportunities.

Staff understood the benefits of regular outdoor play and we saw them supporting children with risky play. For example, climbing on logs and an old chimney pot from the school roof. This approach encouraged children to understand their own capabilities and develop confidence in how to be safe.

Planning approaches were child led and responded to their current interests. Children were empowered to plan and lead their own play and learning. Creative use of learning walls highlighted children's thoughts, ideas, and discussions. Children spoke confidently about their learning and what was on their learning wall. This contributed to children feeling valued, listened to and respected. Staff told us how their observations of children, identified individual learning targets. Children were also fully involved in setting their own targets and working on something that was important to them, for example making sandwiches for snack. This meant that children were engaged in play and were making very good progress.

Children had easy access to their personal learning journals, which they were excited to share with us. These folders showcased a wide variety of experiences, next steps in learning and achievements. Children took time to share these with us and confidently recalled their previous learning. Children's learning and development was regularly shared with families using a digital app called SEESAW. This supported learning to continue at home and kept families informed of their child's progress. Observations detailed significant learning and planned next steps that were relevant to each individual child. Effective tracking of progress ensured that all children were supported on an individual basis. As a result, children were effectively supported to learn and achieve.

Throughout the service there were rich opportunities for children to develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. Throughout the day we observed, children mark making, singing songs and rhymes, speaking some French and listening to stories in a cosy comfortable space.

Children benefitted from regular opportunities to visit the woods and had developed strong links with their community through walks. This approach stimulated children's interest and feeling of inclusion in the local community and enhanced their play and learning opportunities.

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The indoor play space was clean, bright, welcoming and well ventilated. The service was very well maintained. Staff had been creative in their use of space and careful consideration had been given to resources. This created an inviting and homely atmosphere. There were also some cosy areas for children to relax and rest. A range of activities and experiences were available to all children across the service. We found that all play materials were appropriate to children's needs and stages of development. This helped to stimulate their natural curiosity. For example, blocks, loose parts, sensory items, and a well-resourced creative area. Children were busy and immersed with their play as they moved between indoors and outdoors independently.

Free flow access to the large outdoor space enabled children to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. The garden provided a range of spaces for development of physical skills and exploration. Families who responded to our MS Forms survey told us that their child could play outdoors always or very often. One parent told us:

"The children at Balmerino Nursery are very lucky to have daily access to an amazing garden which has lots of fun activities within, such as a mud kitchen. They are also able to learn about local wildlife that visits the garden. During the warmer months, they have the incredible ability to visit the local beach in the morning where they have an amazing time playing with stones, pretending to fish and get to explore the beach. They also have visits to the local woods, where they climb trees, make dens and listen to stories."

Children took pride in their play space and helped clear away resources when they were no longer in use. Staff also reset areas to ensure that they were inviting to children. This meant children and staff respected the environment and sent a strong message to children that they matter.

Children's safety was a priority, and the service had systems in place to keep children safe. Detailed risk assessments helped staff to minimise potential risks and enhanced children's safety. Children were involved in developing their skills and awareness of staying safe as the service was exploring the Care Inspectorate's SIMOA campaign. This supported the children's understanding of risk and keeping themselves and others safe.

Staff implemented infection, prevention, and control routines to minimise the potential spread of infection. The environment was well maintained, and we observed children being supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing throughout the session. This contributed to keeping children safe and healthy.

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.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The acting head teacher and staff were passionate, motivated, and committed and continued to develop the service to ensure positive outcomes for children and families.

The service had experienced a period of change, and this had meant that some aspects of quality assurance and self evaluation had not been consistent. The acting head teacher came into post at the end of last year and had prioritised building relationships with children, their families and staff. Throughout the inspection they demonstrated a commitment to move forward at a pace to support the journey of improvement and we could see that this was a priority. A development plan had been created, and the priorities were outcome focused with realistic targets. Quality assurance systems were now beginning to support improvement. The service required further time to develop and strengthen their quality assurance system. This would help to bring about change and continue to support positive outcomes for all.

The views of children and families were regularly sought and valued. Their views influenced change and improvements in the setting. Most families who completed our MS Forms online survey strongly agreed or agreed that they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service one parent told us "The nursery staff are always very open to parents' ideas and suggestions."

Daily discussions and regular team meetings gave staff the opportunity to come together to reflect and discuss individual children's needs. This meant that children's needs were consistently met.

Management and staff had strong values, and this approach promoted a positive nurturing experience for children and their families.

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children benefited from a passionate and caring staff team. Strong connections were a strength of the service, and they prioritised this. As a result, children and their families experienced a warm, caring and nurturing setting. Genuine relationships had been developed with families and this supported effective communication. As a result, staff knew the children and families very well. All families we spoke to described staff as supportive and caring.

The small staff team were responsive and motivated. They encouraged children to make choices and lead their own play. They supported children to access outdoors, and a variety of activities within the play space. Children were encouraged to move freely between indoors and outdoors. This supported them to feel included, respected and their choices valued.

Staff had clearly defined roles and responsibilities. We identified communication as a key strength. This ensured that children's individual needs were consistently met across their day. Staff demonstrated positive team working. They were respectful and very supportive of each other. This warm, caring, and sensitive approach promoted a happy, loving, and secure environment for all children.

Support strategies were in place for some children. These considered individual needs and were consistent in providing children with continuity of care. This meant that children felt safe, secure, and happy. As a caring staff team nurtured and supported them individually.

Staff were highly responsive to children's interests and quickly made changes to resources to support emerging interests and learning. This positive approach supported children to flourish and thrive at Balmerino nursery.

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

Staff should update and improve accident recording procedures to ensure that information about every accident is effectively recorded. This may include:

- recording of all accidents, regardless if further medical treatment is required or not
- notifying parents of all accidents that happen within the service and asking them to sign the accident record.

This will make sure that care needs are fully met.

This area for improvement was made on 11 March 2019.

Action taken since then

All accidents/incidents are recorded accurately and are shared with families. All accidents/incidents are signed by families. This ensures care needs are fully met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The head teacher and nursery teacher should improve formal monitoring systems to ensure the staff team have the appropriate information, support and learning opportunities to provide the highest possible outcomes for children.

This may include:

- the nursery teacher monitoring the effective use of planned next steps and the impact this has on children making good progress, across the curriculum, at a consistent pace
- having a calendar of monitoring activities, which are carried out throughout the year
- using a system to track the journey of improvement and show impact to ensure high quality learning opportunities, for example a model for improvement - creating a culture of improvement through sharing practice and peer support and challenge
- giving parents and children more opportunities to support improvement through evaluating the range of quality experiences offered by the service.

This is to demonstrate the impact of quality assurance and how evidence is used to improve outcomes for children.

This area for improvement was made on 11 March 2019.

Action taken since then

Quality assurance systems are in place and through effective monitoring activities this is improving outcomes for children and families.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at 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?	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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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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