

# Newtonhill School Nursery Day Care of Children

Newtonhill Primary School  
St. Michael's Road  
Newtonhill  
Stonehaven  
AB39 3XW

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
30 January 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeenshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000029

**Service no:**  
CS2003016331

## About the service

Newtonhill School Nursery is registered to provide care to a maximum of 40 children at the same time, aged between 3 years to primary school entry.

The service is delivered from Newtonhill Primary School which is located in a residential area of Newtonhill, Aberdeenshire. The service is close to local amenities such as shops, parks and a beach. Children are cared for within an open-plan playroom with access to a large outdoor play area. There were up to 31 children present during the inspection.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 and 29 January 2025 between 08:30 and 17:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- received 15 responses to our request for feedback from parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children were settled and happily engaged in play and learning.
- Children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well.
- Children mostly led their own play through a well-balanced mix of activities and play experiences.
- The staff team were very motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to continue to take on training to develop their practice.
- The setting should continue to reflect on the environment both indoors and outside to ensure the children are accessing a very good range of resources to support their play and learning and offer challenge where appropriate.
- The setting provided good 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?	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 different parts of this key question as good and very good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm and nurturing care from staff which meant they were settled, relaxed and confident. When children needed support and comfort, we saw that staff were responsive to their needs. Children enjoyed a comfortable closeness with staff for stories and were comforted with cuddles. Positive attachments had been formed which supported children to feel secure and loved.

Staff knew children well and were able to confidently discuss their interests, likes, dislikes and any support that was in place. Most parents felt they had a strong connection with the staff. One parent said; "Always friendly and happy to chat at drop offs/pickups. Like that I have a key teacher to communicate with. Feel very supported." Another parent said; "Staff are fantastic and give a good hand over of your child when you collect them. They know my child very well and are loving and caring." This promoted a supportive ethos of children's needs being well met.

Personal plans were in place for all children and reference was made to the wellbeing indicators. This contributed to gathering meaningful information, supporting children to receive care and support that was right for them. Care plans were in place for children who required one. These identified strategies to support staff to tailor individual care, which we saw during the inspection. Plans were being reviewed regularly with families. This ensured that staff had access to key information allowing them to consistently offer children care and support tailored to their needs.

Mealtimes had been an improvement focus for the service. The setting had recently taken delivery of new tables which allowed everyone to have lunch together. Consideration had been given to supporting independence and we saw children serve their own food and drinks and scrap their plates after lunch. Children ate food that was well presented, nutritious and took into account their preferences and dietary needs. At the time of our first visit we saw some adults sitting with children, while others were more task focussed. This resulted in some children not always experiencing a relaxed and social mealtime. This was highlighted to management who had taken action and made immediate improvements. We saw that on the second day of our inspection all children were having a lovely, unhurried, social mealtime experience. This supported children to develop social skills such as taking turns, engaging in conversation, experience positive interactions and learning about food and good, healthy eating habits.

Medication was stored safely and securely, easily accessible to staff while being out of the children's reach. Since the last inspection, medication records had been updated to contain relevant information to support staff with safe administration. We found however, that storage was not consistent. We asked that the service ensure their auditing systems take this into account, to ensure medication storage is consistent throughout the setting. This would ensure the safe administration of medication, particularly in an emergency.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through safe sleep spaces being on offer and nurturing nappy changing experiences. We saw staff pick up on children's cues and settle children to sleep when they

were tired. Staff were respectful during nappy changing, taking into account children's privacy and dignity. This contributed to children being nurtured and well cared for.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were very engaged and had fun throughout the inspection. Staff supported children's choice about where they played and were very responsive to children's interests. We asked that the setting consider the timing of group time to support the flow of the day. This would ensure play was not interrupted and children had time to explore their ideas.

Children had opportunities to lead their play and we saw them problem solve and use their imagination. Children enjoyed exploring foam bricks outdoors. Children spent time lifting and moving them. They stacked the bricks problem solving together, ensuring they balanced while trying different positions. Children built them high and knocked them down. They showed resilience and enjoyed the cause and effect of this. Children used the available resources well to support their curiosities.

Staff interactions were very encouraging and patient. During discussions with children, staff adapted their language and pace, which supported children's understanding and language. Staff were skilled in extending children's learning. For example, several children were interested in using the playdough in their play. Staff quickly noticed that children were finding it difficult to carry out their ideas as there was not enough playdough. Staff asked children what they could do and together, they made more playdough. This took place in the moment with children being involved in the process. This contributed to children being able to extend their learning opportunities further.

Opportunities to explore language, literacy and numeracy were evident within play experiences and the environment. Children enjoyed stories and singing spontaneously and in groups. Adults developed numeracy skills during play for example, when building with the blocks, children said 'I want to build this tall' stretching their arms up. While building staff supported this saying 'you're building it high, it's nearly as tall as you'. This led to making size comparisons between different dinosaurs. Children showed a clear interest in letters and numbers and we discussed a variety of methods which staff could adopt to develop this further. For example, ensuring print was at the children's level, directing and modelling the purpose of writing to children during play, for example creating shopping lists in the house corner and making signs for their structures in the construction area. This would contribute to developing children's literacy and numeracy skills and make their experiences meaningful throughout the setting.

Staff welcomed being part of the planning process, including the opportunity to take responsibility for areas in the setting. Planning aimed to promote a balance of spontaneous learning experiences and intentional learning for the children. Group time was used to focus on spontaneous learning and floor books were being used to gather children's ideas and evidence learning. We discussed the importance of ensuring children's interests were being explored alongside intentional planning. This would lead to deeper levels of thinking, learning and involvement.

Observations were used to share information, photos and capture children's learning. This also provided an opportunity for families to get an insight into their child's play and learning in detail. Observations we sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress, allowing them to plan the next steps in individual children's learning journey. The setting was tracking children's learning. Developing tracking and monitoring was an improvement focus, which would further support staff to tailor support and challenge, and identify gaps in learning.

Children had benefited from connections with the school and wider community. They accessed the wooded

area within the playground and enjoyed walks to the local shops and library. People from the community such as police had visited the nursery. The setting had plans to further extend experiences within the community now that safe access to the local beach had been re-instated. This contributed to children's sense of belonging and supported them to have new opportunities and learn about work roles out with the setting.

## How good is our setting?

### 4 - Good

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

#### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a welcoming environment with good ventilation and natural light. The layout of the room provided all children with plenty of space to play and learn, which supported children's health. There was a cloakroom for children to store their belongings where parents were welcomed into at the beginning and end of the day. Walls displayed children's artwork including drawings of who lived in their homes. This gave children a sense of ownership and belonging.

A variety of resources were accessible across different spaces which took into account children's interests. Children were able to independently select and transport resources around the room to extend their learning and choose where they played. This meant that children were engaged in their play. We discussed further developing areas to ensure there was a range of resources. Taking account of all children's stages of development would support stimulation and challenge throughout their play.

There were some opportunities for children to express themselves and be creative in their play. A child told us; "We make up our own shows." We discussed the benefits of further developing the environment by offering more open ended and sensory resources to meet children's individual needs. This would further promote valuable opportunities for children to be creative and meaningfully engaged in play.

Children were able to freely choose where they played both indoors and outdoors throughout most of the day. Most parents told us that their children have the opportunity to play outdoors. While outside, children were able to take part in physical and active play experiences such as climbing, building and exploring with messy play. Children told us; "I like the water tray outside" and "we go outside every day and I like it." This showed that they were confident and relaxed in the setting.

Children's safety was promoted through risk assessments which highlighted potential hazards and control measures. Where suitable, children were involved in reviewing these. Throughout the inspection, staff interactions allowed children to consider risks within their play. For example, when a child tripped outside, staff discussed with children about being safe and they worked together to tidy resources making the area safe. This meant that children were actively given opportunities to assess and manage risk as well as promote their safety.

Children's health was supported through infection prevention and control measures. For example, routines were embedded where children would regularly wash their hands, such as before and after eating. On the first day of inspection, we observed children using the bathroom at busier times of the day where staff were not readily available to support them. Following discussion with the manager, we observed children being well supported by adults in line with their policy. This meant that children were kept safe and well.

Children and their family's privacy was protected by the safe and secure storage of personal information, in accordance with guidance and legislation.

### How good is our leadership?

**4 - Good**

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

#### 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service's vision, values and aims were shared visibly with parents. These included, 'For all to value play and develop confidence, curiosity, enquiry and creativity within our community'. These were reflected in practice and supported staff and families to understand what to expect from the service. Management advised vision, values and aims were going to be reviewed to ensure that the views of staff, children and families were reflected and included.

The leadership team were committed to involving all staff in initiating change within the service. Team meetings were held regularly where all staff had the opportunity to share and take part in relevant discussions. Staff spoke positively about support from the leadership team, in line with current improvement priorities such as planning and floor books. This meant that staff felt valued and were supported to be confident in their role.

Most parents told us they felt involved in the development of the setting, however, some parents mentioned that they were not being welcomed at drop off and pick up times which was having an impact on their involvement. Parental feedback had recently been received through a questionnaire following a family Bookbug session. This highlighted that families welcomed the invitation to spend time in the setting. We discussed the importance of offering regular opportunities to welcome families into the nursery. This would promote family involvement and show them that their views were being listened to and valued. Developing this would meaningfully involve all stakeholders in the life of the setting, as well as promoting family learning opportunities.

Staff were committed and passionate about reflection and self-evaluation, which had been a focus of the service since the last inspection. Staff spoke confidently about their involvement in self-evaluation and actions that had been implemented as a result. Using best practice guidance had supported the team to improve outcomes for children. A floor book had been developed which clearly detailed the service's improvement journey reflecting on the priorities. The setting should continue to include staff, children and families inputs, which will help sustain the development of the setting.

Children benefitted from clear and familiar routines which were embedded into practice. Key policies and procedures were in place and reviewed regularly, allowing staff to be familiar and confident within their roles. This supported children and families to receive high quality care and support, specific and relevant to them.

### How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

## 4.3 Staff Deployment

Staff were very kind and caring in their approach with children. Parents told us they were happy with the care and support their child received and described staff as; "friendly," "helpful," and "approachable." Children had developed positive relationships and secure attachments to staff, meaning they were comfortable and confident in the setting. Staff knew children very well and showed a genuine interest in the children's experiences. As a result, children felt secure, valued and respected.

Staff were very enthusiastic about their roles and in providing positive outcomes for children. Staff valued the mix of skills across the team and were supporting each other to develop these skills further, in different areas of their practice. Parents told us that there was always enough staff to meet the children's needs. A parent told us, "They communicate well as a team... [they] are happy to learn and support our children's needs." This meant that staff felt confident within the team and demonstrated a collaborative approach to supporting children.

Children experienced high quality learning opportunities and were supported by staff who were dedicated to achieve qualifications and further learning within their role. They were confident in discussing the impact of recent training. For example, sharing with us the impact English as an additional language training had in supporting them to meet children's needs. Implementing changes such as adding books in various languages and including celebrations in different cultures, meant that children and their families were included in the life of the setting.

Staff communicated and worked very well together to keep children safe and secure. Children's safety was supported when moving between indoors and outdoors as staff placed themselves where children chose to play. This meant children were well supervised and kept safe.

Children were cared for by staff who had a very good knowledge of their roles and responsibilities. Management provided role modelling and direction to support staff to develop confidence. A supportive induction process for new members of staff helped them to become more competent and develop effective ways of working within their new setting. This contributed to positive outcomes for children.

## 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 ensure the quality of children's experiences are improved, the provider should implement robust quality assurance processes, including self-evaluation, covering key areas of practice.

This should include, but not be limited to:

- a) regular, effective, and focused monitoring is carried out across the setting
- b) robust and effective quality assurance processes are implemented with involvement from the staff team



c) clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service

d) robust evaluations and audits are developed and implemented, with any actions addressed promptly.

This is to ensure that management and leadership 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).

**This area for improvement was made on 10 January 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

Staff were committed and passionate about reflection and self-evaluation, which had been a focus of the service since the last inspection. Staff spoke confidently about their involvement in self-evaluation and actions that had been implemented as a result.

The leadership team were committed to involving all staff in initiating change within the service. Team meetings were held regularly and leaders were monitoring staff practice. Staff spoke positively about support from the leadership team.

The nursery was using a quality assurance calendar to effectively support the 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.

**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	5 - Very 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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