

Pitcoudie Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

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Glenrothes
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 February 2025

Service provided by:
Fife Council

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CS2003017105

About the service

Pitcoudie Primary School Nursery is a day care of children service in Glenrothes, provided by Fife Council. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 70 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The nursery is accommodated in an adjoining building to the primary school. It has an office and reception area, additional multi-use room and two playrooms each with kitchen, toilet and cloakroom areas. There are two enclosed outdoor areas, one of which is directly accessed from the playrooms. Children have opportunities for outings within the community to local shops, parks and woodland.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 February 2025 between 8.30 and 16.30 and on 26 February 2025 between 8.30 and 16.45.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and information gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with 70 children and six of their family members
- received 17 responses to our online questionnaire
- spoke with 12 staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences and how they were supported with their care, play and routines
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Children experienced responsive and respectful interactions with staff who were consistently kind and caring towards them.
- There were some opportunities for creative and risky play and these could be further developed to offer children rich, stimulating and fun learning opportunities.
- The setting had established good links with the community by exploring the local woods, visiting the local care home and going for regular trips to the library and the shops.
- The leadership team had a strong vision for the nursery and high aspirations for the children and families.
- We found that the general environment, walls, equipment and furniture showed signs of being worn out and would benefit from further refurbishment and maintenance.

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?	4 - 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 responsive and respectful interactions with staff who were consistently kind and caring towards them. Practitioners were skilled at identifying children's individual needs and implemented effective strategies tailored to those needs. As a result, children received care and support, which made them feel safe and valued.

Staff supported children with their personal care in a sensitive manner, ensuring their dignity and privacy. This enabled children to develop a positive sense of self while becoming gradually more independent in looking after their personal care.

The whole staff and leadership team valued the importance of a quality mealtime. They had reflected on how to use the space appropriately to improve the children's experience further. Most children enjoyed snack and lunch times in a calm and relaxing atmosphere with some opportunities to self-serve. The setting had considered ways to extend these so that all children could have a relaxed experience. To this effect, we signposted the leadership team to the Care Inspectorate practice note 'Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC)'.

Staff understood the importance of offering children some spaces in which they could rest and relax during a busy day. As a result, children could access sensory tents and cosy corners. We discussed with the staff team the benefit of reviewing the environment further to identify more spaces that could serve this purpose.

Personal plans were in place and staff regularly reviewed them with families, discussing progress and agreeing on next steps. This meant that staff gathered effective information regarding each child's needs, preferences and interests and identified the right support in collaboration with other agencies. Staff had developed strong links with other professionals to effectively support children and their families. Children benefitted from weekly sessions with the speech and language therapists and regular visits from the educational psychologist and the nursery nurse. These supported the children's learning and development at a pace that was right for them.

A parent told us: 'I think staff are all great. They are so welcoming, kind and professional. They have been a great support for my family'. Another echoed: 'My child is new to the nursery, but a careful care plan has been set up and I am involved with all the steps'.

The medication system followed best practice guidance. Thorough monitoring and quality assurance in this area of practice ensured children's safety.

Effective monitoring of accidents and incidents identified significant patterns of occurrence and areas in the environment. We encouraged the leadership team to reflect on what action points they could develop from the data gathered through the audits.

Both the leadership team and staff demonstrated in-depth awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities and knew what protocol to follow if a child protection concern arose. As a result, children's safety and wellbeing was promoted.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Staff used a responsive approach to planning to support children's interests. They recognised the need for some planned activities to offer children a balance of experiences throughout the session. Children were encouraged to take part in planning through the learning walls and by sharing their current interests and ideas. We discussed the opportunity to develop staff awareness of schematic play to support children in exploring patterns of play.

There were some opportunities for creative and risky play and these could be further developed to offer children rich, stimulating and fun learning opportunities. The core provision in the setting offered some choice and independence which enabled children to lead their learning. These included being engrossed in creating artifacts with loose parts outdoors, experimenting with mixing paint, building objects with wooden blocks and role playing as shop keepers and customers indoors. We encouraged staff to review the provocations they offered with a focus on children being able to test their ideas and develop their own play.

Staff understood the importance of weaving language, literacy and numeracy concepts naturally into play. As a result, most children made good progress in these areas while enjoying writing birthday cards and invites, counting objects in the shop corner, and singing nursery rhymes. We discussed the need to develop staff confidence in deepening these learning opportunities and involve children in planning these activities. Staff used creative ideas, song props and puppets to support language development and as a result children engaged enthusiastically in these activities.

Staff used observations to record some significant learning for each child, however we identified some gaps in the frequency and consistency of the observations. Clear next steps in children's learning were not always present and this could have an impact on effectively tracking children's progress in learning. Staff agreed that this was an aspect they needed to further develop with the support of the nursery teacher. Children would also benefit from more opportunities to lead their play and learning through high quality experiences and a rich and engaging provision that offers breadth and challenge. Some practitioners shaped the interactions with children to extend their critical thinking and deepen their learning. We discussed with the leadership team the need to fully embed this practice in all interactions with children to sustain and extend their engagement. We also discussed the need to strengthen the approach to planning for children's learning and to tracking their progress. This would ensure children's experiences are meaningful and that children's learning is effectively reviewed and appropriately supported and extended (see area for improvement 1).

The setting had established good links with the community by exploring the local woods, visiting the local care home and going for regular trips to the library and the shops depending on the children's current interests. As a result, children developed a connection with their local environment.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to achieve their potential, the service should improve the approach and skills of staff in relation to planning for children's learning and tracking and monitoring their progress. Staff should be supported to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

How good is our setting?

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 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Overall, children benefitted from two spacious rooms which offered a range of areas and activities to support their interests and development. Staff were in the process of carrying out an audit of the environment, reviewing the layout of each room and the resources needed in each area.

Following a recent incident, the leadership team had put in place temporary measures to minimise any further risks and was working towards an action plan to improve the playroom layout. The leadership team was considering reconfiguring the two rooms to ensure children could be effectively supervised at all times. This also involved assessing the feasibility and the safety of the free flow experience between the two rooms and the outdoor area.

We found that the general environment, walls, equipment and furniture showed signs of being worn out and would benefit from further refurbishment and maintenance. Parents also told us: 'Some of the furniture and resources are dated and could do with some improvement and upgrade'. This would improve children's experiences, promoting their health and safety and send a strong message that they matter.

Core resources such as sand, water and play dough were on offer in both rooms. Spaces offered some opportunities to be creative with loose parts, art and imaginative play. We discussed with staff the importance of having attention to detail to make sure each area is inviting and fun and that the resources spark curiosity and interest. The outdoor area was safe and secure, but would benefit from care and attention to ensure it offered children a rich and engaging space where they could lead their play and interests. We asked staff to consider reviewing it in consultation with children and their families to ensure it reflects children's interests and stages of development. This would contribute to stimulate their curiosity further.

Staff promoted handwashing at key times throughout the day both indoors and when out in the forest. To ensure the effective cleaning of all areas, including toilets, staff would benefit from carrying out regular checks of toilets and surfaces, maintaining high levels of cleanliness and removing any clutter accordingly. This would ensure that children played in spaces that were well maintained.

Children were involved in learning about the Care Inspectorate SIMOA (Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) campaign and discussed how they kept themselves safe in the nursery. Staff told us they planned to extend this by offering children the opportunity to take home SIMOA the elephant to raise awareness of the physical risks around them and develop emotional security. We suggested using SIMOA on trips and outings to develop the children's ability to assess risks and keep safe further.

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 leadership team had a strong vision for the nursery and high aspirations for the children and families. Staff had been reviewing the core values such as 'responsibility' and 'respect' in consultation with the children. As a result, children showed their understanding of the values in practice by being kind to each other while playing. This promoted a strong sense of belonging to the setting.

We suggested involving the parents in the review process too, so that the values truly reflect the sense of community the leadership team had been developing.

Children and parents' views had been taken into account to develop activities and initiatives that met their needs. This can now inform the future direction of the improvement journey.

Staff understood the importance of creating positive relationships with families and offered several opportunities for parents to be involved in the development of the service such as coffee mornings, bookbug sessions, play and stay and PEEP (Parents Early Education Partnership) sessions.

The leadership team had good systems in place to identify the main priorities for the improvement plan such as numeracy and play pedagogy. The drive to promote a culture of support and collaboration and an ethos of collective responsibility among the staff team was clear. Staff showed their commitment to improve children's outcomes in their daily practice. We discussed with the leadership team the need to embed the changes and implement the new initiatives they identified at a pace that was right for the staff. This would support them in feeling confident and take a more proactive approach to practice. This would also ensure progress that is sustainable and measurable and that could positively impact on children's experiences.

Staff told us they felt valued and supported by the leadership team: "I feel my wellbeing needs are supported by management". Another echoed: 'management are very understanding and empathetic'.

Staff had been offered valuable opportunities to look outwards and learn from visiting other settings and were also encouraged to share their strengths and knowledge with the rest of the team and the wider learning community.

How good is our staff team?**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 4.3: Staff deployment

There was a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience among the staff team. Staff spoke respectfully to each other, sharing relevant information and ensuring the transitions for children were tailored to meet children's individual needs. They also understood the importance of communicating clearly and effectively with parents. As a result, staff and families worked in partnership to ensure the transition from home to nursery was at a pace that was right for the child.

There was a mutual respect among staff. Staff were all very committed to do their best to support children and that showed a high level of collaboration and teamwork.

A good rota was in place, which meant staff breaks were managed well, ensuring minimal disruption to children's activities and routines.

The leadership team had identified the need to have a dedicated space for staff to rest and recharge during their break. This promoted the wellbeing of staff.

The leadership team was aware that staff absences could impact on the rest of the team. Where possible, additional staff had been deployed to meet children's needs. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and nursery teacher were also present in the playrooms, offering support to staff and role modelling interactions with children.

Staff ratio needed to be considered more carefully when staff engaged in activities that required a high level of supervision such as going into the woods. We encouraged staff to recognise what was feasible in small groups and when additional adults were needed to support children's needs, wishes and choices.

Through individual support and team meetings, staff had identified clear leadership roles such as developing the outdoors environment, sensory boxes, family learning and literacy and numeracy. These roles were beginning to have a positive impact on the relationships with families as well as children's experiences and play opportunities both in the setting and at home.

Both the staff and leadership team had identified mentoring and induction as aspects that needed reviewing and were in the process of strengthening the induction protocol using the 'Early learning and childcare national induction resource'.

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 improve the experience of children and families some refurbishment of the premises should be undertaken.

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

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22).

This area for improvement was made on 30 August 2022.

Action taken since then

While efforts had been made to improve the physical conditions of the environment following the previous inspection, we found that there was further refurbishment and maintenance needed in terms of walls, furniture and equipment.

This area for improvement has not been met and will remain in place. This is to make sure children play and learn in an environment that is fit for purpose, safe, homely and comfortable and that it gives a strong message that children matter.

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?	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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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