

Rothiemay Playgroup Day Care of Children

Rothiemay Primary School
Rothiemay
Huntly
AB54 7LT

Telephone: 01466 711 032

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 April 2025

Service provided by:
Rothiemay & District Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003001929

Service no:
CS2003008923

About the service

Rothiemay Playgroup is a day care of children service situated to the rear of Rothiemay Primary School in Moray. The service is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of 12 children aged from three years to not yet attending primary school. On the day of the inspection there were seven children attending the service. The service is close to the village centre, a park and other amenities. Children are cared for in a playroom. They have shared access to toilets within the school and have an enclosed, outdoor area within the school grounds.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 16 April 2025, between 09:15 and 16:30. 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:

- Observed practice and children's experiences
- Spoke with the staff and manager at the service
- Spoke with children during their play
- Gathered feedback about the service from families
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were supported with kindness, care, and nurturing approaches that supported their overall wellbeing.
- Staff knew children and their families well, which meant that children received the care and support they needed at the right time.
- Children were able to lead their own play indoors and outdoors, and were engaged and happy learners.
- Self-evaluation and effective quality assurance systems were in place to support continuous improvement.
- The staff team worked well together and the culture was one of support and respect.

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?	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?

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 were nurtured and very well supported throughout their daily experiences by kind, caring staff. Staff responded quickly to children's cues, spoke with them in gentle tones and offered comfort when needed. They knew the children well and supported their rights by listening to their views and supporting their preferences. Children benefited from interactions that promoted their independence. For example, when getting ready to go outdoors, staff encouraged children to dress themselves. Parents told us that they agreed that their children were very well cared for. One parent said, "This service has helped my child to gain so much needed confidence and life skills which will greatly help in primary school setting." Another parent told us, "They really like the staff and feel safe and have fun there."

Mealtimes were sociable, calm and relaxed, which meant they were positive experiences for the children. Children were very well supported to be involved in the preparation of food. For example, at snack time, a member of staff supported a child to cut vegetables and grate cheese, which enabled them to build skills and independence. Children gained further confidence as they served themselves at each table using tongs and helped to clear away at the end of mealtimes. Staff sat with the children and ate alongside them. This helped add to the homely feel and allowed staff to supervise children closely whilst chatting with the children. This helped to keep children safe as staff could respond immediately should an emergency, such as choking, occur. Water was available throughout the day so that children could stay well hydrated.

Children's wellbeing was benefiting from the effective use of personal planning. Information was gathered prior to children starting and systems were in place to ensure that the information was regularly reviewed by parents. The manager planned to introduce updated plans for all children in the new term, based on the wellbeing indicators. We agreed that this had the potential to support families to share a wider range of information and therefore maintain even greater continuity between home and nursery. Most parents agreed that they were involved in reviewing their child's plan and agreeing next steps for their development. One parent told us, "Always being told I'm more than welcome to go in and discuss any matters regarding my child at a time that is convenient for me."

Appropriate systems for the safe storage and administration of medications were in place. We advised some minor changes to administration of medication documents, to ensure compliance with current best practice guidance. The manager responded to this immediately and changes were made during the course of the inspection.

Staff knew the children and their families well and had built up strong relationships with them. Where additional support needs had been identified, measures were in place to liaise with families and share information effectively both ways. Staff worked proactively with families to identify appropriate next steps and strategies. For example, strategies were in place to give enhanced support to some of the children who were due to move into school after the summer. This helped to ensure that all children were supported to reach their potential.

Quality indicator: 1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun as they explored the resources and spaces indoors and outdoors. Their right to play was being upheld as they were free to choose where, what and how to play within each space. This meant that they could follow their interests and lead their own play while developing their skills. For example, children showed a keen interest in role play and were very well supported to develop this indoors and outdoors over an extended time. Outside, one group were running a building site in the sand tray, while others were making mud pies. Inside, children took advantage of shirts and hats from the dressing up box as they took on family roles.

Children experienced a balance of planned and spontaneous play opportunities in response to their interests. For example, their interest in minibeads was very well supported as they studied caterpillars under a microscope in the playroom. Outside in the garden they were supported to gently care for some snails they had found. Children's play and learning was enhanced through support by skilled staff. They knew when to support with words or actions, and when to stand back and observe. Parents told us that they felt that child-led learning and outdoor learning were strengths of the service. One parent said that their child was, "Never forced to do anything and can have quiet time when needed." Another parent told us, "Outdoor play is always encouraged." We agreed that children were meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning and were supported to develop skills for life.

Play experiences offered children opportunities to develop skills in language, literacy and numeracy. For example, children took turns at selecting the story of the week. Alongside this they were supported to choose other books for the book corner. All children were then involved in developing activities linked to the book and this promoted children's voice and creativity. There were opportunities for mark making, songs and rhymes which further supported literacy skills. Staff were confident in supporting opportunities for numeracy learning, for example counting, chats about bigger, smaller, taller, shape and pattern. The manager and staff had undertaken training on numeracy and as a result had added a range of resources to the playroom. They were planning to provide further resources outdoors to provide similar experiences outside. We agreed that this was a positive next step which had the potential to further promote children's learning.

Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. Staff showed a good understanding of child development, and skilfully used this to support quality play and learning experiences. As a result, children were progressing well and were happy and confident. Children were eager to share their learning journals which were kept on a low shelf for them to access them at any time. Observations of children's learning and next steps had been developed alongside the children. Staff had been working together to refine their observations and link them to progress in learning. A floor book was used to gather evidence of learning and children's ideas and reflections. This was very effectively used by staff to make links with learning outcomes and plan individual next steps.

Learning was shared with families in meaningful ways. The use of QR codes within learning journeys gave parents an opportunity to view videos of their child's play and learning. Parents told us that they had some opportunities to view their child's learning journal. One parent said, "We receive our child's folder home every term to see how they are getting on and what can do at home to help with this." Parents were encouraged to comment in their child's learning journal. We suggested that the service build on this good practice to offer more frequent opportunities to share learning with families. This had the potential to further enhance outcomes for children.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced by strong connections to their own and wider communities. For example, parents were invited in for regular stay and play sessions and events such as a

Mothers' Day tea, for which the children had done some baking. A parent had been coming in to lead Highland dancing sessions and the children regularly accessed the local park and woodlands, during which parents were invited to join in. This enhanced children's opportunities for play and learning.

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.

The playroom was cosy, comfortable and welcoming. There was plenty natural light and ventilation, and the room was laid out well to provide interesting spaces to play in. It was furnished with neutral materials and wall displays were used to showcase children's work. There were lots of real-life resources and these were easily accessible to the children. There were opportunities for creative play, role play and construction, all of which were popular with the children. Staff told us that they monitored where the children most enjoyed playing and made changes according to their interests. As a result, children were busy, engaged and happy.

Children benefited from regular opportunities to play outside. Within the enclosed playgroup garden children had space to run and climb, which supported them to develop their motor skills. The garden area was well resourced with a variety of activities and spaces to explore. Children had fun playing in the sand pit and at the mud kitchen, which was well stocked with real utensils and pots. Free-flow play between indoors and the garden was not possible due to the layout of the service, but staff told us that at times, part of the playground adjacent to the playgroup door was secured to offer some free-flow opportunities. The provision of an outdoor toilet within the playgroup garden also enabled children to be based outdoors for extended periods during warmer months. This meant that staffing ratios could be maintained wherever the group were playing and this helped to keep children safe.

Overall, children's health was promoted by staff's understanding of infection prevention and control. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times, although at times staff were not close by to effectively supervise. We discussed this with the manager who agreed to review where staff were deployed at these times. We also advised that warm water should be provided for handwashing in the outdoors toilet shed and the manager agreed to put this in place. Nappy changing facilities were located within the school and were not in use by the playgroup at the time of the inspection. We discussed with the manager, the need to ensure that facilities comply with current best practice guidance should they be required by children in the service in the future. To support the service to plan for the necessary changes we made an area for improvement and signposted the manager to best practice guidance documents (**see area for improvement 1**).

Children benefited from a setting that was well maintained, with secure boundaries and doors which helped to keep them safe. Children were supported to make checks of the environment and were encouraged to talk about risks. This supported them to make positive choices in order to keep safe. Risk assessments had been completed to help identify any hazards, both indoors and out.

Children's privacy was protected by the safe storage of their information, including electronic and paper files.

Areas for improvement

1. To keep children healthy and safe, the provider should develop a plan detailing how they will ensure that children have access to appropriate toilet and nappy changing facilities.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Care Inspectorate guidance document, 'Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders).'

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

'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27).

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.

Children benefited from a staff team that was committed to continuous improvement and positive outcomes for all children. The care, support and learning experiences provided and the positive approach to continuous improvement contributed to the positive ethos of the setting. Planning for improvement reflected current priorities in the setting and staff were meaningfully and actively involved in the self-evaluation process. Regular meetings enabled the staff team to reflect on the service and work together on improvements. Staff told us that they felt empowered to suggest changes and that their ideas were heard and valued. They confidently spoke about how the improvements they had made were benefitting the children in their care. For example, they regularly reviewed the layout of the indoors environment based on where children were most engaged. This enabled them to support children to lead their learning.

Staff told us about how they supported children to be involved in many of the service improvements. For example, they had been involved in reviewing the mealtime experience. Floor books were used to capture children's views and as a result, the service had introduced "Try It Tuesday" as a way of widening the range of snacks on offer to children. This demonstrated the children had ownership of some of the changes and improvements affecting them.

The manager and staff team had developed effective ways of gathering the views of families, and these had informed several improvements to the service. They had asked parents for their views on coming into the playgroup to review their child's development and for themed events. Some families had also been involved in service improvements through their participation in the playgroup committee. For example, the committee had raised funds to update resources, and plans were underway to fundraise for an extension of the outdoor space. Some parents told us that they did not feel meaningfully involved in developing the service. We shared this with the service and advised them to continue to develop ways of ensuring that all families could be involved.

A quality assurance calendar was in place and this was supporting the manager to ensure consistent approaches and identify improved outcomes for children. Policy and procedure reviews had had been informed by latest good practice guidance. Some audits were regularly conducted such as audits of accident reports. The manager was keen to further develop monitoring systems to ensure consistency and we agreed that this would further promote positive outcomes for children.

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.

Children were supported by kind and caring staff who got down to their level and followed their cues. Staff had got to know the children well and as a result were responsive and mindful of their needs and preferences. Their interactions were skilled, offering support when needed. They had time to speak and listen to children and were respectful of their views and experiences. This helped children to feel valued and loved.

Children benefited from effective staffing levels across the day. An additional staff member in the middle of the day ensured that all children were well supported at lunchtimes and gave other staff opportunities for scheduled breaks. Staff were flexible and worked well as a team, swapping in and out of roles as necessary.

Children benefited from staff who had a wide range of knowledge and experiences. Some of the staff were undertaking further formal qualifications in childcare and spoke positively about the changes they were making to their practice as a result. Staff had undertaken a range of training provided by the local authority to extend their skills and knowledge. For example, they had had support in numeracy from the local authority early years team and had introduced new resources to the playroom and outdoors area as a result. We advised the manager to continue to develop ways to evaluate the impact of staff training on outcomes for children.

Staff who were new to the service were supported through a flexible induction process and they told us that they felt supported by the manager and their staff peers. They had been recruited in line with safe recruitment practices, which helped to support the welfare and safety of children. The manager met staff regularly for support and supervision and gave them protected time to discuss challenges and to identify future training needs. Staff told us that they felt well supported as a result. The manager had developed a network of peer managers since taking up the manager role. However, there was no formal support and supervision system in place for the manager of the service. We advised the provider to ensure that suitable arrangements were made to ensure that the manager had regular support and opportunities to progress her own professional development.

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?	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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