

Portessie Playgroup Day Care of Children

Portessie Primary School
School Road
Portessie
Buckie
AB56 1TN

Telephone: 01542 834 091

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
24 April 2025

Service provided by:
Portessie Playgroup an Association

Service provider number:
SP2003001935

Service no:
CS2003008932

About the service

Portessie Playgroup is a day care of children service. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 26 children not yet attending primary school, of whom no more than 15 are aged 2 years to under 3 years. There were 23 children present at the inspection. The service is provided by Portessie Playgroup an Association.

The service operates from a room located within Portessie Primary School, it has it's own kitchen and adjoining toilet facilities. A fenced outdoor play area is located within the school grounds a short distance from the play room.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 22 April 2025, between 8:30 and 15:15 and 23 April 2025 9:00 to 13:00. 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 four children using the service and three parents
- received 14 questionnaires from families and four from staff
- spoke with three staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children's overall wellbeing was being supported by the attentive and caring approaches of the staff.
- Children's individual needs were being well supported as staff worked well together and communicated with families.
- Children were having fun and were meaningfully involved in initiating their own play and learning.
- Children benefited from being cared for in a very comfortable and welcoming setting that was well furnished.
- Clear leadership was enabling staff to have confidence in their capacity to support children and families.
- Children experienced a warm and respectful atmosphere. Staff interactions were caring and kind that was conducive to children's wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem.

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

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|--|---------------|
| How good is our care, play and learning? | 4 - 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?

4 - Good

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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children's overall wellbeing was being supported by the attentive and caring approaches of the staff. Staff provided a calm and reflective approach with the children that helped them to manage their emotions, promoted friendships and positive relationships. Children appeared assured, happy and confident.

Children were able to rest and relax, as an inviting cosy space. It was well used by the children, they cuddled up on the sofa with staff to read together and have quiet conversations. A child took a few moments to snuggle into cushions and a blanket whilst listening to a story. Sleep mats were also available to promote good and safe habits around sleep.

Children's individual needs were being well supported as staff worked well together and communicated with families. They had been involved in the creation and review of their child's personal plan such as health, interests and likes/dislikes. It helped to ensure that information was shared and that there was continuity of care. Identified strategies also helped to support children's development. We suggested that having key information readily accessible to staff, would help to ensure that a consistent approach was maintained. Families had been involved in the creation of their child's personal plan such as health, interests and likes/dislikes that also promoted information sharing.

Chronologies also helped to identify children's needs and directed actions to support them well. Overall they were being used appropriately, there were some gaps in recording and following up information to ensure needs were met and we discussed this with the manager.

All parents considered that they were fully involved in my child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan and had the opportunity to discuss their child's play and learning. Comments included:
'there are personal meetings every term'
'the staff are very reassuring and listen to any questions we have and answer them honestly'
'they ask me to come in regularly to discuss this with them'.

Children enjoyed eating together in an unhurried atmosphere that helped to ensure it was a positive social experience. Staff sat with the children during their meal which enabled them to respond quickly to their needs. Children were involved in pouring their own drinks and serving themselves to the side dishes. At snack time staff had a tendency to be more task orientated and this meant they were less able to be observant of the children. The manager explained that they were aiming to introduce a family service model, where children would be able to serve their own foods. We suggested that continued monitoring and evaluation of the arrangement would help to ensure that snacks and meals fully involved children and an opportunity to promote close attachment.

Ref: Practice note Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC) - [hub.careinspectorate.com](https://www.careinspectorate.com/hub/careinspectorate.com).

A set rolling menu provided healthy food options and complied with children's dietary needs and/or food

preferences. Children were able to remain hydrated throughout the day as their own water bottles were readily available within the playroom and during outdoor play.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun and were meaningfully involved in initiating their own play and learning. The generally calm atmosphere also helped children to be motivated in their play. Children were called to gather time shortly after their arrival although they were engaged in play activities. We suggested the manager and staff consider the routine's of the day and the benefits of adult directed approaches that interrupted children's play.

Resources and materials were readily accessible and visible within the play area. Children played well together and were building, cars and robots with a variety of construction blocks, working out what they needed to do and how. Children used a variety of craft materials including pencils/pens to create pictures and making a variety of objects with playdough, using cutters and rolling pins. A child told us that they had drawn a picture of their mummy and their dogs, they had used glue to stick the feathers and ribbon on. Another child asked us to look at their learning folder, named a variety of shapes and talked about the pictures they had drawn. Children enjoyed doing jigsaws and playing a variety of card and board games with each other and with staff. At the interactive board children and staff joined in with numeracy games, counting and recognising numbers.

Children clearly enjoyed playing outdoors in the afternoon. They were encouraged to change into outdoor clothing that supported them to problem solve and develop fine and gross motor skills (muscle movement). They were able to benefit from being out in the fresh air and to participate in active and creative play. Activities included water play, creating an obstacle course, they explored bugs, and made patterns and shapes with chalk. A child was having fun rolling a variety of objects down a cardboard tube into a box at the bottom. Children read stories and sang songs and made music with a variety of percussion instruments. We suggested that children would benefit from wider opportunities to play outside and discussed this with the manager and staff.

Continuing to offer versatility of resources to the children would help to ensure that they were led to find ways to see how things worked, to explore their emerging interests and provide challenge. We discussed this with particular reference to the role play area and sensory play that encouraged rich play experiences.

Staff were skilled in recognising children's interests and the level of support they needed. Such as, some children needed quiet one to one time and others needed social/group activities. Staff identified opportunities to develop language, literacy and numeracy during their attentive interactions with the children. To help ensure that a consistent approach was maintained, we advised the manager to embed the programme of observing and monitoring staff practice that also helped to identify any training needs.

Play and learning was enhanced through connections with the wider community. Children used the library and gym located within the school. Children visited the local shop and went on nature walks. Visitors to the service had included the police and ambulance personnel.

Parents agreed that their child could be involved in a range of opportunities and fun experiences to meet their individual needs and support their development. Comments included:

'their speech has come on really well, they can count and had good social skills'

'our child has gained so much confidence and built a trusting relationship with the playgroup staff'

'the staff are so helpful towards my son and take in consideration his interests and try to tailor things around that interests to help them enjoy the experience more'.

Staff were working well together as a team to establish a meaningful method of observation and assessment of children's learning. The service was working towards a balance of responsive and planned quality experiences that helped to ensure that children developed a broad range of lifelong learning skills.

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children benefited from being cared for in a very comfortable and welcoming setting that was well furnished. Neutral decoration and windows provided ventilation and natural light, that helped to promote psychological wellbeing. It helped to give the message to children that they mattered.

The premises were clean and well maintained. Staff were clear about the procedures for cleaning within the service, it helped to ensure a quality and safe environment for themselves and children in their care.

The addition of toilet and nappy changing facilities that adjoined the playroom had been beneficial to children's independence and the ease of staff to supervise where needed.

Staff and children followed good hand hygiene practices to help prevent the spread of infection. Children washed their hands well often without any prompts, such as following outdoor play and before and after eating. Staff had suitable personal protective equipment such as disposable gloves and aprons, that helped to support the wellbeing of children. Staff had completed food hygiene training that supported food safety.

Staff worked well together to remove risks to the children within the setting both indoors and outdoors and across the day. Practice helped to ensure that children were accounted for at all times and that the environment was safe and secure. It helped to ensure that activities were not compromised and that children were supported to enjoy fun play experiences. Children had opportunities to manage risk and learn about their own limits, that also helped them to build resilience. Staff used SIMOA (Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) good practice guidance, to help implement safe practice. It was anticipated that the introduction of a tangible link for the children through a soft toy elephant named SIMOA, would enable children and families to share and talk about their own safety both within the setting and their home environment.

The environments were well structured to take account of all children's stages of development and learning. The creation of a designated and fenced outdoor play area within the grounds of the school had enabled children to benefit from regular active and exploratory play outdoors.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

The vision for the setting had been reviewed and included the views of those involved in the setting and it was clearly displayed. It helped everyone to know what was important to the setting to meet the needs of children and families. The manager was creating conditions where all people felt well-informed to share responsibility for the change process.

Parents were being given the opportunity to share their views about the service and suggest any areas for improvement. A coffee and catch up had been well attended by parents and they had been able to share their views following the event. Parent meetings also enabled parents to share their views about their child's development and progress. We discussed how parents might share their views more widely when visiting the service, such as viewing/adding comments to the floor book and improvement folder.
Ref: Me, my family and my childcare setting: A practice note for building stronger connections and meaningful relationships - careinspectorate.com.

Children were being invited to share their views through floor books (child is encouraged to contribute their thoughts, ideas and observations). They been able to influence the changes in relation to the environment that had included the cosy/quiet space and loose parts (no fixed purpose) materials for the garden.

Parents told us that they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Comments included:

'we can join the committee and share our views'

'feedback through the social media group and individual meetings'

'feedback is always valued'.

Clear leadership was enabling staff to have confidence in their capacity to support children and families to achieve their potential. Staff had a clear understanding of and shared daily roles such as meet and greet at drop off/pick up, meals and snacks and personal care, that helped to ensure smooth delivery of the service. Staff meetings/training sessions enabled staff to reflect well together and to use such reflections to influence positive changes. We suggested that a brief summary of discussions that clarified actions, as part of the minute, would be beneficial for the purposes of self-evaluation.

The service improvement plan helped to identify and inform improvement in the quality of service to children and families. The support of the local authority early years team had enabled a new format of self-evaluation to be established, to record and monitor improvement. It was enabling clarity of purpose and direction to be developed. We advised the manager to ensure that the format measured the impact/differences it made on outcomes for children and families. Quality assurance systems that included observation and examination of practice to identify inconsistencies were also being established.

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Leaders recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed during the day to support the wellbeing of children. Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensure positive transitions and communication with families.

All parents considered that they had a good relationship with the staff caring for their child. Comments included:

'my child's development speaks for itself, he clearly gets the support he needs'

'all of the staff are lovely, professional and caring people and have the children's best interests at heart'

'the staff and manager listens to me and communicates really well'.

Newsletters informed parents of any staff training and any changes to the staff team, either planned or unplanned, so that families and children were kept informed.

Staff had different roles associated with their levels of experience, skills and knowledge. Daily responsibilities were shared between the staff to support children's experiences across the day. Staff breaks were planned to minimise the impact on the children whilst enabling staff to refresh.

The consistent staff team worked well together and there was a culture of support and respect. Staff were suitably deployed within the service. They were also proactive in recognising where gaps existed or where staff and children needed some help and support. Staff communicated well with each other when a task took them away from their responsibilities.

Children experienced a warm and respectful atmosphere. Staff interactions were caring and kind that was conducive to children's wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem. This contributed to good outcomes for children.

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

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| How good is our care, play and learning? | 4 - Good |
| 1.1 Nurturing care and support | 4 - Good |
| 1.3 Play and learning | 4 - Good |

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| How good is our setting? | 5 - Very Good |
| 2.1 Quality of the setting for care, play and learning | 5 - Very Good |

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| How good is our leadership? | 4 - Good |
| 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well | 4 - Good |

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| How good is our staff team? | 5 - Very Good |
| 4.3 Staff deployment | 5 - Very Good |

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