

# Lady Cathcart Nursery Day Care of Children

School Lane  
Buckie  
AB56 1AZ

Telephone: 01542836013

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
29 May 2025

**Service provided by:**  
The Moray Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001892

**Service no:**  
CS2018367382

## About the service

Lady Cathcart Nursery is a daycare of children service situated close to the town centre in Buckie. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 50 children at any one time aged from two years to not yet attending primary school, of whom, no more than 10 children will be aged under three years. There were 32 children present over the inspection. The service is provided by Moray council.

The service operates from renovated premises. It is ground level and consist of two playrooms, both of which lead onto a large outdoor play area. A large hall is also available and it is used for meals and some indoor group activities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 May 2025, between 08:30 and 15:15 and 28 May 2025, 09:00 to 12:15. 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 five parents
- received six questionnaires from families and five from staff
- spoke with two 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 well-supported as children experienced warm and nurturing approaches.
- Staff worked well together, with families, and other professionals, which enabled them to get to know the individual needs of the children.
- Children were involved in leading their own play and learning both indoors and outdoors and they were having lots of fun.
- Children's opportunities for play and learning were beginning to be enhanced through visits and connections to their own and wider community.
- Play areas remained a focus for development so that they provided challenge and exploratory play.
- Children's opportunities for play and learning were beginning to be enhanced through children having connections to their own and wider community.
- To ensure a strong ethos of continuous improvement, leaders should ensure that momentum is maintained.

## 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.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children's overall wellbeing was being well-supported as children experienced warm and nurturing approaches. Staff were calm in their responses and where children sought comfort, staff offered cuddles and reassurance. Where children needed support with personal care, staff were discreet in their responses and explained what was happening. This helped to promote their security and confidence. Cosy spaces enabled children to choose time away from busy spaces and to rest, to sit quietly, chat together and join in with stories. It remained one of the areas that was under observation/development, to ensure that they provided comfort and relaxation.

Staff worked well together, with families, and other professionals, which enabled them to get to know the individual needs of the children. Information/strategies was readily accessible to all staff, it helped to support children's development and to promote consistency of care. Families had been involved in the creation and review of their child's personal plan such as health, interests and likes/dislikes. This helped to ensure that information was shared and enabled staff to respond to changes. Chronologies also helped to identify children's needs and directed actions to support them well.

Almost all parents considered that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan and had the opportunity to discuss their child's play and learning. Comments included:

"Care plans are regularly updated."

"Always asked to check details."

"Our keyworker will always contact us about important parts of their [child's] care, play and learning."

"I am always told if my child does something new."

"Staff always tell me how their [child's] day was and understand their needs."

There were some opportunities for children to be involved in the preparation and delivery of snacks and meals. Children helped with cutting up the fruit, poured their own drinks and were able to serve their own sides, which they did with confidence. Children enjoyed eating together and chatting with each other that helped it to be a positive social experience. Whilst staff were mainly focused on all of the children, at times, tasks meant that staff were less able to supervise and respond to need. It was anticipated that change to the delivery of meals that enabled children to serve from the table would enable staff to provide greater levels of supervision. Continued monitoring of the lunch and snack provision would enable adaptations to be made and help to ensure that it remained a positive and safe experience for children.

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 outside during play.

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children were involved in leading their own play and learning and they were having lots of fun. They moved freely and confidently around all of the play areas and engaged in play in small groups and sometimes working things out on their own. Children chose to play outdoors for significant periods throughout the day and that enabled them to benefit from being in the fresh air. Children were able to choose whether to put on outdoor clothing and footwear which helped to boost their self-esteem and independence skills.

Resources and materials were readily accessible and visible within the play areas. Children played well together with the playdough, creating shapes and foods. They had lots of conversations with each other about what they were making. Children chose to paint and enjoyed selecting the paints and a variety of craft materials, such as feathers and pipe cleaners to experiment with pictures and collages. A child told us how they were mixing all the colours up on the paper and adding feathers as they were birds. Outside, children were having fun with water and bubbles and a variety of potion bottles and large pipettes. Children were building a car with large blocks and go-cart tyres, digging and pouring in the sand and making pies in the mud kitchen. A couple of children showed us the scarecrow they had made for the planting area as a bird had taken the seeds they had planted for their vegetables.

Children were involved in leading their own play and learning and they were having lots of fun. Play areas remained a focus for development so that they provided challenge and exploratory play. We discussed this with specific reference to the role play area and visual prompts with ideas for using play resources/ materials to further develop their skills in literacy and numeracy.

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. To help ensure that a consistent approach was being maintained, the manager was in the process of embedding a programme of observation and monitoring of staff practice that also helped to identify training needs.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were beginning to be enhanced through visits and connections to their own and wider community. Outings had included the library, dolphin wildlife centre and lifeboat. Staff were keen to maintain momentum as they recognised the benefits to the children's experiences and learning. Intergenerational (interactions between different age groups) practice was being explored with potential visits to a local care home.

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

"My child always tells me how much fun they've had at nursery."

"Our child loves to play outdoors and has recently spoken about all the changes in the nursery garden."

"Our child loves to grow things, they have told us they have been planting and watering plants, learning how they grow."

"My child loves playing outdoors in the sand and mud kitchen, as well as working with other children using imagination in play and creating friendships."

Staff were working well together as a team to embed 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?

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 being cared for in a comfortable setting that was well-furnished and decorated in neutral colours. It helped to give the message to children that they mattered. Sliding patio doors to the end of each of the playrooms, and windows, provided plenty of natural light and ventilation that promoted children's psychological wellbeing.

The setting was clean and well-maintained. Staff were clear about the procedures for cleaning within the service to ensure a quality and safe environment for themselves and children in their care.

Staff and children generally followed good hand hygiene practices. The majority of children washed their hands well prior to eating and following outdoor play. A few children did not always use soap, in haste, to have their snack or after blowing their nose. Ensuring that infection control practices were quality assured would help to provide consistent levels of safety for children. Staff used personal protective equipment (PPE) during personal care that also helped to support the wellbeing of the children. Staff had also completed food hygiene training to support food safety.

Overall, staff worked well together to remove risks both indoors and outdoors across the day. They were implementing practice that helped to ensure children were accounted for at all times and that the environment was secure and safe. It also included when children were out in the wider community. Therefore, children were able to benefit from and enjoy challenging and fun play experiences. We discussed how children might also be more involved in assessing and managing risk to learn about their own limits and build resilience. Staff had an understanding of SIMOA (Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) good practice guidance that helped them to implement safe practice.

A sensory room helped to provide a safe environment where children could be helped to manage their emotions, reduce anxiety and increase feelings of wellbeing. The indoor and outdoor environments were being monitored and structured, so that spaces reflected children's interests and curiosities that supported their development and learning.

## 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.

The vision for the setting had been reviewed with children, families and staff. It helped everyone to know what was important to the setting to meet the needs of children and families. The manager was motivated to create arrangements where everyone felt well-informed to share responsibility for the change.

Parents had been given the opportunity to share their views about the service and suggest any areas for improvement through a parent fundraising group. They had also been invited to participate in a craft session with the children. There was an open approach to parents attending stay and play sessions, a few parents had attended and had enjoyed the opportunity. The manager and staff were exploring how parents might share their views more widely and influence changes. Parents were welcomed into the setting at drop off and pick up times and it also provided an opportunity to speak with staff.

Parents told us that both them and their child were involved in developing the service. Comments included:

"Parents' input is always asked for on dojo or via questionnaires, recently I know children had been asked about new outdoor play equipment."

"Meeting about how to raise money for the nursery."

"The improvements made within the setting over the last several months has been noticeable and well received by parents. Great job to all staff."

"The new management this year have made some major improvements and we welcome these as positive changes, and has dealt with any issues promptly."

Children told us that they had lots of fun and they could choose what they liked to do, playing in the water and making potions, planting vegetables and making a scarecrow, painting and getting messy and playing with their friends at nursery. There was recognition of capturing the child's voice, and enabling them to influence changes particularly in relation to their environment. They had been involved in ideas for the craft area and a refresh of the mud kitchen.

The manager and local authority were helping to create conditions where all people felt well-informed to share responsibility for the change process. It was helping staff to feel valued, and to have confidence in their capacity to support children and families to achieve their potential. A planned programme for staff meetings helped to ensure that staff had protected time to reflect together, and to focus on continued improvement.

The service improvement plan helped to identify and inform improvement in the quality of the service to children and families. A clear format of self-evaluation was being embedded that recorded and monitored improvement. It was enabling clarity of purpose and direction to be developed, and was also beginning to measure the impact/differences made on outcomes for children and families. Quality assurance systems that included observation and examination of practice to identify inconsistencies were in the process of being embedded. To ensure a strong ethos of continuous improvement, leaders should ensure that momentum is maintained.

## 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.

Leaders had ensured that the service was appropriately staffed during the day to support the wellbeing of children. 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.

Newsletters and online communication helped to inform parents of any foreseen changes to staffing. A staff identification board in the reception area could easily be viewed by parents. A communication app was also used for sharing information with parents.

Regular check-ins and communications with staff helped to promote continuity of care and positive transitions such as lunch and drop off/pick up times. We discussed dispersal of staff with the manager in relation to opportunities for children to move freely between outdoor and indoor play. There was scope to further examine the arrangements, so that staff were able to consistently promote interactions and support to the children at all times which helped to ensure quality outcomes.

Children experienced a warm and respectful atmosphere. Staff were caring and kind and that was conducive to children's wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem. This helped to contribute to good 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 further support children to be meaningfully and actively involved in their play and learning, the manager and staff should establish a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences that promote choice, engage children's imagination and enrich their play and learning.

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

"As a child I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity" (HSCS 2.27).

**This area for improvement was made on 31 October 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

Play areas both inside and outside had been re-arranged and continued to be evaluated so that they provided a balance of planned and spontaneous play for children. Children were also building connections with their own and wider communities that enhanced their learning and development.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To support improvement that enhances the delivery of high-quality practice, leaders should continue to establish sound methods of quality assurance.

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



"I am supported to give regular feedback on how I experience my care and support and the organisation uses learning from this to improve" (HSCS 4.8)

"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 21 September 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

A clear format of self-evaluation was being embedded that recorded and monitored improvement. It was enabling clarity of purpose and direction to be developed, and was also beginning to measure the impact/ differences made on outcomes for children and families. Quality assurance systems that included observation and examination of practice to identify inconsistencies were in the process of being embedded.

**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	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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