

Kirkhope Nursery Day Care of Children

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Ettrickbridge
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
3 June 2025

Service provided by:
Scottish Borders Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001976

Service no:
CS2016348295

About the service

Kirkhope Nursery is a day care of children service situated in the rural village of Ettrickbridge near Selkirk.

The service is registered to provide care for a maximum of 20 children at any one time, aged between three years and entry into primary school.

The registered manager will also be the registered manager for Liliesleaf Primary School Nursery. (CS2003017373)

Children are cared for in a playroom adjacent to the school building, with access to an enclosed outdoor area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 14 and 15 May 2025. 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, information from a recent variation to increase numbers, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with several children during their play
- spoke with four parents during our visit and reviewed online comments from 11 parents
- spoke with members of staff and the leadership team
- observed staff practice and daily experiences for children
- 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 benefitted from warm and nurturing care provided by the staff.
- Recent reviews of practice had positively influenced the lunchtime routine, supporting a more positive experience for the children.
- Children were happy and actively involved in leading their play.
- Outdoor play experiences were central to promoting children's health and wellbeing.
- The staff team worked well together to meet children's care and learning needs throughout the day.
- The provider should ensure the setting revisits and reviews local protocols and national child protection policies and procedures.

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?	3 - Adequate
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 as several important strengths taken together, outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1 - Nurturing care and support

Children were nurtured throughout their daily experiences. Overall, interactions were warm and compassionate, with children being treated with respect. They received praise, cuddles and reassurance from staff as needed, fostering a sense of security and love that supported their wellbeing.

Mealtimes were a positive experience for children. Recent reviews of practice positively influenced the lunchtime routine and provided more responsibility and independence for children moving onto school. Children enjoyed social interactions in a relaxed, unhurried environment. Staff supported these interactions by sitting with children, facilitating conversations and offering encouragement. Moving forward, staff should provide more opportunities for all children to self-serve, allowing them to develop greater independence. Families told us: "The variety of food offered has helped my children become more open to trying different food. The staff are gently encouraging when it comes to ensuring my child tries new things" and "The staff provide a good range of snacks for the children including fruit and vegetables".

Some staff knew the children well and could discuss the support each child needed. Personal plans were in place. These included wellbeing notes, care plans, chronologies and learning trackers. While most personal plans reflected children's needs some required further development to make sure they reflected all information received from parents and ensured appropriate support strategies were in place (see area for improvement 1).

Families told us, "Nursery are good at involving me in my child's plan", "Staff provide regular opportunities to discuss my child's development within the setting and are always very positive and enthusiastic about my child's development out with the setting" and "The staff openly speak to us about our child and us to them. We have reviewed our child's care plan".

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Indoor and outdoor play spaces and experiences promoted both learning and enjoyment. Children were encouraged to be independent. They were busy and engaged in play experiences of their choice. We observed children freely transporting resources around the spaces to lead their own play.

Observations were shared with families through 'Showbie' which demonstrated an understanding of each child's unique learning needs, interests, and showed progression in their learning. Families confirmed, not only do we get many 'Showbie' updates but I'm also given an update when I pick up my child. Developments in planning for children's learning experiences provided more functional play, letting children explore and understand the practical use of objects. Planning was flexible and responsive to the interests of the children. Children showed interest in small block play, drawing and the home area. Broadening the range of learning experiences indoors would provide more challenge and extend children's interests. Such as, large block play, construction and loose parts to promote creativity and problem-solving (see area for improvement 2).

A range of resources were available to support the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy skills. For example, books, games, writing resources, displays, counting and sorting materials. Moving forward, staff should nurture children's language, literacy and numeracy skills, by engaging children in a meaningful way, through interactive stories, open ended questioning and using concepts such as size, quantity and shape during play, mealtimes and while organising materials (refer to area for improvement 2).

Children particularly enjoyed their time in the outdoor space. They had fun playing in the mud and the garden shelter, and some were focused on searching for mini beasts. These experiences were well supported by staff. Families confirmed, "The setting had a lovely, safe outdoor environment with a range of different activities to explore. My child is mostly outside at nursery", "Garden is always accessible", "The children have the garden open all the time" and "Recently they have been planting seeds at nursery and my child came home talking about it. We haven't been able to provide this at home, so having it at nursery is brilliant".

The setting made use of the local community to enhance children's play and learning. Children had opportunities to visit local woods, tennis courts and the parish hall for physical activities. Families told us that their children "walked in the community, woods, and fields, providing opportunities to see local animals, wildlife, and observe how the community changes from season to season."

Areas for improvement

1.

Personal planning approaches should be reviewed to ensure the service consider all the information provided by families and ensure children receive the right support at the right time. Support strategies, should reflect information contained in the child's plan, wellbeing notes and chronologies, to ensure each child's health, welfare and safety needs are met.

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

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices.' (HSCS 1.15)

2. To support children's breadth and depth of learning, the setting should provide a wider range of learning experiences, including more open ended play indoors, such as, large block play, construction and open ended materials. Staff should facilitate and extend children's learning, including their language, literacy and numeracy skills. They should engage children in a meaningful way through open ended questioning, interactive stories, and using concepts such as size, quantity and shape during play, mealtimes and in organising materials for functional play.

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 have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling.' (HSCS 1.30)

'As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open ended and natural materials.' (HSCS 1.31)

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good as several important strengths taken together, outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a pleasant, welcoming environment which was comfortable. It was well ventilated with natural light and a variety of areas to use. Children had space to store their belongings and could access these easily.

The setting was safe and secure. Secure boundaries and doors allowed children to move around safely. Staff were vigilant about safety, for example, checking the numbers of children in attendance throughout the day and ensuring their safety and wellbeing during hot weather. Families told us, "The place is organised but fun. The door into the nursery has a high handle and is safe. Entering the nursery requires a teacher to let you in. ID tags have to be worn at stay and plays along with a sign in and out book" and "The nursery is safe and doors have no handles on the outside. The gates to the garden aren't easily accessible from the public and the children can't reach the locks".

The environment was suitable for the children attending. There was enough space to encourage children's independence. This supported them to make choices about where to play and which activities to engage in, giving a strong message that they mattered. Children moved freely most of the day between the indoor and outdoor environment. This enabled them to meet their own needs and preferences. Comfortable spaces were available for children to rest and relax. If children needed to sleep a space was provided. We discussed how sleeping areas for children could be made more comfortable and safe. The setting took immediate action and prepared individual boxes of clean bedding to support comfort and good infection control.

Staff were self-evaluating the environment and spoke enthusiastically about the positive changes they had made to create engaging play spaces and experiences. There were interesting displays of children's work, print and photographs in the playroom, which supported discussion and fostered collaborative learning.

Children's toilets facilities needed maintenance to support good infection control. For example, the wood around the sink area was badly stained and cracking. Staff reported these to the local authority for action. Immediate action was taken after our visit to make improvements in this area.

Outdoor play experiences were central to promoting children's health and wellbeing. Positive improvements had been made to the outdoor spaces to allow children to connect with the natural environment. For example, they had opportunities to grow and care for fruit, herbs and flowers. Their efforts provided children with a sense of responsibility and achievement. The outdoor shelter supported a holistic approach to learning by providing a usable space in all weather conditions. To further enhance children's play and learning experiences the service could consider further developing their open-ended materials which offer endless opportunities for exploration and creativity. The 'Loose Parts Toolkit' (Play Scotland 2019) could be used for inspiration.

Children's safety was promoted through regular risk assessments. These were consistently reviewed, and staff worked well as a team to identify and remove potential hazards. Staff also spoke with children about safety, enabling them to enjoy a variety of activities that offered both challenge and fun in a safe way. For example, children played with loose parts and rolled in the mud, imitating pigs on a farm. They were also reminded about road safety while walking within the community. These opportunities helped children build self-esteem and confidence in a secure environment.

How good is our leadership?**3 - Adequate**

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 3.1 – Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The vision and values of the service were currently under review in consultation with parents, children and staff. This involvement allowed for ongoing feedback and collaboration, fostering good relationships and a culture of inclusion. Most families agreed that they and their child were meaningfully involved in developing the service. Comments included, "Constant encouragement to be involved is given", "Verbally, through stay and play and we are encouraged to give ideas about how the setting could be improved" and "They Listen to feedback".

Improvement plans were in place and were leading to positive changes and supporting ongoing developments. For example, planning for children through the use of spaces and routines, as well as changes to the outdoor area, such as the addition of a large shelter and a small allotment, made the space more accessible. Families confirmed, they had been involved in developing the outdoor area.

A quality assurance calendar was in place to ensure key events throughout the year were planned for. This supported senior staff in monitoring learning journals, scheduled medication, routines, spaces, planning processes and self-evaluation activities. Staff were receptive to suggestions for improvement and took immediate action to implement positive changes that supported children's wellbeing, for example improving the recording and storage of medication and children's bedding.

Staff had audited the playroom and focused on making the purpose of learning more explicit within different learning areas. They were linking areas and zones to experiences and outcomes for children. They spoke enthusiastically about changes they had made, for example developing the outdoor area.

Whilst staff were alert to signs that children might need additional support and or protection from harm, at times, information had not been shared with relevant partner agencies. Child protection policies and procedures must be reviewed. This is to ensure that all child protection measures are current, robust, effectively understood, and consistently implemented by all staff, including the leadership team (see requirement 1).

Requirements

1. **By 31 August 2025**, the provider must ensure the service has a clear understanding of local and national child protection policies and procedures.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- a) the staff revisits and reviews local protocols and national child protection policies and procedures, to support a joint understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- b) ensure all staff within the setting feel empowered to take appropriate action if necessary to ensure the effective protection, welfare and wellbeing of all children in their care.
- c) implement training, learning and development activities to support the staff's understanding of safeguarding children. This should include, for example, exploring roles and responsibilities,

keeping accurate records, information sharing and analysis. Training should also cover quality assurance and the effective auditing and monitoring of children's care plans, wellbeing records and chronologies.

d) review children's plans including their chronologies to ensure significant events or changes in children's circumstances are accurately recorded to support their wellbeing and holistic care.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1)(a) (Welfare of users) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI/2011/210).

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

'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.' (HSCS 3.20)

'I am listened to and taken seriously if I have a concern about the protection and safety of myself or others, with appropriate assessments and referrals made.' (HSCS 3.22)

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good as there were a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children had positive experiences throughout the day, supported by staff who positioned themselves indoors and outdoors to facilitate free-flow play. This encouraged children to be access the level of care and support they needed from staff, fostering independence while ensuring their safety and wellbeing.

The setting had experienced a change in team and had worked well to support one another and build positive relationships with children and families. Staff communicated effectively across the different indoor and outdoor areas to ensure they were working together to meet the needs of children on a day to day basis. They kept each other informed when leaving play areas, which supported positive working relationships and helped maintain good outcomes for children.

Staff training and reflective conversations were clearly having a positive impact, contributing to numerous improvements within the setting. Staff demonstrated enthusiasm for undertaking training to better support the care needs of children.

Families were complementary of the staff team, with all confirming they had good relationships. They described staff as, "Amazing", "Attentive", "Friendly", "Relaxed". Families further commented "Staff are great and very good at communicating" and "The staff are lovely and caring. They work really hard to give the children a variety of experiences". This positive feedback highlighted the strong partnerships between families and staff, contributing to a supportive and nurturing environment that promoted children's wellbeing and development.

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

Staff should continue to develop children's personal plans to support their health, wellbeing and learning.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 4 - Engaging with children.

This area for improvement was made on 23 August 2017.

Action taken since then

While personal plans had been improved, ongoing work is needed to ensure their content effectively supports staff in keeping children safe from harm, where necessary.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 2

Staff should arrange to do infection control training, keeping them up to date with best practice guidance.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 12 - Confidence in staff.

This area for improvement was made on 23 August 2017.

Action taken since then

Some staff had undertaken infection control training. We highlighted good practice guidance to support the service in managing infection control.

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.

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	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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