

# Riverbank School Nursery Day Care of Children

Riverbank School & ELC  
Conningham Gardens  
Aberdeen  
AB24 2TU

Telephone: 01224455435

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
28 August 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeen City Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000349

**Service no:**  
CS2003014423

## About the service

Riverbank School Nursery is accommodated within Riverbank School in the Tillydrone area of Aberdeen. The service provides a day care of children service to a maximum of 46 children at any one time, aged two years to an age to attend primary school, of whom no more than six are aged two to three years. The service will have access to areas of the premises as designated by the head teacher.

Children are cared for in a spacious purpose-built nursery with direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The service is well situated close to local amenities and easy bus travel.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 August 2025 between 09:30 and 16:15 and 28 August 2025 between 09:00 and 17:30. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 children using the service and six of their parents/carers
- received seven completed questionnaires (this includes all types)
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

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 experienced caring and loving interactions.
- Children's personal plans were effective to support their overall health and wellbeing.
- Lunchtimes required some improvement to help ensure children are well supported at all times.
- Children were happy and engaged learners.
- Children were cared for in a bright and inviting environment.
- Self evaluation and quality assurance processes led to high quality interactions and consistent care.
- Children were cared for by committed and enthusiastic staff.

## 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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very 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 and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced caring and loving interactions from kind, patient, and smiling staff. Children new to nursery or who were settling back into the setting after summer received lots of hugs and reassurance. Staff were responsive to children's needs and cues for help. For example, they treated children with respect and dignity when supporting them to get dressed. This helped them to settle, feel safe, and ready to explore. A parent commented, "My child feels safe in the setting with staff and they enjoy playing with their friends".

Children's personal plans were effective to support their overall health and wellbeing. Parents were fully involved in the process of developing the children's personal plans which were detailed with easy to find information. This meant staff were well informed about the children's individual needs, likes, dislikes, and interests, and helped promote a continuity of care from home.

Knowledgeable and experienced staff demonstrated a good understanding of children who required some additional support. Clear strategies of support were in place contributing to consistent approaches and children who were well cared for.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of using effective communication to help children understand and process information. This included using photographs, objects, and picture cards to help children transition between play experiences and follow daily routines. This contributed to a calm ethos where children were settled and happy.

Children experienced positive snack times. They were offered a range of healthy fruits and were encouraged to drink to keep hydrated and well. There were opportunities to self serve and be independent. Staff sat with the children to supervise, keep them safe, and encourage positive social skills.

Children were offered nutritious and appetising lunches. Staff were positive in their interactions to encourage children to wash hands, sit at the table, and eat lunch. However, most children were new to the setting and were unfamiliar with lunchtime routines. This meant some children did not experience a calm lunchtime and were not provided with enough support to promote their independence or keep safe. The manager and staff should continue to evaluate and make changes to mealtimes to help grow children's confidence and ensure they receive the individual support they need.

Staff were confident in delivering the safe administration of medication. However, for one child there was not enough information, including clear signs and symptoms of when to administer medication, to help keep them safe. We addressed this with the manager who took immediate action to review and ensure all necessary information was recorded.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of trauma and the impact on children and their families. Positive relationships had been developed with other agencies, such as social work and medical professionals, to help ensure children and families were provided with the support they needed.

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun and were actively and meaningfully involved in leading their play. They were offered a balance of spontaneous and planned play experiences and were able to choose resources and where they played. Some children enjoyed being outside and helped make an obstacle course with staff. A variety of play opportunities indoors were available to support children's creativity, problem solving, and imaginative play. A parent commented, "My child loves going and loves the staff and there is always plenty of choice with things they do in the nursery".

Staff demonstrated skilled interactions to support children's learning and development. They were very good at listening to the children, asking questions, and sharing experiences. Staff knew when to stand back and when to engage. Learning was always unhurried and children were given time to explore at their own pace. This contributed to happy and engaged learners.

Staff celebrated children's achievements both in and out of nursery. This helped children feel valued, raising their self esteem and confidence.

Child-centred planning approaches supported children's progress and development. One parent told us their child had come on "leaps and bounds" since starting at nursery. Observations of children at play were used to capture children's achievements and were shared with parents. For most children, this led to relevant next steps which were used to inform planning. For some children, next steps were not always meaningful or used effectively to plan appropriate learning experiences. We discussed this with senior staff who advised this was part of ongoing improvements.

Some opportunities for learning in language, literacy, and numeracy were available. There were some examples of counting during play and numbers were displayed in some play areas. Staff used repetition of words, such as squidgy, shake, and squeeze, to support children's language and communication skills. Children enjoyed looking at books which were attractively presented throughout the nursery. However, more stories, rhymes, and planned play experiences to help develop children's literacy and numeracy development should be considered.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their own and wider communities. The service made good use of the local amenities and went on regular walks and visits. This included outings to the local shops and travelling on the bus. A parent commented, "My child was super excited last week to tell me they went on the bus and they sat upstairs and went to do some shopping. They go to the park and library which they like".

### 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. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

The school and nursery had recently moved to a new and purpose-built building. The building was well designed with many features, including well positioned windows. These enabled children to observe and see other areas of the school, creating a feeling of wellbeing and supporting transition into primary one. Furniture was of a very good quality and appropriate to the ages and the stages of children who were using it.

The welcoming foyer and cloakroom were spacious. Information to support parents was attractively displayed, promoting a sense of inclusion and belonging for children and families.

Children were cared for in a bright and well thought out environment. Developmentally appropriate spaces were inviting and were resourced with a wide range of natural materials and loose parts. Areas, such as the home corner and construction areas, were spacious with lots of room for children to move freely. A good range of real-life resources in the home corner supported children's learning through familiar and everyday experiences. The art and craft areas were well stocked and refreshed as needed to ensure the area remained attractive and inviting.

Staff made good use of the outdoor space. Some children chose to bring resources from indoors outside which meant they had fun playing in the fresh air. The attractive sandpit provided opportunities for digging and pouring and some children enjoyed creating an obstacle course with loose parts. The inviting mud kitchen was used less by children and staff were in the process of evaluating how to improve this. Parents told us they enjoyed seeing their child play outside.

Children were able to play quietly or rest in cosy corners. An attractive area with a small sofa, soft lighting, and sensory resources provided a safe place for children. A parent told us their child enjoyed the cosy spaces which had helped them settle and feel safe.

Children played in a safe environment. Risk assessments and daily checks helped identify any potential hazards. Children were encouraged to understand the impact of risky play and were supported to make positive choices to keep safe. Children were kept safe on outings and staff supported children to cross the roads and consider risks, such as barking dogs.

Staff demonstrated an effective knowledge and understanding of infection prevention and control practices to keep children safe and well. For example, they followed guidance when preparing and serving lunch and snacks. Handwashing was embedded in practice and the setting was kept tidy and clean, including the toilets which were checked regularly.

## How good is our leadership?

**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.

The service was well led by a motivating senior practitioner who was well supported by the head teacher at the school. Staff told us the management team were very approachable and helpful. This contributed to ongoing change and improvement.

The service's vision, values, and aims were aligned with the school and were reflected in the caring and inclusive ethos. Families and children had been consulted to ensure they were fully reflective of their aspirations.

The service promoted a culture of inclusion and working together with families to improve outcomes for children. Parents were involved and included during the move to the new school premises, promoting a feeling of pride and belonging in the community. Newsletters and ongoing sharing of information through See Saw, an online learning platform, helped ensure parents and families were fully informed of new initiatives.

Parents were welcomed into the nursery, were asked for comments, and encouraged to make suggestions. As a result, the service provided parent workshops and individual sessions on using See Saw as a platform to share their child's learning. Other ways to involve and include parents were planned, such as inviting them to join outdoor learning opportunities in the local woods.

Children were able to express their views by choosing where they play and what they want to do. They were very involved in developing the nursery rules which were displayed alongside the service's vision, values, and aims. This promoted a positive ethos where everyone was encouraged to be kind to others. The children were involved during the move to the new building and a nursery representative joined school pupils to report back to nursery. Children were encouraged to share their views and ideas on the nursery spaces, helping to ensure they fully meet their needs.

Self evaluation and quality assurance processes were fully embedded in practice. Staff were fully involved in the process and felt valued for their opinions. They were able to make suggestions and reflect on their practice during regular team meetings. This led to improved practice, quality interactions, and consistent caring approaches. Ongoing staff training and audits of practice contributed to sustained improvements and a well kept learning environment.

A quality assurance calendar was in place to support the manager and senior staff in their roles. For example, monitoring of children's personal plans and audits of accidents and incidents led to high quality care and a safe environment. Continued areas for development included improved tracking of children's learning and working alongside the school community to support children to understand their feelings and be kind to others.

### 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. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Staff were proud of the strong relationships built with children and their families. They were passionate about providing families with the support they needed during difficult and stressful times. Parents commented, "The staff are friendly and very approachable and take their time to talk to you".

Children were supported by an experienced staff team, most of whom had worked at the service for a number of years. They worked well together to promote positive outcomes for children. They had developed trusting relationships and communication was courteous and respectful. New staff told us they felt very welcomed and supported in their role. This promoted a positive atmosphere and role modelling for children. Staff breaks were well planned and did not impact on the supervision of children at busier times of the day, such as arrival and departure.

Staff communicated well throughout the session promoting effective supervision and quality engagement as children played. They worked well as a team and were aware of their individual strengths which they used to help others. They were proactive in recognising gaps in staffing and in helping their colleagues when needed. This helped ensure children's experience across the day was positive.

Staff were very committed and enthusiastic. Some staff had additional responsibility and leadership roles to promote high quality care and provision. This included support workers having key worker roles and some staff having responsibility for outdoor learning. All staff had undertaken training opportunities to refresh

their skills, keep up to date with new ideas, and learn new knowledge. Staff felt valued for their strengths and experiences which led to a very happy and confident team where children and staff had fun together.

## 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 ensure children's overall wellbeing is supported through effective use of personal plans, the provider should ensure staff are consistently working proactively using guidance detailed within these plans to meet children's needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 May 2025.**

#### Action taken since then

Children's personal plans were effective to support their overall health and wellbeing. Parents were fully involved in the process of developing the children's personal plans which were detailed with easy to find information. Clear strategies were in place for children who required some additional support, contributing to consistent approaches and children who were well cared for.

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

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's learning and development, the provider should ensure:

- Planning processes are effective to promote children's learning.
- Staff demonstrate an understanding of child development and how to use spontaneous play to support children's learning.
- Observation and assessment of children's individual learning identifies and promotes their progress.

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 achieve my potential in my education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 May 2025.**



**Action taken since then**

Child-centred planning approaches were effective to support children's progress and development. Staff demonstrated a good knowledge of child development and used this to plan learning experiences relevant to the age and stage of the children. For most children, observations identified next steps and were used to plan experiences which supported their individual learning.

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

**Previous area for improvement 3**

To ensure children experience quality facilities that are well furnished, well resourced, comfortable, and homely, the provider should ensure the continued development of indoor and outdoor spaces for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'The premises has been adapted, equipped, and furnished to meet my needs and wishes' (HSCS 5.18).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 May 2025.**

**Action taken since then**

Children were cared for in a bright and well thought out environment. Developmentally appropriate spaces were inviting and were resourced. A small sofa, soft lighting, and sensory resources provided a safe place for children to play quietly, sleep, or rest. The outdoor environment was attractive and spacious with a range of play equipment to support children's physical development, curiosity, and creativity.

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

**Previous area for improvement 4**

To ensure quality care and experiences for children, the provider should ensure that quality assurance and self evaluation is embedded into staff practice. This should mean that:

- Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence changes within the setting.
- Quality assurance, including self evaluation and improvement plans, leads to improved practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance systems' (HSCS 4.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 May 2025.**

**Action taken since then**

Children and families were meaningfully involved in the development of the nursery. Parents were welcomed into the nursery, were asked for comments, and encouraged to make suggestions. Children were able to express their views by choosing where they play and what they want to do.

Quality assurance and self evaluation processes and systems were effective and helped promote high quality care for children. An improvement plan was in place to promote sustained and continued development.

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

## Previous area for improvement 5

To meet the care and learning needs of all children, the provider should ensure effective supervision and quality engagement for all children across the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me' (HCSC 3.16).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 May 2025.**

### Action taken since then

Children were well cared for by a committed and kind staff team. The deployment of staff was effective to ensure children were provided with quality engagement across the day.

**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	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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