

# Castle Douglas Nursery Day Care of Children

Castle Douglas Primary School  
Jenny's Loaning  
Castle Douglas  
DG7 1JA

Telephone: 01556 502 071

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
3 September 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Dumfries & Galloway Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003501

**Service no:**  
CS2003015467

## About the service

Castle Douglas Nursery is a daycare service for children situated in Castle Douglas. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 58 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school full-time. At the time of the inspection, 59 children were registered with the service, and 48 children attended on the first day, while 49 children attended on the second day.

The service has an outdoor play area. Children were able to move freely between indoors and a secure outdoor area. The centre is within walking distance of local amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. It took place on 2 and 3 September 2025. The inspector attended the service between 13:45 and 15:45 hours on 2 September and from 09:45 to 17:00 hours on 3 September.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about the service. This included 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 daily life
- spoke with children using the service
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the manager and staff
- received 19 completed questionnaires from parents/carers to gather their views and feedback.

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.

## Key messages

- Children received warm, respectful care that promoted wellbeing, though clearer planning is needed to meet individual needs consistently.
- Children led creative, meaningful play supported by skilled staff, fostering independence, curiosity, and strong progress in learning.
- Children thrived in safe, well-designed spaces that supported creativity, physical development, and meaningful, child-led exploration.
- Effective leadership and inclusive practice supported improvement, with strengths clearly enhancing outcomes for children.
- Effective staff deployment created a nurturing, well-organised environment that supported children's safety, wellbeing, and development.

## 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?	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 different parts of this key question as good and very good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support.

Children were cared for by staff who were warm, kind, and who understood each child's needs and preferences. Before starting nursery, important information was gathered, and each child was given a key worker who took time to learn about their likes, dislikes, and daily routines. One parent said, "Meetings with my child's key worker were never rushed. I always felt listened to and involved." Because of this, children were happy, settled, and felt safe.

Staff were gentle and respectful when helping with personal care. They asked children's permission before helping, which protected their privacy and made sure their play wasn't interrupted.

Children ate lunch together in a calm, friendly setting with furniture that suited their size. Staff joined them at the table, helping create a relaxed atmosphere. Children were encouraged to serve their own food and pour drinks, which helped build independence and confidence.

Staff knew the children well, and personal plans included helpful details about their preferences and learning goals. However, some plans did not clearly show how staff would support individual needs. It was suggested that plans be improved with more specific strategies to help staff give consistent care.

Children were kept safe and healthy. Medicines were stored properly, and records were kept up to date. Any accidents or incidents were recorded and shared with parents, helping support children's overall wellbeing.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

Children were happy and confident as they led their own play and learning. Staff supported them warmly when needed, helping them feel safe and encouraged.

Toys and materials were set up to spark curiosity and imagination. For example, children built houses with blocks while staff joined in, helping them play together and use creative thinking. Staff planned activities based on the children's interests and experiences. They understood child development well and used this to create meaningful learning. For instance, children explored ideas about homes and local places, which helped them feel connected and part of their community.

The nursery was filled with natural and real-life materials that helped children think and solve problems, and be creative. Children stayed focused while using trucks and tractors to move wood shavings, showing deep engagement in their play. Staff listened closely to children and asked open-ended questions to stretch their thinking. They used children's ideas to shape activities, and planning records showed how children were learning and what their next steps were.

Parents were very positive about the nursery. One said, "The Nature Garden is a real asset." Another shared,

"It's lovely to see my child thriving and fully engaged." These comments showed strong family involvement and satisfaction.

Staff responded to children's ideas during play. For example, when children drew families, staff encouraged them to add arms and legs, helping develop early writing skills. Children also enjoyed trips and outdoor play in the local area. They visited parks, explored the Nature Garden, and took part in community events like singing at Hanover Court. These experiences helped children learn about the world around them and feel part of their community.

## 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.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

The nursery was clean, bright, and welcoming. It had plenty of natural light, fresh air, and good-quality furniture. Children had lots of space to play, move around, and explore. We saw children enjoying a story in a quiet area with soft cushions and sofas, which made the space feel calm and comforting.

Play areas were set up to match what children were interested in. Toys and materials were high quality and helped children learn and grow. For example, children played with umbrellas in the rain and explored a boat outside. The layout of the nursery reflected children's ages, stages, and preferences.

Children could easily move between indoor and outdoor spaces. The outdoor area had sand and water trays, balance crates, a mud kitchen, tyres for digging, and a boat. These activities helped children stay active and explore. Parents said they were pleased with the outdoor learning. One shared, "My child loves the nature garden, balcony, and park visits. These activities help build confidence." Another said, "Nature garden, football, bikes." These experiences supported children's physical development and helped them learn about the world around them.

Children used real-life items like pots, pans, and food boxes to play. Open-ended materials were available, inside and outside, such as blocks, pipes, a boat and tubes. These helped children be creative, solve problems, and build physical skills. The wide range of materials allowed children to play in ways that suited them.

Staff helped children stay safe and healthy. Children were reminded to wash their hands, and staff showed good hygiene habits and explained why they mattered.

Children's personal information was kept safe. Managers made sure records were stored properly, protecting children's privacy and dignity.

## 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.

## Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

During the inspection, the management team and staff demonstrated openness, honesty, and a reflective approach to their improvement journey. The team had taken time to identify areas for development and worked collaboratively to move the service forward, with a clear focus on achieving positive outcomes for children, families, and the wider community.

Staff had built warm, respectful relationships with parents and maintained effective communication. Parents were welcomed into the service during drop-off and collection times, and staff promoted an open-door approach within playrooms. Initiatives, such as 'stay and play' sessions, regular newsletters, and updates via online learning journals, helped strengthen connections between home and nursery.

Parents told us they felt listened to and included. One commented, "We are regularly asked for feedback and opinions. For example, we were invited to suggest ways to improve drop-off routines. It's clear the nursery values input from both parents and children and actively seeks ways to improve." These views reflected a strong culture of partnership and inclusion.

The service had developed an improvement plan and monitoring calendar to guide ongoing development. The new manager had begun monitoring staff practice and reviewing documentation, including children's personal plans. With the team now fully staffed, the service was well placed to re-establish quality assurance systems and self-evaluation. Continued embedding of these processes will help build staff confidence and ensure consistent practice across the setting.

## 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.

## Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

Staff and management had introduced new planning formats and developmental trackers to monitor children's progress and inform future learning. As these systems were still in the early stages, we encouraged the team to continue embedding and evaluating their impact. This will support staff reflection and contribute to improved outcomes for children.

Staff were kind, friendly, and caring, which helped create a warm and welcoming place for children and families. There were enough staff throughout the day, and they were placed in the right areas to meet children's needs. Staff paid attention to each child as an individual, making sure everyone was well cared for.

The team worked well together, using their different skills to support children in a positive way. Parents shared how happy they were with the care, saying, "Staff were patient, caring, and easy to talk to;" and "They felt listened to and kept informed."

Staff made sure children were safe when moving around the nursery. They talked to each other clearly, planned transitions well, and helped children feel secure by keeping routines familiar.

The manager supported staff by spending time with them during the day. This helped build strong relationships and gave staff chances to talk about how to improve care. Staff felt happy and confident in their roles, which helped the day run smoothly and made children feel secure.

Staff breaks were planned carefully so children's play and learning were not interrupted. Cover staff helped keep things calm and consistent.

All staff said they felt supported by their manager and colleagues. One staff member said, "This positive environment helped staff do their best work, leading to great 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

The service manager should monitor the procedures for the management of children's medication to incorporate best practice. Management and staff should refer to the Care Inspectorate good practice guidance - Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services (2014).

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that as a child:

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

**This area for improvement was made on 27 August 2019.**

#### Action taken since then

The service has updated its medication procedures in line with the Care Inspectorate's guidance Management of Medication in Daycare of Children and Childminding Services (2025). Although no children required medication at the time of inspection, the systems in place, including a clear recording template and communication process, reflect best practice.

**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	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good



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