Grantown Playgroup
Day Care of Children

Black Park
Heathfield Road
Grantown-on-Spey
PH26 3HX

Telephone: 01479 873 598

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 September 2026

Service provided by:
Grantown Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003001794

Service no:
CS2003008608

About the service

Grantown Playgroup provides a daycare of children service in a residential area of Grantown-on-Spey. The service is registered to provide care for a maximum of 30 children at any one time, from two years of age until they attend primary school. No more than 10 children may be aged two years. At the time of the inspection, 31 children were registered with the service and 22 were attending.
The service operates from one playroom with partition walls, toilets and changing facilities. Children have free-flow access from the playroom to a large outdoor space.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 September 2026 between 08:45 and 15:45. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. Feedback was shared with the service on 29 September 2026.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation, we:

- spent time with children using the service
- received six completed questionnaires from families using the service
- spoke with three families during the inspection
- spoke with the manager and provider
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing care from staff who knew them well.
- Children were confident and engaged in inviting indoor and outdoor play experiences.
- Leaders knew the service well and used self-evaluation to support improvement.
- Planning, observation and tracking approaches were developing and could continue to be strengthened to show children's progress and meaningful next steps.
- Quality assurance could include more formal monitoring of staff practice and children's experiences.
- Leaders could further reduce potential outdoor risks by reviewing the timing of activities, staff deployment and supervision.

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

Leadership	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

The service had a clear vision, values and aims, which leaders had recently reviewed with families during a stay-and-play event. We saw these values reflected in warm, caring and respectful interactions between staff and children. This helped children feel valued and secure. One family told us, "The staff are wonderful, and we really appreciate the service they provide."
Leaders and staff reflected regularly on the quality of the service and used their findings to improve children's experiences. For example, the service identified that the nutritional content of some packed lunches did not align with national guidance. Leaders responded by sharing clear, accessible information with families to promote healthier choices for children. This demonstrated a responsive approach to improvement.

Quality assurance and moderation activities helped leaders maintain oversight of key aspects of the service. A quality assurance calendar guided planned reviews of risk assessments, accident and incident audits, policies and children's profiles. This helped leaders identify actions and maintain safe, consistent practice. Leaders could strengthen this further by formalising how they monitored staff practice, the learning environment and children's experiences, including mealtimes and outdoor supervision. This would help them recognise what was working well and take timely action where improvement was needed.

Leaders knew the service well and placed children's play and learning at the heart of improvement planning. They had identified two relevant priorities: strengthening observations and tracking children's progress and developing connections with the local community. The manager spoke confidently about the improvements introduced and the measures in place to support progress, including staff training and development. This showed that clear action had been taken to support ongoing improvement.

Recruitment and induction arrangements helped the service maintain a stable, skilled and experienced staff team. Newly recruited staff received support from the manager and depute and used the national induction resource to develop their understanding of their roles, responsibilities and the service's expectations. Regular reflection and discussion helped new staff build their knowledge and confidence. This supported continuity of care and positive experiences for children.

Appraisal systems supported staff wellbeing and professional development. These gave staff opportunities to reflect on their practice, discuss development needs and receive constructive feedback from leaders. Staff told us they felt supported by leaders and colleagues. Positive relationships and an open-door approach helped staff feel valued and confident in seeking support when needed. This contributed to a stable and supported staff team who provided children with consistent care and positive experiences.

Staff understood their responsibility to identify and manage risks so that children could play safely. Leaders could further reduce potential risk by developing a specific risk assessment for the climbing frame. This could guide how and when it was used, taking account of busier periods and other activities, such as children using bikes. Reviewing the timing of activities and staff deployment would help maximise supervision across the outdoor area while enabling children to enjoy appropriate challenge and freedom in their play.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children were happy, confident and engaged in a range of good-quality play experiences. Well-organised and inviting spaces enabled them to make choices and lead their own play. Children moved purposefully between experiences and sustained their interest in activities that reflected their ideas.

Thoughtfully planned spaces and high-quality resources gave children rich opportunities for imaginative, creative and exploratory play. Literacy and numeracy were embedded naturally throughout the environment. Children explored shape and number through puzzles, used mathematical language while comparing quantities in the mud kitchen, and developed communication and storytelling skills through books, puppets and imaginative play. Children moved freely between areas and transported resources to extend their play and explore their own ideas. Increasing the range of open-ended resources available indoors would give children greater scope to create, investigate and solve problems.

Free-flow access to the outdoors supported children to make choices and move independently between spaces. A range of open-ended resources encouraged children to explore, investigate and develop their own ideas. Experiences such as climbing trees and filling bird feeders helped children learn about the natural world and develop an understanding of how to care for it.
Staff were responsive and available to children. They positioned themselves at children's level, played alongside them and followed their interests and ideas. Staff recognised when to observe and when to step in to support or extend play. They could strengthen this further by using consistently skilful questions and prompts to provide appropriate challenge, encourage critical and creative thinking and support children's progression in learning.

Planning approaches were developing and supported staff to provide intentional learning experiences. Floorbooks showed the progression of learning and included children's artwork, comments, mind maps and voting. This showed that children's views were valued and gave them ownership of their learning. Staff could strengthen responsive planning by recording more consistently how children's interests, questions and theories influenced what happened next. This would help them build on children's curiosity and make individual learning journeys clearer.

The service was developing its approaches to tracking, monitoring and observation. Developmental milestone trackers and recently introduced literacy and numeracy tracking gave staff an overview of children's development. Observations were beginning to identify the learning and skills demonstrated, children's views and meaningful next steps. Continuing to strengthen these approaches would help staff show each child's individual learning journey, recognise progress and plan experiences that built on children's interests, strengths and achievements.

Children benefitted from regular opportunities to explore their local community, including visits to the woodland area and library. The service was developing further links with the grammar school, primary school and local sheltered housing complex. These connections had the potential to broaden children's learning, strengthen their sense of belonging within the community and support positive transitions to school.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children experienced warm, consistent and responsive care from staff who knew them well. Staff recognised children's verbal and non-verbal cues, offered comfort and reassurance, and noticed when children needed support to join play.

Children confidently approached staff, showing that secure and trusting relationships had been established. One family told us, "Every morning, staff warmly welcome both you and your child. Staff are always available if you need to discuss anything, and emails or telephone calls are dealt with promptly."

Transitions were well managed and caused minimal disruption to children's play and learning. Settling-in arrangements were tailored to each child, with visits gradually extended in partnership with families. This respected children's individual needs and helped them feel safe and secure during transitions.

Mealtimes were calm, relaxed and sociable. Staff sat and ate with children, modelled positive habits and engaged them in conversation. Children chose when they had finished, returned to play without unnecessary waiting and helped to clear their dishes. These routines respected children's pace and supported positive relationships. Opportunities to develop independence could be strengthened by enabling children to serve more of their own food and drinks. There was scope to build on this positive experience by giving children greater choice at lunchtime. We saw that some children playing outdoors wished to return inside, although the routine at that time meant children remained together either indoors or outdoors. With careful planning of staff deployment and supervision, the service could explore a more flexible approach that respected children's preferences while keeping them safe.

Staff knew children well and used information shared by families to understand their health, wellbeing, interests, preferences and support needs. Where children needed additional support, staff followed agreed strategies and handled sensitive information appropriately. One family told us, "The staff have been a great support to us." This showed that families valued the support provided and helped children receive care that was consistent, responsive and tailored to their individual needs.

Where children received support from other agencies, staff worked collaboratively with professionals and shared relevant information appropriately. This helped staff understand children's circumstances, follow agreed approaches and provide consistent support. As a result, children experienced continuity of care and were supported sensitively through changes in their lives.

Medication arrangements were appropriately managed and supported safe care. Staff worked closely with families to understand children's health needs and ensure that agreed support reflected current best-practice guidance and the service's policy. This reassured families that staff understood and could respond appropriately to their child's health needs throughout the day.

Families were warmly welcomed into the play area at the beginning and end of the day, when staff shared information and discussed children's needs. Stay-and-play sessions gave families meaningful opportunities to take part in the life of the service. Children showed family members their favourite experiences, shared their learning journals and enjoyed playing alongside siblings. One family told us, "Stay-and-play sessions and parent council meetings gave us valuable opportunities to share our views and suggestions with the team." These approaches strengthened connections between children's experiences at home and in the setting and supported their sense of belonging.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good

Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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