Burra Early Years
Day Care of Children

Old School
Hamnavoe
Burra
Shetland
ZE2 9LA

Telephone: 01595859451

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 June 2026

Service provided by:
Burra Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003002059

Service no:
CS2003009589

About the service

Burra Early Years provides a care service to a maximum of 30 children aged two and a half to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is a committee run group located on the Isle of Burra, off the west coast of Shetland. The service operates from the former school building with a fully enclosed outdoor space. There is a spacious open plan playroom with direct access to toilets and an outdoor area.

There was up to 24 children present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 01 June 2026 between 08:30 and 15:50 and 02 June 2026 between 08:05 and 12:05. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with three of their parents/carers
- received ten responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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

• Strong nurturing care where children feel safe, valued and build secure relationships with staff.

• Positive and meaningful partnerships with families that support children's experiences and sense of belonging.

• Children engaged and confident in their play, with generally good staff interactions, though this is not yet consistent.

• Quality assurance processes require greater consistency and structure to fully support ongoing improvement.

• Staff feel valued and supported within a positive team, contributing to a strong ethos across the setting.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as **adequate/satisfactory**. While the strengths had a positive impact on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

The setting had developed a shared vision, values, aims that reflected both its early years provision and charitable role. Children and families were invited to contribute words and phrases which they felt reflected the service. These were used to create a poster displayed within the setting. There was scope to use these values more in daily practice in order that children could better understand them. The setting promoted an inclusive ethos, though this could have been more visible within everyday experiences.

The service was well led by a committed manager and senior practitioner who created a positive and supportive team. Staff said they felt valued, listened to and involved in decisions. Regular meetings supported this. Since the last inspection, the manager had recognised the importance of support and supervision, with ongoing discussions planned. However, these discussions were quite general and would have benefited from having a clearer structure, including strengths, areas for development and agreed actions. As a result, leadership was effective, though more structured support would have improved staff development. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and remains in place **(see section 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' of this report)**.

Self-evaluation included families well, with clear examples of parent feedback being used to make improvements. For example, a parent suggested attending the Scalloway fire festival, which the children then experienced, followed by participating in related activities in the setting. We discussed implementing a "You said, we did" approach to highlight to parents that their views were valued. Parents also supported the setting through the committee and by helping with developments such as building outdoor equipment. Parents said they felt involved in a meaningful way to develop the setting. Therefore, partnerships with families were good and had a positive impact on children's experiences.

The setting had made some progress with improvement planning since the last inspection. A clear plan had been developed, focusing on key areas. The floor book showed improvements through photos, comments and examples, involving staff, children and parents. Changes included the environment, outdoor learning and increased parental involvement. Some reflection had taken place, though this could have been deeper to show how changes improved outcomes for children. Overall, improvement work was positive, though better reflection would have strengthened it further.

Staff training had supported practice, with staff giving examples such as numeracy training having improved experiences for children. Staff were enthusiastic and had taken responsibility for areas for development highlighted in the improvement plan. There was an opportunity to build on this by giving staff lead roles and encouraging them to support others. Involving staff in audits could also support confidence and ownership more. Staff were motivated and developing well, with potential to take on more responsibility.

Quality assurance processes had improved with the introduction of a clear calendar of tasks and responsibilities. Policies had been updated, though some small changes were still needed. Monitoring of staff practice was mostly informal and would have benefited from a more formal approach, particularly around observations of children's experiences and learning. Peer support happened naturally but was not recorded. Sharing responsibilities among staff would have strengthened these processes. Therefore, quality assurance was developing well, though more consistency was needed. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and remains in place **(see section 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' of this report)**.

Recruitment and induction processes were mostly in place, although there were some gaps in documentation. It was important that all records were fully completed for every staff member. The use of the national induction resource supported staff to reflect and develop over time. This helped staff feel more confident in their roles. Recruitment and induction were generally effective, though more consistency was required.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as **good**, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were happy, confident and engaged in their play. They moved freely between indoor and outdoor spaces, often choosing to spend most of their time outside. For example, children enjoyed exploring sand, using different containers and language such as "full" and "empty". Their interest in snails developed into imaginative play about families and caring roles. Children showed resilience when using the rope swing and problem-solving skills on the hill with hoppers and vehicles. There were a few missed opportunities to extend learning further, such as not always following children's interests or developing water play. Overall, children experienced good play opportunities, though these could have been extended more consistently.

Experiences supported children to develop important life skills. Staff encouraged conversations, for example discussing snail patterns and what they eat. Children developed independence through daily routines such as helping at lunch and dressing themselves. Opportunities to use digital technology were limited, though this had been identified for improvement. As a result, children were developing key skills, but digital learning could have been further enhanced.

Parents told us that their children were involved in fun experiences which met their needs. One parent told us, "My child has had lots of opportunities for different experiences within the setting." Another parent said, "Really supportive of my child's individual needs and allowing them to achieve things in their own way. Day to day the staff provide fun activities they love, water play, crafts, imaginative play, but also love activities on trips out with nursery like local walks, walk to the beach, Da Voar Red Up, trips to park, gym class at school - very lucky." This highlighted that children were happy, engaged and benefiting from a wide range of meaningful experiences that supported their individual needs and interests.

There were some opportunities for family learning. Parents attended events such as training on the importance of play offered through the local authority and stay-and-play sessions. These supported them to be part of and understand their children's learning. We discussed ways of engaging more families through offering different types of sessions. In addition, asking parents what they would like support with may increase engagement. The setting worked positively with families, though this could have been developed further.

Staff interactions were good and mostly supported children's learning well. Staff observed children carefully and joined their play at appropriate times, using comments and questions to extend learning. For example, staff demonstrated how to use hula hoops and encouraged children to challenge themselves on hoppers. In the sand area, staff supported language and thinking through simple conversations. Children often invited staff into their play, showing positive relationships. Therefore, staff interactions were a clear strength of the setting.

Planning involved all staff and included both planned themes and children's interests. Plans were displayed and stored so children could revisit them. There was evidence of responsive planning, such as adding magnifying glasses to explore snails further, alongside planned themes like kindness and safety. Children's views were included and linked to the curriculum. However, evaluation and clear next steps were not always evident. Planning supported learning well, though it needed clearer evaluation.

Observations were shared with parents, who valued the photos and used them to talk with their children. While both group and individual observations were used, there was more focus on group observations, and some children had gaps in their records. At times, observations focused more on curriculum links than on children's learning, and next steps were not always clear. This made it harder to track progress over time. Therefore, observations supported communication with families but needed to be developed to better track individual learning.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Staff provided very warm and nurturing care throughout the day. Children appeared very relaxed and comfortable in the setting and approached staff confidently for support, for example when asking for help with clothing. They used staff names and sought closeness during play, snack and lunch, showing strong, secure relationships. The setting was also flexible in meeting children's needs, supporting them to settle when required and allowing them to attend activities such as swimming or spending time with family. Children experienced caring and responsive support which helped them feel safe and valued.

Children were familiar with daily routines and followed them confidently. For example, they knew to wash their hands before and after mealtimes, which was mostly well supported by staff through modelling and supervision. At snack time, although hand washing was encouraged, this was not always supported as consistently. Strengthening this would promote good hygiene habits. Children demonstrated strong independence in following routines. Transitions throughout the day were smooth and well managed. Staff gave children clear warnings, such as letting them know when it would soon be time for lunch or to go inside. Long-standing staff relationships helped provide consistency, which supported children to feel secure. Transitions happened naturally without disrupting play, allowing children to move between activities with ease. Transitions were calm and well supported, helping children feel safe and settled.

The setting had practices in place to keep children safe. Staff effectively monitored numbers of children using name cards and visual displays, and ratios ensured children received appropriate care. Staff communicated well when moving between indoor and outdoor areas. Records for accidents, incidents and medication were mostly well maintained, with clear procedures for allergies and child protection. However, risk assessments had not been recently updated. Involving children in understanding risks would strengthen this further. Therefore, safety procedures were generally good, though some updates were needed.

Snack and lunchtime routines were very positive experiences for children. At snack, children were independent, serving themselves healthy foods and engaging in relaxed conversations with staff. There was an opportunity to involve children more in preparation and to improve supervision of hand washing. Lunch was calm and social, with staff sitting alongside children and encouraging independence through self-serving and using utensils. Children were confident and engaged, and staff promoted healthy eating. Overall, mealtimes were nurturing and supported independence.

Personal planning was in place for all children and used wellbeing indicators to give a clear overview of each child. Plans were reviewed regularly with parents, helping ensure they reflected children's needs and interests. However, some sections were incomplete, and a few support plans lacked clear strategies. Strengthening this would ensure more consistent support. Therefore, personal planning was effective overall, though clearer detail was needed in some areas.

The setting had strong relationships with families and a welcoming atmosphere. Staff knew children and their families very well and communicated effectively at drop-off and pick-up times. Parents reported feeling very welcomed and valued, and some were involved in settling children or attending events. However, limited space in the entrance area sometimes made communication difficult. Staff recognised the benefit of providing a quieter space for discussions and making parents more aware that they were welcome in the setting at any time. One parent told us, "Staff are really understanding. They never find anything any trouble. They welcome our child into the setting warmly which always has filled me with confidence that our child is nurtured. They contact me when appropriate or when they feel there is a concern. I have also discussed issues with them and they have such good knowledge about our child that I know they really care." Another parent said, "Staff are very approachable and friendly, I have asked for advice about a few different things and everyone is brilliant and always happy to help. Happy to support both me and my child." Overall, the setting had a very strong sense of community, with positive relationships supporting children's sense of belonging.

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 support positive and improve outcomes for children and families, the manager should ensure effective quality assurance systems are embedded into practice. This should include but not be limited to:

a) Children and families being meaningfully involved and influencing changes within the setting.

b) Regular, effective and focused monitoring being carried out across the setting.

c) Regular support and supervision in place to support staff practice and professional development.

d) Quality assurance calendar supporting audits and monitoring, developed and implemented, with any actions addressed promptly.

e) Policies and procedures updated to reflect the service.

f) Self-evaluation and improvement plans leading to high quality care and support.

This is in to ensure 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 30 April 2025.

Action taken since then

Since the last inspection, the setting had made progress in developing its quality improvement systems to enhance outcomes for children and families. Children and families were more meaningfully involved in shaping improvements, such as outdoor developments. Self-evaluation and improvement planning had provided a clear focus and involved staff, children and parents in the process. Further evaluation of these changes would support staff to understand the impact on outcomes for children and families. A quality assurance calendar had been introduced, and policies and procedures had been updated. However, further work was still required around audits, staff monitoring, and support and supervision to ensure ongoing improvement.

While progress had been made, this area for improvement has not been met and will remain in place.

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

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.