

# Kirkhill School Nursery Day Care of Children

Cairngorm Gardens  
Kincorth  
Aberdeen  
AB12 5BS

Telephone: 01224 874 439

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
27 May 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeen City Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000349

**Service no:**  
CS2003014439

## About the service

Kirkhill School Nursery is registered to provide a daycare of children service to a maximum of 64 children, aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is provided from a building within the grounds of Kirkhill Primary School in the residential area of Kincorth, Aberdeen. Children have access to two bright playrooms with integral kitchens and toilets. There is direct access from the playrooms to a large outdoor play area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 May 2025 between 09:30 and 17:45 and 27 May 2025 between 09:30 and 12:45. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with three parents/carers
- received 22 completed questionnaires from parents/carers and staff
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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 received nurturing approaches from staff that helped them feel emotionally safe and secure.
- Children experienced safe, unhurried mealtimes.
- Children enjoyed a variety of play and learning experiences.
- Children's health and wellbeing was enhanced through daily access to outdoor play.
- The environment was comfortable and resources were well-maintained.
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation had resulted in changes which promoted positive outcomes for families. Three areas for improvement from the previous inspection had been met.
- Effective staff deployment supported positive outcomes for children.

**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?	4 - Good
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, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children, and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Warm and nurturing care supported children to be settled, happy and relaxed. Staff offered cuddles and reassurance when children became tired and upset. A child told us, "The teachers are nice. They always help people, I like it, I like nursery." Most parents told us they had a good relationship with staff caring for their children. One parent commented: "Staff are all friendly and my child really enjoys being with them." This contributed to children feeling secure and developing positive attachments.

Children were well supported in their personal care. Staff were respectful of children's privacy and dignity and were kind and supportive in their interactions.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported by the use of personal planning. Plans included individualised information on children's needs and how these would be met. Information was regularly reviewed with parents, ensuring it was up-to-date and relevant. Where children needed further support, separate plans with clear strategies were in place to meet these needs. This meant children received care and support that was right for them. Most parents told us they felt fully involved in their child's care, and regularly reviewed their personal plan. One parent commented: "The staff keep me well informed with how my child is doing and if there are any issues, the staff and I have sat down to discuss what we can do to help my child overcome those issues."

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through nutritious food options and access to fresh water throughout the day. Overall, mealtimes were well-organised, unhurried and supportive of children's needs. Staff sat with children, providing effective supervision to keep them safe. Children were encouraged to be independent and benefited from opportunities to self-serve their meal, pour drinks and clear away dishes. Staff could further develop how they support meaningful and stimulating conversations with children during mealtimes to enhance the experience further.

Appropriate storage and systems were in place for medication being administered safely. Staff were knowledgeable about children's health needs and knew the signs, symptoms and actions to take where a child may require medication. Medication forms contained accurate information and were regularly reviewed with parents. This contributed to keeping children safe and well.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children benefited from a range of play experiences that supported their development and interests. These included building models, arts and crafts, hunting for insects and exploring the sensory play on offer. Most parents commented positively on the range of play. A parent commented, "There are plenty of activities and opportunities for my child to take part in." Another parent shared, "My child has expressed an interest in arts and crafts, so they regularly have new pictures or items to take home with them." As a result, children confidently led their learning.

Staff interactions were supportive and helped to promote a positive atmosphere. Staff enthusiastically participated in children's games and some staff used effective questioning and commentary to extend and develop children's individual learning. They encouraged children to take turns, make predictions and problem solve, such as when constructing models and mixing coloured ice during an experiment. However, there were a few missed opportunities to extend children's thinking. Staff should continue to develop questioning to extend learning and enable all children to widen their skills through play.

Children's communication and literacy was supported through discussions with staff, spontaneous singing, storytelling and opportunities for mark making. Daily keyworker group times provided further opportunities for singing and stories. The use of some environmental print, such as packaging and signs, provided opportunities for children to recognise and become familiar with letters. Some staff used mathematical language in their interactions such as counting and measuring. We discussed how the setting could develop resources further to naturally promote literacy and numeracy through play experiences.

Children's learning was beginning to be supported by the process of planning. Staff told us "the process had been simplified" and "was easier to understand." This system was relatively new and yet to be fully embedded for all staff. Observations of children's experiences were recorded and shared with parents using an online app. Most observations we sampled were general rather than specific to individual children's experiences. Next steps were not yet consistently logged to progress children's learning. A parent commented, "It would be nice to see more of what my child is doing to meet development stages." Management advised this had been identified as an improvement priority. A new online platform and staff training was about to be introduced. This aimed to further promote communication and provide a more individual approach to identifying and supporting children's progress.

Children were supported to feel part of their community and opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through visits to the school library and local shop. Local charity groups had helped source open ended resources from the community and develop outdoor play spaces to enhance children's outdoor learning. The service recognised the importance of community based opportunities and was looking to develop these further.

## How good is our setting?

**4 - Good**

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

The service was welcoming to children and their families. Children's health and wellbeing was supported as there was plenty of ventilation and natural light in the playrooms. There were some comfortable and cosy spaces for children to rest and relax. This included a small sensory room for children who needed some quiet time or became overwhelmed in the main play areas. These could be increased and further developed to make the environment more homely. The manager agreed this was an area of ongoing development.

Children independently chose where they played and moved confidently between the indoor and outdoor play spaces. Children had opportunities for risky play outdoors and made good use of natural open ended materials to create obstacle courses and challenge themselves. These supported children's strength and balance and stimulated their imagination. A continued focus of real and open ended materials in outdoor and indoor play spaces would help support children's curiosity and creativity. For example, children enjoyed the role play shop outdoors, however, resources in this area were minimal. This meant the space was not used to its full potential. Staff should continue to develop play areas for children to ensure they meet their ongoing needs.

Overall, effective infection prevention and control measures protected children from the potential spread of infection. Staff undertook regular cleaning throughout the day which helped support children's wellbeing. Staff and children washed their hands at appropriate times, such as before mealtimes or after toileting. We advised that this should also be done after eating to comply with current guidelines.

Children were kept safe due to staff supervising them closely and counting children at regular intervals. They ensured doors to the setting were secured appropriately when children were arriving or leaving the setting with parents. Risk assessments were in place for the environment and resources. These identified possible hazards and how to reduce the level of risk. Staff had taken an active role in raising awareness of the Care Inspectorate's SIMOA (Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) campaign by introducing a soft toy elephant to include and assist children with risk assessing areas. As a result, children were learning important life skills as they developed an understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Children's personal information was stored securely to ensure families' privacy and confidentiality.

## 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.

The vision, values and aims of the service were in the process of development. The importance of aligning these with the school whilst also being nursery specific was recognised by the service. This will help ensure they fully reflect the aspirations of children, parents and staff.

The service recognised the importance of parental involvement. Parental views were sought using questionnaires and daily opportunities at drop off and pick up for parents to come into the setting. Recent parent feedback had identified a need for an entrance sign and plans were in place to create this with children, parents and staff. Staff told us parental involvement and communication were ongoing areas for development to further support partnership working.

Staff were guided and supported by a motivated and passionate management team who were committed to provide a high quality service for children and families. The recently recruited manager was well-organised, familiarising themselves with their responsibilities and getting to know children, families and staff. Staff told us their views and opinions were respected and the manager was visible, approachable and supportive. Good foundations and positive working relationships were being formed which would support the team to continue together on their improvement journey.

Effective leadership was enabling staff to have confidence in their capacity to support children and families to achieve their potential. Staff had a clear understanding of expectations and shared daily roles such as meet and greet at drop off and pick up, personal care, meals and snacks. This helped to ensure smooth delivery of the service. Daily huddles, team and one-to-one meetings, enabled staff to reflect well together and to use such reflections to influence positive changes. To further evaluate performance, the manager and staff should continue to familiarise themselves with the guidance documents *How good is our early learning and childcare?* and *A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare*.

Policies were in place to support the effective running of the service and ensure that children's needs were met. Overall, these reflected current guidance and were regularly updated. However, there were a few occasions where the service did not notify the Care Inspectorate as required. We discussed this with management and signposted them to guidance, *Early learning and childcare services: Guidance on records you must keep and notifications you must make*. Notifying the Care Inspectorate of significant incidents and concerns supports discussions with providers that promote children's safety and wellbeing. We asked the manager of the service to submit these. This was actioned within the agreed timescale (see area for improvement 1).

Quality assurance systems helped maintain and supported the delivery of good quality care for children. Regular audits were completed and included accidents, incidents, personal plans, medication and monitoring of staff practice. An improvement plan identified relevant areas for development. Staff were knowledgeable about improvements and told us they had been involved in developing these. Children had benefited from improvements made, for example, changes to the mealtime routine had resulted in a safe, more relaxed and unhurried experience for children.

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's wellbeing is promoted, the provider should ensure all relevant notifications are made to the Care Inspectorate as required.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed" (HSCS 4.23).

### How good is our staff team?

**4 - Good**

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

Children were supported by a caring and motivated staff team. Newly appointed staff told us they had been warmly welcomed by staff and management. They commented that their induction was positive and helped them to understand their roles and responsibilities and the expectations of the service. They were paired with a mentor to support them and help them feel welcomed and included.

Staff communicated well, sharing information to support the needs of children or when tasks took them away from an area. Staff were proactive in seeking help from colleagues and on hand to offer assistance when needed. This demonstrated a positive working environment. Staff told us they felt they worked well as a team.

Management recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed to support the wellbeing of children. Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensure positive transitions. Overall, busier times of the day, such as mealtimes or arrival and departure times were recognised and planned for.

Due to vacancies and staff absence, the team had gone through a period of change and some parents felt these changes had not always been communicated well. Photos of staff were displayed in the foyer and we discussed with the manager the importance of effective communication to support families to feel involved and included. We were satisfied management had a plan in place to progress this.

Children's care and support was promoted through staff's knowledge and skills. Staff had completed core training including first aid and child protection which contributed to keeping children safe and well. A range of additional training and learning had been undertaken. Some staff told us about the positive impact training had on their practice. This included supporting children's communication needs and children and staff wellbeing. Staff provided training feedback at team meetings to share knowledge and promote consistent practice within the team.

## 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 meet the care and learning needs of all children, leaders and staff should work together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. This should include but is not limited to, ensuring staff are deployed effectively to promote a safe and positive mealtime experience.

This is to ensure 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" (HSCS 3.16).

**This area for improvement was made on 24 June 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

The service was appropriately staffed which allowed children to make full use of the different areas across the setting. Staff communicated effectively, moved around the setting, and responded to children's needs by positioning themselves where they were needed most. Staff consistently sat with children at snack and mealtimes. This contributed to a safe environment with effective supervision of children.

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

### Previous area for improvement 2

To keep children safe, the provider should ensure the safe administration of medication. This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) Undertaking a full review of all medication to ensure details and records are up-to-date.
- b) Carrying out a review of long-term medication every three months along with parents.
- c) Ensuring staff are knowledgeable and competent in the safe storage, recording and administration of medication.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed" (HSCS 4.23).

**This area for improvement was made on 29 March 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Appropriate storage and systems were in place for medication being administered safely. Staff were knowledgeable about children's health needs and knew the signs, symptoms and actions to take where a child may require medication. Medication forms contained accurate information and were regularly reviewed with parents. Regular medication audits were completed as part of the quality assurance process.

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

### Previous area for improvement 3

To keep children safe and promote their wellbeing, the provider and manager should ensure effective quality assurance processes are in place, including robust audits and monitoring of staff 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 processes" (HSCS 4.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 29 March 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Regular audits were completed and included accidents, incidents, personal plans, medication and monitoring of staff practice. An improvement plan identified relevant areas for development. This was contributing to improved outcomes for children. Processes and procedures must now be fully embedded into practice to ensure continuous and sustained improvement.

**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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - 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](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

## Contact us

Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto: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 cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

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.