Canonbie Nursery
Day Care of Children

Canonbie Primary School
Canonbie
DG14 0XA

Telephone: 01387 371 336

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 November 2025

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003501

Service no:
CS2003015464

About the service

Canonbie nursery is registered to provide a daycare service to a maximum of 20 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The provider of the service is Dumfries and Galloway Council.

The service is located in Canonbie Primary School in Canonbie, Dumfries. The nursery has access to a secure outdoor area, the school playground and field, indoor school hall and library. It is within easy walking distance of village amenities like the shop and park.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced visit which took place on Tuesday 25 November and Wednesday 26 November 2025. Feedback was given on Thursday 27 November 2025. 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 13 children using the service
- received 11 completed questionnaires from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff
- 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.

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 were cared for in a nurturing environment where they were respected as individuals and offered a wide range of opportunities to learn and develop their skills and interests.
- Children were happy, confident and actively engaged in play and learning. They were having fun.
- Staff supported children's emotional development and responded well to their ideas, ensuring resources were available to extend learning.
- Strong relationships with families ensured a partnership approach to care. Parents felt well informed and involved in the life of the nursery. They valued the close relationships staff had with their children and praised communication and support.
- Management and staff demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement, with self-evaluation embedding in practice and an improvement plan informed by systematic quality assurance processes.

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	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very 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 5 - Very Good

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.

Children were cared for in a setting which nurtured and respected them as individuals and provided them with a variety of opportunities to learn and develop their skills and interests. These aims were clearly set out in the setting's Vision, Values and Aims Statement which outlined expectations for parents and children. Whilst these had been developed prior to the current manager's appointment, there was recognition that these should be regularly reviewed with parents, staff and children.

Management and staff demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement. Self-evaluation had been a focus for improvement, and this had enabled staff to develop as confident, reflective practitioners, using self-evaluation regularly and effectively. An improvement plan was in place, which clearly set out priorities for improvement and was shared with parents. The plan was informed by quality assurance processes which included parent feedback and knowledge of children's interests and opinions. A monitoring calendar supported the systematic review of key areas like children's plans and audits of accidents and incidents.

Staff actively reflected on practice and made changes, for example improving the environment to improve children's experiences. Peer observation and child-focused tools, alongside formal observations of practice, would further strengthen this. A floor book for improvement told the story of the setting's improvement journey and was increasingly reflecting children's voice, for example influencing snack menus.

Staff were keen to learn and open to new ideas. Their practice was informed by national guidance, for example Scottish Social Services Council and Education Scotland learning resources. Training and professional learning opportunities were well supported. We suggested that further use of Care Inspectorate practice guidance, like the mealtime experiences, would support this further. Leadership was promoted through champion roles, with staff taking responsibility for developing curricular areas. We suggested that adjusting the staff rota to allow for longer periods in specific areas would further support continuity and depth of learning.

Staff felt respected, valued and supported by management and one another. The revised professional review system included regular check-ins rather than annual reviews, supporting ongoing professional dialogue and support. Induction followed the national induction resource, with mentoring and strong team support for new staff. Staff described the setting as welcoming and inclusive, and told us: "Canonbie Nursery is the best place I've ever worked. From day one I have felt so welcomed and part of a community and I consider myself lucky to be part of it."

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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.

Children were having fun and confidently told us about what they enjoyed, for example playing with dinosaurs, games and playing outdoors. Children's right to play was respected and valued, with a range of child-led activities. Staff were on-hand to enable children to develop their ideas and solve problems.

Children played co-operatively, and were developing friendships and leadership skills as they looked after one another and explained the rules of games. They were confident about making decisions, choosing where they wanted to play and what they wanted to do.

Opportunities to develop literacy, language and numeracy skills were evident. Numeracy had been a focus for improvement, and there were a variety of experiences provided both indoors and out. Children enjoyed stories, and rhymes, when they had fun changing the words to familiar songs. Table-top games were very popular and supported turn-taking and the understanding of rules. Creativity and problem solving were promoted through block play, arts and crafts and role play. Children had some opportunities to learn about the digital world, and this was an area which would benefit from further development.

Staff knew the children very well and used this knowledge to plan experiences that built on skills and interests. Staff supported children's emotional development effectively, by sharing strategies which helped children manage their feelings positively. They had started to implement the "Think Equal" programme which promotes attributes like empathy and an understanding of diversity. We observed that staff responded very well to children's ideas and made sure that children had the resources they needed to develop these further.

Planning for children's learning had been a focus for improvement, with staff trying out different formats to record their observations, ideas and next steps. We discussed the current planning and recording systems during our visit, and made some suggestions to support the setting further. We agreed that management and staff should continue to explore different ways of involving children more actively in their learning journey.

Parents felt well informed about their child's learning and were actively involved in the life of the setting through Stay and Play sessions and improved handover times. We saw that parents were welcomed into the nursery at collection times, and invited to participate in activities. Information was shared in a variety of ways, including daily conversations and an online app used to share photographs, observations and next steps. A weekly video provided a record of activities, and we suggested that adding children's comments would help evaluate experiences and plan next steps. Staff also wrote monthly letters to children, celebrating their achievements and progress.

Children had opportunities to learn about their community and the wider world through activities like visits to places of interest, joining in with the rest of the school and also participating in community events like a festive lantern parade. These opportunities help children to feel connected with their local community, build confidence and develop respect for others.

Parents told us: "Nursery is wall to wall fun. Children have the opportunity to do a range of extra activities like, rugby coaching and outdoor learning experiences in the woods to name a couple." They liked the child-led learning and said, "The children show an interest in an area and the staff run with it and create activities bespoke to need."

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

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.

Children were confident, happy and secure in the nursery, cared for by a nurturing, kind and supportive staff

team. Staff knew the children very well, understood their circumstances and were sensitive to their needs. Staff treated children respectfully and valued their individual preferences. Relationships were very important, and staff had worked to build trust with children and their families, ensuring that there was a partnership approach to children's care.

All children had personal care plans detailing how their needs would be met. Information was gathered from parents by sharing the documents in advance, giving them time to consider their expectations before attending a meeting where the plans were created. Appropriate strategies were in place, and referrals to other agencies were made when appropriate.

Management and staff had a clear understanding of their roles in keeping children safe. Child Protection was a core subject, refreshed and discussed regularly. Medication procedures were reviewed in line with current guidance and shared with parents.

Children experienced meals and snacks which were sociable and unhurried, with staff sitting with children to support conversation and role model good practice. The snack menu had had recently been reviewed using the most up to date guidance, ensuring that children were provided with healthy options. A bubble party had been introduced as a fun alternative for celebrating birthdays. The lunchtime experience was being reviewed due to an increase in numbers, and we discussed ensuring that arrangements continue to support conversation and interaction. Drinking water was available throughout the day.

Children were encouraged to help with tasks like setting tables and were developing life skills such as independence and being responsible, for example when getting dressed and helping to tidy up and look after their toys. Children were confident about asking questions and seeking comfort, including cuddles. Staff were attuned to children's moods and responded sympathetically, offering comfort and first aid when needed.

The pace and balance of day were appropriate, with active outdoor play and quiet, restful times. Cosy areas were available indoors and outside. Children could choose to play alone or in groups. Safe arrangements were in place for those who chose not to join in larger group activities. Whole group activities were timed to fit natural breaks in play and we suggested that the time before home could be used to reflect on what children enjoyed and involve them in planning for the next day.

Parents told us: "Regular reviews in nursery with my child's key worker make me feel confident and comfortable with how [my child] is getting on. I can also talk to them any time about anything in between these reviews". "Very good communication. I also really like the online platform where pictures and videos are uploaded. Sometimes my [child] won't always say what [they've] been up to at nursery and this is really lovely for us then to chat about". "It is a fantastic nursery. My child's confidence has grown so much since [starting there]. Parents valued "The close relationships children have with staff, they really get to know them and plan with their interests in mind".

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	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

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

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