Hoddom Nursery
Day Care of Children

Hoddom Primary School
Langlands Road
Ecclefechan
DG11 3DS

Telephone: 01576 300 613

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
8 October 2025

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003501

Service no:
CS2003015489

About the service

Hoddom Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 30 children at any one time aged from two years to not yet attending primary school, of whom no more than five are under three years. The service is based within the Hoddom Primary School and children are accommodated in an open-plan playroom with access to an enclosed outdoor garden. Hoddom nursery is located in a residential area in the town of Ecclefechan, Dumfries and Galloway. On the day of inspection, the service had 25 children registered; 23 children were present, all between the ages of two and to, not yet attending primary school, on day one of the inspection, and 22 on day two.

The service has sole use of the premises and the outdoor play area. Children can freely move between indoors and a secure outdoor area. The centre is within walking distance of local amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection conducted by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. It took place on 6 and 8 October 2025. The inspectors attended the service between 10:15 and 15:15 hours on 6 October, and from 09:00 to 16:45 hours on 8 October.

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 four completed questionnaires from parents/carers to gather their views and feedback.

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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within 'Children thrive and develop in quality spaces'.

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

- Strong leadership and staff collaboration improved outcomes for children.
- Effective staff deployment supported children's safety, wellbeing, and learning outcomes.
- Children thrived through engaging play, responsive planning, and skilled support.
- Children were nurtured, respected, and supported to achieve positive outcomes.
- Children benefitted from safe, engaging spaces that supported their wellbeing.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - 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.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources.

The service's vision, values, and aims had been clearly embedded in daily practice. Staff had demonstrated a strong understanding of these principles, and they had been consistently reflected in routines, interactions, and decision-making. This created a shared sense of purpose and a nurturing ethos where children felt safe, respected, and included.

Quality assurance and improvement processes had been well established and had made a measurable impact on children's experiences. Staff had used self-evaluation effectively to reflect on practice and implement changes that improved outcomes. For example, personal plans had been reviewed and strengthened through ongoing quality assurance, ensuring they were more responsive to children's needs and interests.

Staff had shown a sound understanding of best practice and national guidance. They had confidently referenced relevant frameworks, including the 'Realising the Ambition' document and 'A Quality Improvement Framework for the early learning and childcare sectors'. Staff had been reflective and committed to continuous improvement, which supported consistency and high standards across the service.

Interactions between staff and children had been respectful, responsive, and inclusive throughout the day. Children had been listened to and encouraged to express their views, which helped build confidence and a sense of belonging. Staff had been attuned to children's needs and had adapted their approach to support individual development. One area for improvement was to remain mindful of voice levels, as louder adult voices tended to influence the volume of children's responses.

Overall, leadership had been strong and effective. Staff had demonstrated a clear commitment to improvement and had worked in partnership with families to ensure the service met the needs of all children. A formal improvement plan had been developed and implemented, providing a structured approach to tracking progress, identifying areas for growth, and celebrating achievements.

Staff and the manager confidently discussed the plan's impact, emphasising how it had supported continuous improvement and improved outcomes for children across the service. Families and children had also been genuinely involved in the improvement process, sharing their views and experiences to help shape priorities and ensure the plan reflected the needs of the entire community.

The service had been well placed to continue improving and delivering high-quality outcomes for children.

Quality indicator: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment.

Staff deployment was well managed and contributed positively to children's safety, wellbeing, and learning. The manager ensured that staffing arrangements supported consistent supervision and meaningful interactions throughout the day. Children benefitted from a calm and predictable environment where their needs were met promptly and sensitively.

Staff were positioned thoughtfully to support play, learning, and care routines. This allowed children to explore freely while feeling secure and supported. Transitions between activities were smooth, with staff available to guide and reassure children as needed. The deployment of staff also supported responsive care, enabling individual attention and fostering strong relationships. Parents shared with us, "Staff are helpful and friendly," and "There are plenty of opportunities to speak with staff about any concerns."

Staff communicated effectively with one another, ensuring that responsibilities were clear and that children's experiences remained uninterrupted. This contributed to a well-organised setting where children could engage confidently and independently.

Staff consistently deployed themselves effectively throughout the day, creating a well-balanced environment that supported both active play and restful moments. During busier periods, deployment was thoughtfully managed to ensure quieter spaces remained accessible, promoting a calm and nurturing atmosphere for all children.

Overall, staff deployment was a clear strength of the service, creating a safe, nurturing, and engaging setting where children could thrive.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces — 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.

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces.

Indoor and outdoor spaces were welcoming and well-equipped, supporting children's play, learning, and wellbeing. Resources reflected children's interests and were used creatively to promote engagement. Children accessed materials independently and made choices about their play, thereby building confidence and autonomy.

Outdoor play was a regular part of the routine and supported children's physical and emotional development. Staff encouraged exploration and independence, and children were observed engaging in activities that helped them learn about the world around them. A parent shared with us about the outdoor play, "This is the highlight of nursery for my child, and the outside space was one of the biggest factors in choosing the nursery."

Safety and supervision were well managed. Staff were vigilant and aware of children's whereabouts, and risk assessments were understood and implemented. Risky play was supported in a balanced way, helping children build resilience and self-awareness; for example, by navigating obstacle courses and discussing safety. While concerns were noted about the fire door, mitigation steps were in place to keep children safe. The service reported that a gate is planned, though the timeline is not yet confirmed.

The setting benefitted from natural light and ventilation, creating a pleasant atmosphere. Hygiene and infection control were generally strong, with staff following food safety and cleaning procedures to maintain a clean and safe environment. Gloves were stored in a lidded container, supporting infection control during personal care routines.

During our 2024 inspection, we found that the children's toilets needed to be upgraded. This issue had already been noted by management and staff. The head teacher told us that the upgrade was listed in the school's maintenance plan, but no changes had been made by the time of our visit. To create welcoming and supportive personal care spaces, additional improvements are necessary in the children's toilets and nappy-changing areas.

Children influenced the design and use of spaces. Their voices shaped daily experiences, and resources promoted choice and independence. Multi-sensory play supported emotional wellbeing, and displayed celebrated children's work and reflected diversity and inclusion.

Information management was secure, respectful, and well organised. Staff actively upheld children's rights and ensured safe, welcoming physical spaces. Data protection practices met legal standards, and robust record-keeping systems supported effective care. Continued attention to refining documentation and facilities would further enhance the already strong practice.

Overall, the environment supported children's development and wellbeing. With continued attention to safety planning and facility updates, the service is well placed to build on its strengths and improve outcomes for children.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Children's play and learning experiences were evaluated as very good, with several strengths that positively impacted outcomes and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

Children were highly engaged in both spontaneous and planned play. Activities were meaningful and built on their interests, promoting deep concentration and enjoyment. For example, children were observed making their own books and writing stories, showing creativity and ownership of their learning.

Planning and assessment were child-centred and responsive. Staff offered a balanced mix of child-led and adult-led play, allowing children to explore freely while receiving appropriate guidance. Achievements were celebrated and progress tracked effectively. Children were seen enjoying building towers and storytelling, which reflected thoughtful planning and a strong understanding of individual needs.

Language, literacy, and numeracy were well supported through varied resources and purposeful play. Children matched numbers with items on the table, engaged in storytelling, and participated in singing activities that developed core skills in a fun and natural way.

Interactions between staff and children were respectful, responsive, and skilled. Staff used effective questioning and scaffolding to extend learning and spark curiosity. Staff observations were of a high standard and led to well-informed, targeted support that enhanced children's experiences and development. Staff input was timely and purposeful, contributing to meaningful learning.

Overall, children benefitted from a rich learning environment where play was valued and learning was embedded in everyday experiences. Parents shared with us about opportunities and experiences on offer: "My child has the choice to do a selection of activities as soon as my child goes into nursery," and "Playing

on the tyres, drawing with chalk, running, playing with bubbles." The service is well placed to continue building on these strengths and further enhance outcomes for children.

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.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support.

Staff provided warm, responsive care that helped children feel safe, secure, and emotionally supported. Observations were used effectively to guide care routines and reduce stress. For example, a child was gently encouraged to count peers present, helping to ease tension and promote calm.

Children's rights were respected and embedded in daily practice. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the children's rights and linked them meaningfully to children's learning. Children were consistently heard, included in decisions, and treated with dignity.

Relationships across the setting were strong and consistent. Staff worked closely with families, creating a sense of trust and partnership. Parents told us that, "Parents are invited to attend stay and play sessions in nursery," and "Staff are very polite and approachable. Willing to help and give advice on anything." This was evident in the positive interactions observed between staff and parents, and in the open-door approach that welcomed families into the playroom.

Personal plans were in place and well maintained. They had been created in partnership with parents, signed, dated, and updated regularly. Targets were clearly based on observations and planning, allowing staff to tailor support to each child's individual needs.

Mealtimes were calm and sociable. Children chose when to eat, served themselves salad, poured drinks, and even refilled water from the fridge. Staff sat with children, creating a relaxed and respectful atmosphere. Children were also observed cleaning up after themselves, promoting independence and responsibility.

Medication processes were in place to keep children safe. Staff had strong links with professionals, such as health visitors, speech and language therapists, which supported positive outcomes for children and families. All staff had completed child protection training and understood their roles and responsibilities.

Accident and incident logs were in place, with audits and follow-up actions recorded. Staff were adjusting to a new system, and with continued use, this will become embedded in routine practice.

Overall, children were nurtured, respected, and supported in their achievement. The service demonstrated a strong commitment to wellbeing and development, with clear systems in place to ensure safety and inclusion. With minor adjustments to documentation, the service is well placed to maintain and build on these strengths.

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 children's needs to be met, the provider and management team should ensure that staff deployment considers staff's knowledge, skills and experience as well as children's individual care routines. Daily tasks should be planned for in a way that does not impact on the quality of staff engagement with children.

This area for improvement was made on 21 January 2025.

Action taken since then

Since the last inspection, the service has taken positive steps to address the identified area for improvement regarding staff deployment. During this inspection, we observed that staffing levels were appropriate and consistently met the needs of the children. Staff were deployed effectively throughout the day, with a good mix of skills and experience that supported both individual care routines and high-quality engagement. Daily tasks were well organised. The team worked collaboratively, ensuring care and support remained consistent and stable.

As a result, 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.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	5 - Very Good

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - 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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