Kirkcowan Nursery
Day Care of Children

Kirkcowan Primary School
Wellhouse Road
Kirkcowan
Newton Stewart
DG8 0HP

Telephone: 01671 830 234

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 January 2025

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003501

Service no:
CS2003015492

About the service

Kirkcowan Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 18 children aged 2 years upwards to those not yet attending primary school. The service offers day care for children and includes a nutritious cooked meal.

The nursery is located within Kirkcowan Primary School in the village of Kirkcowan, Dumfries and Galloway. The children have access to a secure outdoor area and make good use of facilities within the local community.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 14 January 2025 and Wednesday 15 January 2025. The inspection was carried out by an Early Learning and Childcare 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:

- spoke to children attending the service and some of their families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents including personal care plans, learning folders and quality assurance and monitoring documents.

Key messages

Children were being cared for by a caring, committed and professional staff team.

Staff knew the children very well and responded to them respectfully and with love.

Children were secure, confident and developing friendships. They were having fun.

The management team worked together well and supported a caring culture within the whole team.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very 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

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children were being cared for by a warm, caring and nurturing staff team and as a result were confident, secure and developing friendships. Staff knew the children very well and could tell us all about them. They worked together to support children and were tuned into what children needed. Parents told us: "Staff are friendly and always willing to help and give advice, they are always interested in my little one and everything we have been doing in the holidays etc".

All children had a personal care plan and staff were reviewing these with parents during our visit. Plans contained detailed information about children and their wellbeing and safety needs. These included strategies for supporting children with their health and managing their emotions. Information gathered from parents helped staff to look at children through the wellbeing indicator lens and this mostly meant that they had the information they needed. However, there were occasions when not all of the information needed had been shared with the setting, for example medication. It would be helpful for staff to review their procedures to make sure that everyone involved in a child's care understands why staff should have the information they need to care for children safely. Whilst staff clearly knew the children and how to support them, not all information was recorded and we have asked staff to reflect on the importance of recording for continuity and improvement.

Snack and mealtimes were sociable occasions when staff encouraged children to chat and share their thoughts. Staff responded well to children. They listened to them and respected their wishes. We did observe occasions when staff were focussed on tasks and have asked that they be mindful of this. Children used real dishes, glasses and cutlery which values children and also encourages them to be careful. Children were encouraged to be independent and make choices about how much they wanted to eat. Staff were aware of dietary preferences and allergies. They took great care to ensure that food was appropriate for individual children. Staff were vigilant about how children were eating and made sure that children had a safe and enjoyable experience.

All staff had attended child protection training. Visitors made aware of what to do if they had concerns. Procedures were clearly available in the rooms used by the nursery and included a child friendly version of the procedure. Staff had a strong understanding of their responsibilities for keeping children safe.

Children and families were well supported both when they started at the setting and when they moved on to school. Children were able to come for induction visits, as well as to the community Tea and Toast sessions. Staff had good relationships with professionals from other agencies, for example the Health Visitor and made good use of the available support to ensure that children and families were cared for.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

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

Children were having fun as they enjoyed a variety of play and learning experiences. We heard laughter and happy chat throughout our visit. Children were offered a variety of play and learning opportunities which supported them to develop curiosity, experiment and try things out for themselves. Parents told us that children "go for walks to a local farm often and walks through the woods to pick brambles and apples and then make jam, or sticks and leaves to make pictures with".

Children's rights were well respected. The setting had recently been awarded a silver award for respecting rights and children did know about their rights. Children were learning about the wellbeing indicators and this included how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Children talked to us about the healthy foods they were selling in their shop. Staff supported the development of numeracy and literacy skills through conversation and a variety of interesting experiences.

Children had visited the local book town where they had heard an author reading a story and had used the local bus service to travel further afield and learn about their wider community.

All children had learning folders which showed what they had been doing and identified some next steps. Whilst planning did take account of children's interests, it would be helpful for staff to take a more systematic approach to using and recording observations of children as they develop and learn. This will enable them to track progress better as well as plan activities which deepen learning and provide more challenge.

Staff engaged well with children and we saw that children were making choices and were consulted by staff when decisions were made. We did hear staff using questioning however this tended to be for social and information gathering reasons and we have pointed out that greater use of open-ended questions would support all children to develop their thinking skills and lead their own play better.

Staff discussed children's learning with one another regularly and it would be good to develop this practice to involve children more in reviewing their own learning and next steps. A recording format had been developed to support staff to evaluate and celebrate learning however was not being used. Staff were recording children's experiences in a floor book and may want to consider using this format as a more effective tool for evaluating learning and identifying next steps.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

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

Children were being cared for in a welcoming and safe environment which provided them with a wide variety of play and learning opportunities. The layout of furnishings, toys and materials enabled children to make choices about most of their day. Parents told us that "the children do spend some time outside, but we feel that our child would enjoy a more free flow approach to outdoor play with the option at all times to be able to go outside to play."

The indoor space used by the setting was small and limited children's ability to engage in very active play when they wanted to. Opportunities to rest were also limited by the available space, although staff had created a quiet area for children to read and rest. Work had recently been started on adjusting the lighting

so that staff could have better control of making the space more cosy. Children were not able to choose to go outside when they wanted to, although they could ask. Because of the number of staff available, children could only go outside if everybody went. Children had some timetabled access to the school gym hall and they used this space to participate in a variety of active games and exercise. We have asked the setting to risk assess for the possibility of free flow access to the outdoors.

The environment both indoors and outdoors was clean. Staff carried out daily health and safety checks. Infection control procedures were in place, and appropriate handwashing facilities were available in the playroom. We observed that children were following good handwashing practices. An appropriate space was provided for nappy changing and we have advised that spare clothing should be stored in a sealed container to prevent the spread of infection.

Children had opportunities to experience risky play outdoors and also on trips around the community and in the school hall. Children were encouraged to think about their own safety and assess risk for themselves, for example they knew about road safety. Children were encouraged to take responsibility for their environment and care for the world around them.

How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

There was a clear vision for the setting which laid out how children would learn and develop through play and be supported by staff. This had been reviewed recently by both staff and parents. Parents told us that they liked the 1-2-1 time and found it beneficial. They confirmed that they got "feedback forms asking for views". Other parents commented that they would appreciate "some flexibility to accommodate working parents, and allow both mum and dad time to visit nursery".

The management team had a very good overview of strengths and areas for development in aspects all areas of the service. An improvement plan was in place, which was based on quality assurance processes like, feedback from families, professional development reviews and self-evaluation. There was a monitoring calendar in place which identified tasks and responsibilities including children's folders however the management team were at the early stages of deciding how to share tasks and we made some suggestions about this.

Self-evaluation was well used within the setting. Staff had regular opportunities to reflect on practice. They met formally each week and had a regular focus area to look at, for example the impact of new guidance like Setting the Table for mealtimes. Whilst meetings were recorded, these did not always set out what the outcome of discussions were and how actions would be taken forward. Staff displayed a confident knowledge and understanding of how to keep children safe and we suggested that it might be helpful to add safeguarding as a focus at team meetings.

The views of children and their families were valued and feedback had been sought from parents on a variety of topics. A QR code had been created to make giving feedback easier. Whilst parents were welcomed into the nursery and there was an open door policy we noted that few parents did come in at handover times and we have suggested that the setting may find the practice document, "Me, My Family and My Childcare Setting" a helpful document for discussion.

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children were being cared for by a caring, committed and professional staff team. Across the team there was a wide mix of skills and experiences, which helped them to work together to meet children's needs effectively. Interactions between staff, children and parents were respectful, friendly and kind. Parents told us: "We feel that there are enough staff to accommodate the number of children in the nursery, the positive relationships between children and staff show this".

Staff worked together throughout the day. They observed what was happening in the setting and generally moved around to ensure that they were in the right place to support children, for example by joining in games and role play. Staff responded well to children's questions and made sure that the answers were easy to understand and appropriate. This helped to create an environment where children could feel secure, valued and trust the adults caring for them.

The staff team were keen to learn and develop their practice. All members of staff were supported to attend training and learning events which enabled them to follow their interests and meet their professional registration requirements. Management encouraged staff to put their learning into practice and to share it with one another, for example staff had attended intergenerational skills training which helped them to build relationships within their local community.

Management of the setting knew their team well and supported them to develop their skills and interests. Informal support and supervision sessions were used as a way of checking in on staff wellbeing as they were needed. Annual reviews meant that they had the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify areas they would like to focus on, for example the development outdoor learning. Staff told us that they felt well supported and strongly agreed that they had the resources to help them support children and that there were always enough staff to meet children's needs.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very 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?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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