Laurieknowe Nursery
Day Care of Children

Laurieknowe Primary School
Laurieknowe
Dumfries
DG2 7AJ

Telephone: 01387 252 604

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 September 2026

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003015494

About the service

Laurieknowe Nursery is registered to provide a daycare service to a maximum of 94 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. With no more than 10 children aged 2 to under 3 years of age.

The nursery is located within Laurieknowe Primary School and is situated in its own suite of rooms. There is direct access to two outdoor play areas, where children can explore and play actively. The nursery is conveniently situated close to Dumfries town, and makes use of local facilities and places of interest in the community.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 8 September and Wednesday 9 September 2026, with feedback being given on Thursday 10 September 2026. 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
- received eight completed questionnaires from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with the manager and 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.

Key messages

- Parents can be confident that the nursery is committed to listening, learning and improving. Staff know children well, value families' views and work together to make positive changes that enhance children's experiences and outcomes.
- Children were experiencing a happy, engaging environment where they were learning through play, and developing confidence and independence. The nursery now has opportunities to build on their existing strengths by developing planning to ensure that all children experience appropriate challenge and progression in their learning.
- Children experienced warm, nurturing care from staff who knew them well. They were supported to settle at their own pace, build positive relationships and enjoy healthy routines.
- Parents felt that their children were safe, well cared for and making progress.
- Staff took children's safety seriously and supported them to develop confidence and independence. Management and staff recognised that some aspects of the environment and resources would benefit from further development and had plans in place to improve these.

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	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 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.

Management and staff had worked with children develop the setting's Vision, Values and Aims (VVA), helping children to understand what they could expect from their nursery experience. This was shared with families and displayed throughout the setting. A Children's Charter had also been created, building on the nursery's values and helping children feel involved in shaping the culture of the service. Staff and management recognised that these documents would now benefit from being reviewed and refreshed. We discussed how revisiting the VVA regularly at meetings could help staff reflect on how well they were putting the values into practice.

A commitment to continuous improvement was evident in staff practice. Staff spoke confidently about changes they had made in response to children's needs. For example, changes to the dining room layout had enabled children to access outdoor play throughout the day. This showed that staff listened to children and adapted practice to improve outcomes and experiences.

The nursery used recognised quality frameworks and a detailed monitoring calendar to evaluate the quality of the service and identify areas for improvement. This included reviewing incidents, complaints and children's records, and we saw examples where information gathered through these processes had led to positive changes in the environment and day-to-day practice. Children's personal plans were reviewed regularly. We discussed opportunities to involve staff more fully in reviewing anonymised plans to strengthen understanding of how effectively plans reflect individual children's needs and experiences.

While staff regularly reflected on practice, some were less aware of their role within the nursery's formal self-evaluation processes. Increasing staff involvement and ownership of self-evaluation would help strengthen the whole-team approach to improvement. Similarly, management's observations of practice were mainly informal. We discussed introducing a more structured approach, focusing on children's experiences and interactions, to provide clearer evidence of strengths and areas for development.

Management and staff were welcoming, open to feedback and committed to involving families in the life of the nursery. Parents had opportunities to share their views through surveys, newsletters and activities such as the gardening group. Feedback from families, staff and quality assurance activities helped shape the nursery's improvement plan, which was shared with parents and carers. We also discussed additional ways of gathering feedback, such as with greater use of QR codes.

Parents gave largely positive feedback about the nursery, describing staff as friendly, approachable and supportive. Parents identified opportunities to strengthen communication and were hopeful that the recently introduced online platform would support this.
Staff wellbeing was clearly valued by management. This was particularly important given the significant changes experienced by the service in recent years, including changes to the building, staff turnover and the introduction of two year olds. Staff spoke positively about the support they had received from management and felt comfortable discussing concerns when needed. They welcomed the planned wellbeing initiatives, recognising the impact that change had had on the team.

Staff benefited from opportunities to develop leadership through champion roles, enabling them to lead on

areas of interest and share their knowledge with colleagues. A mentoring system and induction programme were in place to support new staff. However, some staff were unclear about these, suggesting they could be promoted more consistently across the team. Staff had identified ways to further strengthen communication about changes and involvement in decision making. Staff spoke positively about the nursery and demonstrated a genuine commitment to providing the best possible experiences for children.

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.

Entry into the setting was secure and appropriate safety measures were in place to ensure staff were aware of children's whereabouts throughout the day. Daily registers and whiteboards were used to record numbers and support supervision. As a result, children were kept safe. The leadership team had completed risk assessments to support safety and wellbeing. Whilst these were generally relevant, we identified a few inconsistencies in recording and updating them promptly to reflect recent changes.

Staff appropriately prioritised children's safety. We discussed opportunities to further develop children's ability to assess and manage risks for themselves through a risk-benefit approach to play. This would help children build confidence, resilience and problem-solving skills while continuing to enjoy challenge and adventure in their play.

Children had access to large open play spaces, a dining room and an outdoor area which they could access independently. Further consideration of how children are monitored in corridors would help strengthen arrangements for children's safety. The environment was organised into defined areas that supported a range of play experiences including construction, literacy, role play and sand and water. Resources were mostly displayed at children's level although choices within the sand and water area were limited. The service had recently combined age groups together, creating additional space for small group work, and parent workshops which were planned for later in the term. We discussed the use of environmental audits to ensure the environment continues to meet the needs of all children.

While the environment supported children's learning and play, some areas appeared tired and would benefit from refurbishment. We discussed ways to create a more welcoming and homely atmosphere, including covering walls and fixing areas of flooring that were lifting. The quality of resources varied. Some newer resources encouraged curiosity and creativity, however, a number were broken or in poor condition and should be replaced. Environmental print was evident throughout the setting and supported children's early literacy skills. Planned improvements will further strengthen this by ensuring consistent use of visuals and words and replacing any missing letters or numbers. As a result, the overall quality and welcoming nature of the environment were impacted.

Children had access to toilets and changing spaces which were monitored by staff throughout the day. The leadership team should ensure these checks are consistently carried out throughout the day to ensure children's comfort and wellbeing is being supported. These areas would also benefit from environmental print to support routines.

The service had identified that the outdoor space needed developed and two staff had been given leadership responsibility for this area. The service had applied for a grant to support the development of the space. We also discussed the benefits of developing a quiet, cosy space where children could rest and relax.

There were opportunities for children to lead their own play, and their work or designs were recognised, displayed and praised by staff. As a result, children felt valued and included in the service. However, there were occasions when children became disengaged, suggesting that some experiences or resources did not fully reflect children's needs, stages of development or interests. We discussed the benefits of carefully considering how experiences are presented to children and using provocations to spark curiosity and extend learning.

Children's personal information was stored in line with legislation, and the leadership team had created a 'need to know' folder to support new or supply staff. As a result, information was shared effectively.

Children play and learn 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.

Children were happy and clearly enjoying their time at nursery. Children moved confidently around the nursery environment, choosing where they wanted to play and who they wanted to play with. They appeared settled and secure, readily approaching staff for support when needed.

The nursery provided a stimulating environment where children could explore their interests, be creative and make choices about their learning. Children enjoyed a wide range of experiences, including construction play, arts and crafts and resources exploring light and colour. Many children demonstrated developing skills and confidence, for example when using scissors and engaging in creative activities. Outdoor play was popular, with many children choosing to spend much of their time outside, exploring and playing games.

Children were developing early literacy and numeracy skills through everyday experiences. We saw children confidently recognising colours and shapes and using mathematical language in their play. Children were enthusiastic about books and talked excitedly about visits to the local library. Many enjoyed music making and singing, confidently joining in with familiar songs and rhymes. Staff supported children's language development through conversation and by introducing new vocabulary. There is now an opportunity to further enhance communication and thinking skills by increasing the use of open-ended questions and discussions that encourage children to solve problems and think creatively.

Staff knew children well and generally responded well to their interests and emerging learning. For example, staff described how they planned to build on a child's interest in paper aeroplanes. This demonstrated a commitment to following children's interests and supporting their learning. However, there were occasions when staff were focused on routines or practical tasks and missed opportunities to extend children's learning, language and thinking through richer interactions and conversations.

We discussed staff deployment across the nursery. Staff worked hard to support children, but there were times when movement between areas affected continuity of interactions. Reviewing deployment and clarifying expectations for designated areas could help ensure children consistently benefit from high-quality interactions throughout the day.

Children were developing valuable life skills through everyday experiences. They took responsibility for tidying up, sharing toys and helping others. Staff described how children had been given a budget to purchase items from a local charity shop, supporting their understanding of choice, responsibility and money. Children also demonstrated a good awareness of road safety through experiences in the local

community. We discussed how visual timers could further support turn taking and sharing by helping children understand how long they need to wait.

The nursery had recently introduced an online platform to support planning, assessment and communication with families. Children's individual learning stories and floor books provided a positive record of children's experiences, achievements and interests. These included children's views and some next steps in learning.

We discussed plans identified within the service improvement plan to strengthen planning, assessment and tracking of children's learning. Although children's interests influenced experiences, this was not always clearly reflected in planning records. The introduction of the online platform should help strengthen links between observations, assessment and future planning. We found opportunities to further develop planning by focusing more clearly on what children are learning, their individual progress and meaningful next steps. Ensuring next steps are regularly reviewed and updated as children achieve them will help provide appropriate challenge and support continued progress in learning.

Children are supported to achieve 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.

Children were happy, settled and enjoying their time at nursery. As our visit took place early in the new nursery year, many children were still getting used to the setting and routines. We saw that most confidently separated from their parents and were becoming familiar with daily routines. Staff provided sensitive support for the small number of children who needed extra reassurance. Flexible settling-in arrangements helped ensure that children and families were supported in a way that met their individual needs, allowing children to build confidence and feel secure at their own pace.

Warm, caring relationships were evident throughout the nursery. Most children were confident about approaching staff for help and support, and we saw friendships developing across the setting. Parents were welcomed into the nursery and had opportunities to speak with staff at handover times. We discussed the benefits of staff approaching parents directly at handover times to support more meaningful communication. Noticeboards provided useful information for families, although management may wish to ensure key information is consistently available regardless of which entrance families use.

Children benefited from the support of an identified keyworker who took responsibility for understanding and planning for their care and wellbeing needs. Children started and ended their day in keyworker groups, where they discussed their feelings, experiences and achievements. These groups supported children's sense of belonging and emotional wellbeing. We discussed ensuring that participation remains flexible and inclusive, with alternative quiet activities available for children who do not wish to join in group activities.

All children had personal care plans in place. These contained information about children's health, wellbeing and developmental needs. The nursery was in the process of introducing a new format, which should help gather more detailed information from families. We found some variation in the quality and detail of plans. Developing a more consistent approach, including evaluating information and identifying strategies to support individual children, would help ensure care plans provide a clear personalised picture of each child.

Children had access to drinking water throughout the day and were encouraged to develop independence

throughout the day. We asked the nursery to review how water bottles are stored to make it easier for children to find and use their own bottle, while also reducing the risk of germs spreading between bottles.

Children enjoyed a variety of health snacks and meals, helping them to learn about healthy eating in a positive way. Mealtimes enabled children to develop independence by serving themselves and pouring their own drinks, building confidence and self-help skills. We observed some differences in how staff supported children during meals and in routines such as storing packed lunches. A more consistent approach would help ensure all children have the same opportunities to develop their independence. Planned improvements to how snacks and lunches are tracked should also help support children's wellbeing.

Mealtimes were relaxed, social occasions where children enjoyed chatting with staff and their friends. Staff sat alongside children, encouraging conversation and creating a warm, positive atmosphere. We discussed how shared mealtime experiences could be used further to model healthy eating habits and support children's communication and social skills.

Feedback from parents was very positive. Parents told us that nursery had helped their children become more confident, develop self-help skills, make choices independently and benefit from varied play experiences. Parents also described staff as helpful and accommodating, noting that staff knew their children well and shared important information about their progress and wellbeing. Overall, parents felt their children were safe, well cared for and enjoying their nursery experience.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good

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

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

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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