

Crossroads Nursery - Banchory Day Care of Children

Crossroads of Durris
Banchory
AB31 6BX

Telephone: 01330 700 423

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 May 2026

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003015747

About the service

Crossroads Nursery - Banchory, Aberdeenshire provides a care service to a maximum of 20 children at any one time aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The manager is also the manager of Drumoak Primary School Nursery.

The service is part of Durris Primary School located a few miles away. The premises consist of playrooms with direct access to toilets, a nappy changing area, and kitchen facilities. The service has free-flow access to outdoor spaces and is close to a woodland area.

There was up to 13 children present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 May 2026 between 08:25 and 16:25 and 26 May 2026 between 08:25 and 13:00. 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 ten of their parents/carers
- received four responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff and management
- 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

- Children were very happy, confident and settled.
- Warm, nurturing relationships created a safe and supportive environment.
- High-quality play experiences promoted creativity, independence, and learning.
- Inclusive practice supported a strong sense of belonging for all.
- Effective leadership promoted teamwork and continuous improvement.
- Very strong partnerships with families and professionals enhanced 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

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

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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**.

The setting had taken an inclusive approach to developing its shared vision, values, aims, involving staff, children, families, and the wider community in the process. This resulted in a vision that reflects the service's role at the heart of a rural community, with a clear focus on being nurturing, family-orientated, and fostering a love of learning. These values were evident in practice and contributed to a welcoming ethos. Work to promote this vision was ongoing and embedding it consistently in daily practice will further strengthen its impact.

The service was well led by a very motivated and supportive manager and lead practitioner who have created a positive and collaborative team culture. Staff reported feeling valued, listened to and involved in decision making, supported through regular team meetings, supervision, and open communication. This inclusive leadership approach fostered strong teamwork and a shared commitment to improvement. The positive morale of staff was evident in practice and contributed to consistency in care and learning.

Self-evaluation processes were well established and actively included the views of families. The setting gathered feedback through both formal surveys and informal methods, such as discussions and post-it note evaluations following events. Clear actions were taken in response, demonstrated through initiatives like the "You said, we did" board. This highlighted improvements such as enhanced outdoor spaces developed in partnership with families and the community. Parents reported feeling valued and able to contribute at any time.

Improvement planning was systematic and clearly embedded in practice. Priorities were displayed and shared with families, with current developments focusing on vision and values, planning, and parental engagement. Staff were fully involved, with self-evaluation a regular part of meetings and in-service days used to support reflection. The use of the Quality Improvement Framework and clear tracking of progress supported a focused approach to development, resulting in positive outcomes for children.

Staff training and leadership opportunities were developing positively. Staff valued professional learning, particularly training linked to improvement priorities, which had increased confidence in areas such as tracking and monitoring. There were emerging opportunities for distributed leadership, with staff beginning to lead on areas of interest and share skills. Further development of this approach would strengthen practice further.

Quality assurance processes were robust and well organised, supported by a clear calendar of audits, policy reviews, and staff monitoring. Supervision was supportive and reflective, focusing on strengths and next steps, while audit outcomes were shared to inform improvements. The small team structure allowed for regular informal support, further strengthening practice. Induction and mentoring were flexible and tailored, ensuring all staff and students were well supported in their roles. Quality assurance and staff support systems were strong, contributing to a confident and capable team.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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**.

Relevant theory was clearly used to support children's development and inform practice within the setting. Staff demonstrated an understanding of frameworks such as Realising the Ambition, using these to guide observations and focus on key areas including literacy and numeracy. The manager ensured that professional learning and in-service training were meaningfully linked to theory and best practice guidance, helping staff understand the rationale behind their approaches. This thoughtful application of theory supported staff to deliver high-quality experiences that were both purposeful and developmentally appropriate.

Children were highly engaged and motivated in their play, confidently making choices and accessing resources to support their interests both indoors and outdoors. They demonstrated creativity, curiosity and problem solving through imaginative play. For example, creating dinosaur scenarios, using the mud kitchen for sensory exploration, and designing a ramp for the cars in the car wash using gutters and sponges. Opportunities to develop language, literacy, and numeracy were naturally integrated into play, such as measuring height using chalk and tape measures, mark making, and counting objects. Staff interactions further enriched these experiences through modelling language and extending thinking. Overall, the play environment was rich, stimulating, and effectively supported children's learning across different areas.

Parents told us their children were involved in a variety of experiences. One parent said: "The nursery also provides wonderful real-life experiences that encourage curiosity and learning. [My child] is really enjoying watching the duck eggs in the incubator, and there has been so much learning and discussion around this. It has been lovely to see [their] excitement and interest as [they learn] about the life cycle and what happens as the eggs hatch". Opportunities such as this successfully fostered children's curiosity, engagement and understanding of the world around them.

Experiences within the setting supported the development of skills for lifelong learning. Children were encouraged to take on leadership roles, make choices, and develop independence through everyday routines such as snack preparation and transitions. Staff used meaningful interactions to extend children's understanding of the world, for example discussing environmental factors during outdoor play. There were some opportunities for children to explore digital technology through resources such as the smart board, Bee-Bots, and old technology like phones and keyboards. However, this could be further developed to provide more purposeful and integrated learning experiences.

Staff interactions were highly effective in supporting and extending children's learning. Practitioners showed strong observational skills, intervening sensitively and at appropriate times to build on children's interests. They used open-ended questioning, modelling, and commentary to deepen understanding and promote thinking, as seen in rich interactions while experimenting with chalk and exploration during water play. Children were comfortable inviting staff into their play, reflecting the strong relationships in place. Staff interactions were a strength, enriching children's learning experiences and supporting sustained engagement.

Planning processes were developing well, with all staff contributing to both intentional and responsive approaches. Intentional planning identified key learning experiences and opportunities across the environment. Responsive planning captured children's interests, wellbeing, and next steps. Children's voices were clearly visible throughout the setting, informing displays and learning experiences. Observations were high quality and regularly shared with families through learning journals, supporting strong communication and continuity of learning. Tracking systems were used effectively to identify strengths and gaps, informing planning and interventions. Planning and observation systems were effective, with a clear focus on continuous improvement and were responsive to children's needs.

The setting worked well in partnership with families and other professionals to support children to reach their full potential. Staff engaged effectively with agencies such as speech and language therapy, health visitors, and specialist teachers. This ensured a coordinated approach to support. Family learning opportunities, such as stay-and-play sessions and shared projects, helped parents understand the value of play-based learning. This collaborative approach strengthened relationships and contributed positively to children's outcomes. Partnership working was strong and had a clear impact on supporting children's development and wellbeing.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

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**.

Staff consistently demonstrated warm, nurturing interactions with children, creating an environment that felt welcoming, supportive and respectful. Children appeared very happy, relaxed and secure, confidently approaching staff for help or reassurance whenever needed. Strong relationships were clearly evident, with both staff and children addressing each other by name, reflecting a genuine sense of connection and mutual respect. These positive bonds were particularly noticeable during lunchtime, where interactions were calm, engaging, and responsive, allowing children to feel valued and listened to. The quality of relationships within the setting was a key strength, significantly enhancing children's sense of security and emotional wellbeing.

Children showed a strong familiarity with daily routines, confidently engaging in expected practices such as asking to "check in" after hand washing. Effective hygiene routines were well established, with staff providing clear guidance, encouragement, and modelling positive behaviours. Transitions throughout the day were smooth and well managed, with staff clearly communicating what to expect next, ensuring children felt secure and prepared. This consistency supported children in developing confidence and independence within a well-structured and supportive environment.

Robust systems were in place to support children's safety and wellbeing. Attendance procedures were clear and accurately maintained, and appropriate adult-to-child ratios ensured that children received consistent care and support. Staff worked collaboratively, communicating effectively while supporting play and learning across indoor and outdoor spaces. Risk assessments were in place, identifying hazards alongside appropriate mitigations. Children were supported to develop an understanding of risk, as seen when a child reported finding glass and through their involvement in head counts. Staff demonstrated a strong awareness of child protection procedures and knew where to access policies. Recent training had further enhanced practice. Documentation for accidents, incidents, allergies, and medication were well maintained and regularly reviewed. Overall, effective systems and strong teamwork ensured that children's safety and wellbeing were consistently prioritised.

Mealtimes were calm, welcoming and well organised, offering children a positive and sociable experience. Children were supported to develop independence through self-serving, pouring drinks and using cutlery. Staff created a warm atmosphere through meaningful conversations and encouragement of healthy choices. Snack times further supported independence, with children involved in preparation and discussions about food and wellbeing. While staff worked well together, taking care to ensure a consistent balance between tasks and interaction, particularly during busier periods, would further enhance the experience. Overall, mealtimes were very nurturing and developmentally beneficial, supporting children's social skills and independence.

Personal planning was effective and collaborative. Plans were in place for all children and were regularly reviewed with parents to reflect individual needs and interests. While documentation was detailed and supported tailored care, streamlining information would improve accessibility for staff. Inclusion was strongly embedded, with staff implementing supportive approaches and enriching experiences despite the rural location through community links, outings, and visitors. Strong, trusting relationships with families were evident. Parents described staff as being very approachable and supportive, and valued regular communication and opportunities for involvement. One parent said: "Crossroads is such a welcoming nursery and truly feels like a home from home. The staff are always friendly and take the time to say hello, pass on any important information, and ensure that [my child] is happy and settled as [they] comes into nursery each day". Clear strengths in relationships and inclusion contributed to the high-quality of care provided to children.

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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