Strathmore Pre School Class
Day Care of Children

St. James Road
Forfar
DD8 1LE

Telephone: 01307 494 276

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 June 2026

Service provided by:
Angus Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000043

Service no:
CS2003015767

About the service

Strathmore Pre School Class registered with the Care Inspectorate in April 2002. It provides a day care of children service to a maximum of 46 children at any one time during nursery hours, aged three to those not yet attending primary school, of which a maximum of 10 children are in the two-year age range.

The service is part of Strathmore Primary School which is located in Forfar, Angus. Children have access to a large playroom with direct access to their own toilets and secure outdoor area. There is a smaller playroom for the younger children who share the outdoor space. At the time of inspection, 41 children were registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 9 June between 08:35 and 16:45 and 10 June between 9:35 and 12:30. This 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluations we:

Spoke with or spent time with children using the service

received three completed questionnaires from families using the service

spoke with six families on the day of the inspection

spoke with staff and the manager of the service

assessed core assurances, including the physical environment

observed practice and daily life

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 experienced a service led by a clear vision and strong values, which were evident in daily practice and helped them feel included and valued.
- Staff were supported to take on leadership roles and contributed confidently to improvements, creating a positive and collaborative team culture.
- Self-evaluation was embedded in daily practice and used effectively to support ongoing and meaningful improvement.
- Children received warm, nurturing care from staff who knew them well and understood their individual needs.
- Children benefited from a well-planned and stimulating environment that supported their engagement, enjoyment and creativity in play.
- Quality assurance and tracking systems were used well to improve practice and support children to make good progress in their learning.

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.

Children experienced care and support that was guided by a clear and ambitious vision. Leaders had developed meaningful values, including respect and inclusion. These values were embedded in daily practice, and reflected in how staff interacted with children, families, and each other. Staff spoke confidently about the ethos of the service and demonstrated a shared commitment to creating positive experiences for children. Children's views were actively sought and meaningfully reflected in the environment. This helped children to feel listened to and valued.

Effective leadership was leading to meaningful sustained improvements across the service. Parents shared that the leadership team was approachable and took the time to listen to their views. One parent shared, "The leadership at the nursery is great! Will always go straight to them for any issues." This supported parents to feel listened to and valued. Staff had identified leadership roles in the service and contributed confidently to improvement. They spoke about changes they had made and how these improved outcomes for children. For example, staff led in areas of numeracy and health and well being. This meant that the staff team felt empowered to lead improvements.

A strong culture of self-evaluation was evident across the service. Leaders and staff used the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors effectively to identify strengths and areas for development. Parents' feedback suggested that they could see improvement in areas they had highlighted, for example some reported that communication was getting better. Self-evaluation was embedded in daily practice and was having a positive impact on the quality of care and learning for children. Senior leaders had a clear oversight of this work and were using it well to guide improvement priorities. Improvement plans were focused, manageable and based on the needs of children and families. This supported the team to make steady and sustained progress over time.

Quality assurance processes were well developed and had a positive impact on practice. For example, leaders had improved the quality of observations in children's learning journals and helped develop greater consistency across the service. Regular professional dialogue supported reflection and helped staff to understand what high-quality practice looked like. Families spoke positively about the leadership team. They described them as approachable, responsive and supportive. They gave examples of how feedback had been listened to and acted upon, leading to improvements in the service.

Policies and procedures were in place to support the safe and effective running of the setting. Staff were confident discussing these and understood their responsibilities. This helped to ensure children's care and support was underpinned by clear guidance and a strong commitment to their safety and wellbeing.

The service had almost always made appropriate notifications to the Care Inspectorate when required, for example for specific accidents or protection concerns. We asked the service to ensure that all relevant notifications be made and they took prompt action to ensure this had been completed. This showed a highly responsive and receptive leadership time.

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.

Children experienced a rich, stimulating and nurturing environment that supported high levels of engagement, curiosity and enjoyment. The service provided a creative and enabling learning environment where children were supported to explore, investigate and lead their own play. Children were actively engaged in meaningful play experiences and showed confidence, creativity and enjoyment as they learned. They were keen to talk about what they were doing and proudly shared their experiences and achievements. This showed that children were motivated in their play and felt a strong sense of ownership over their learning environment.

The outdoor environment was a particular strength. It had been very well developed and offered children a wide range of opportunities for exploration and physical play. The use of natural and open ended resources promoted and extended children's learning. Children used the space confidently and showed high levels of engagement outside. They proudly shared areas they had helped to create, demonstrating a sense of belonging and ownership. The outdoor provision supported curiosity, movement and challenge, and contributed positively to children's overall learning experiences.

Recent work to develop provocations for learning was beginning to have a positive impact. One parent noted that there had been a lack of provocations available to promote children's learning previously. The service had responded well to feedback from parents and had taken steps to enhance children's curiosity and engagement. This showed leaders and staff were reflective and willing to adapt provision in response to children's and families' needs. These developments were helping to create more interesting opportunities for children to think, explore and become deeply involved in their learning.

Interactions between staff and children were consistently warm and supportive. Most staff extended children's learning effectively through high-quality interactions. They used language well to promote communication and support vocabulary development. Staff asked questions, commented on children's play and helped them think more deeply about what they were doing. Senior staff modelled strong practice and this was having a positive influence across the team. We discussed the importance of continuing to build consistency so that all children always benefit from the same high quality of interaction.

Tracking and assessment arrangements were robust and supported children to make good progress. Staff used a range of data and information to monitor children's learning and identify patterns or emerging needs. This helped to ensure appropriate support was in place and that children were progressing well. Regular professional dialogue supported a shared understanding of children's progress and next steps. As a result, children benefited from play and learning experiences that were well planned, enjoyable and responsive to their needs and interests.

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.

Children experienced warm, nurturing and respectful care from staff who knew them very well. Staff had developed strong, trusting relationships with children and demonstrated a clear understanding of their individual needs. Interactions were calm, kind and responsive. Staff were attuned to children's verbal and non-verbal communication and responded sensitively to their cues. They provided reassurance, encouragement and support in a way that helped children feel safe, secure and confident. Children were relaxed in the care of staff and moved around the setting with ease. This showed they felt comfortable and emotionally secure in their environment.

Staff promoted children's wellbeing very effectively. They understood that children's care should be individualised and responsive to what was happening in their lives. Transitions into the service and on to school were thoughtfully planned and well supported. Staff recognised that change and life events could affect children's emotional wellbeing. They used relevant information to understand children's experiences and support them sensitively. This meant staff had a fuller understanding of children's lives and were better able to respond to their needs.

Personal planning arrangements were highly effective. Children's individual needs, including medical needs, were clearly identified and carefully planned for. Staff spoke confidently about children's care plans and how these informed their day-to-day practice. Parents spoke positively about how well their children's needs were understood and met. Staff worked effectively with other professionals when needed. This contributed to positive outcomes for children and helped build strong, trusting relationships with families.

Mealtimes were positive, social experiences for children. In the two-year-old room, children benefited from a calm and nurturing family-style approach where staff sat with children and spoke to them about their day. This promoted their independence and emotional wellbeing. The service reviewed and reflected on mealtimes in the 3-5 room to ensure that staff were able to sit with children throughout the mealtime in both rooms. Across the service, routines were consistent and flexible. This helped children to feel secure while also allowing them choice and control. Staff supported children in a respectful way and created a relaxed atmosphere.

Staff had a secure understanding of child protection procedures. They were able to speak confidently about what they would do if they had a concern. This supported a strong safeguarding culture across the service and helped to keep children safe.

Overall, children experienced care and support that was consistently nurturing, responsive and respectful. Staff knew children very well and used this knowledge effectively to promote their wellbeing. As a result, children were secure, settled and well supported in their care.

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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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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