Cockenzie Nursery Class
Day Care of Children

Osborne Terrace
Cockenzie
Prestonpans
EH32 0BX

Telephone: 01875 811 327

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 September 2025

Service provided by:
East Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002600

Service no:
CS2003015822

About the service

Cockenzie Nursery Class is an integral part of Cockenzie Primary School. The nursery class is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 90 children aged from 3 years to primary school entry.

The primary school is situated in the coastal town of Cockenzie in East Lothian. The nursery class is situated in a newer part of the school building providing children with a bright spacious playroom which has easily accessible toilets, a kitchen area, cloakroom and an office. The large outdoor play area is accessed directly from the classroom giving children free flow access to outdoor play throughout the session.

The service is within walking distance of local amenities and transport links.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate on 25 August 2025 between 08:30 and 16:30. A return visit by one inspector took place on 27 August 2025 between 10:00 and 13:00.

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

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.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

• Children were supported to feel happy, confident, safe and secure by a professional staff team, who knew the principles of nurture well.

• Children benefitted from an exciting learning environment, where they had access to interesting resources and activities.

• Quality assurance practices should continue to be evaluated to ensure they were impacting positively on children's experiences and outcomes.

• Staff worked well as a team and deployed themselves effectively to meet most children's needs and support their care and 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support.

Children benefitted from warm, kind, nurturing interactions with staff. A family commented "Our child feels safe, nurtured and respected. They are always welcomed in warmly, and they have a great relationship with the key worker and has lots of friends". Staff had built up positive relationships and as a result, most children were happy and confident. Staff's sensitive interactions supported emotional wellbeing, this contributed to children feeling secure, included and resilient. A family commented "Cockenzie nursery is a brilliant service and has had the same supportive and nurturing learning environment for many years".

Effective personal planning and positive care supported children's overall wellbeing. Personal plans contained a range of documentation including registration information and pastoral notes. Children who needed additional help had a support plan in place that detailed strategies to support each child. Moving forward we have asked the service to evaluate support strategies to ensure they were up to date and relevant. This would support positive outcomes for the children. The majority of families all agreed that they were involved in reviewing their child's personal plan and some commented "We regularly get to review our child's care plan" and "The plan was sent home for updating regularly and could be updated throughout the year as required".

During lunch, staff worked hard to create a calm and nurturing environment. Staff sat and ate with the children, engaging with them in conversations. Children could help themselves to salad and vegetables from the salad bar. Some children were still settling into the routine of meal times meaning they did not always know what was happening next. We have asked the service to ensure all children were supported through this time. Children's meal and snack menus were designed using best practice guidance. Families shared mixed views about the healthiness of meals, although most agreed that snack choices were varied. Children's independence was promoted by pouring their own drinks, choosing their snack and tiding away. However, there were missed opportunities to include children in the preparation of snack. Moving forward the service should reflect on how the mealtime experiences could be further enhanced to promote more independence, autonomy and choice.

Staff had a good understanding of children's health needs. Allergies and intolerances were displayed. Accidents and incidents were recorded and parents appropriately informed. The service reviewed accidents and incidents to look for trends. Medication was well managed and correctly administered. Although staff recorded when they had provided medication, this was not acknowledged by the family. The service reviewed this and have updated the system to ensure families were aware their child had received medication. The area for improvement made at the previous inspection is met.

Most daily transitions were handled well, especially around supporting key worker groups of children. This included from home to nursery, within the nursery setting, and when children moved on to school. As a result, children developed a sense of security and were happy and confident in their new environments. We asked staff to review how individual children were supported during routine transitions. Families stated "I think the transition to primary one has been fantastic, my child always loved going to nursery and had a great relationship with all staff" and "the transition my child recently had from nursery to primary one has

really helped them settle with ease". Another parent commented they would like more information around starting nursery and stated "More parent information for new starts. I still have a lot of questions about how it all works".

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were happy and had fun as they experienced good quality play opportunities. These impacted positively on children's development, wellbeing and happiness. Children played outside in the large sandpit and mud kitchen, rode the bikes and enjoyed experimenting in the water tray. Inside children were happily engaged at the dough table, book area, playing with dolls in the house and craft and drawing area.

Staff promoted children's right to play and have fun. They were working hard to provide quality learning experiences by promoting choice and children's interests. Imaginative and creative play was promoted through real-life materials and loose parts. These well-considered open-ended materials and creative approaches engaged children's imagination and enriched their play and learning.

Staff understood their role in supporting children's development. When staff engaged with children, they showed interest, and some added further value to children's play and learning through interactions and modelling. Interactions were overall positive, warm and of quality however not always sustained, often short and then staff moved on. This led to missed opportunities across spaces to support and extend learning and development. Staff had the skills to use more open-ended questions. Therefore, we suggest that they take time to pause, reflect, and support children by asking encouraging and curious questions to extend their learning. By working with children to solve problems, clarify concepts and develop thinking, staff could ensure learning is meaningful and appropriately challenged.

Children benefited from a mix of planned and spontaneous play experiences and staff were continuing to develop their approaches to planning. Children were involved in the planning process as their thoughts and ideas were gathered in floor books and mind maps. However, gaps within the evaluations of play experiences meant it was difficult to track children's individual learning. We discussed this with leaders who advised this was part of ongoing improvements.

Children's individual learning and development was recorded within a learning story. Most observations did not contain sufficient detail to fully support children's learning needs. Staff should observe closely and develop experiences that build on children's existing knowledge and skills. A stronger focus on identifying significant learning would help children to become successful learners. Families appreciated the children's learning story and commented "The efforts put into the learning logs were brilliant" and "learning journey indicates how they are involved in different numeracy and literacy skills in their learning". Some stated they would like more updates on their child's learning.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in an environment that was welcoming, well-furnished and maintained with plenty of ventilation and natural light. Children's photographs and artwork was attractively displayed, supporting them to feel valued and respected.

The garden provided varied opportunities for exploration, physical play and was a key part of the children's daily experience. Children played together and engaged in physical challenges, sensory exploration and imaginative play. Families all agreed that children have regular access to outside. Comments included "My child loves the mud kitchen, pulling and planting vegetables and learning all about it. Just running wild and having fun in the boat pretending to be a pirate or just playing with his friends" and "My child is happiest outdoors and around water and the nursery make this possible. The garden is wonderful and huge and they really encourage them to get messy, explore and learn through play. We love the nursery feed with photos of them washing toy cars and experimenting with ice and making camp fires".

Play spaces were well resourced and appeared attractive to children. There were a range of open-ended and natural resources to stimulate children's creativity and problem solving. Staff ensured spaces were set up in ways that were adaptable and had potential to encourage children's sustained thinking. This supported children to use resources to extend and develop their play in line with their own ideas. Displays contributed to a stimulating environment that celebrated children's creativity and achievements.

Infection control procedures mostly supported a safe environment for children and staff. This included staff wearing gloves and an apron during nappy changing and embedded handwashing routines at key times of the day, such as after outdoor play and before and after eating. Children's safety was promoted through detailed risk assessments for all environments and activities they accessed. These assessments were regularly reviewed, and staff understood their responsibility to identify and remove any hazards that could affect children's safety and wellbeing. Children were familiar with 'Safe Sally' and were involved in risk assessing areas in the play spaces and outdoor area. This involvement supported their understanding of safety and helped keep them safe.

Children benefited from connections with the wider community. Children enjoyed regular nature play in the local woods. They were also planting and growing opportunities, within the nursery garden. Children were keen to show the display of vegetables that they had gathered from the garden and had turned into soup for snack. This contributed to children's sense of belonging and supported a wide variety of play experiences.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

The service's vision, values, and aims were displayed across the nursery and wider school community and reflected their ethos and aspirations for children and families who attended the service. These supported staff and families to understand what to expect from the service

Staff were positive about the service, and all stated that they felt supported by leaders team. Staff commented "I cannot speak highly of the senior management team" and another stated that leaders were "approachable and understanding". Staff engaged with the inspection process, demonstrating a positive attitude towards change and improvement. They were responsive to suggestions made during the inspection to continue to improve outcomes for children and families.

The welcoming ethos of the nursery was reflected in staff's and leaders positive relationships with families. Involving children and their families in the continuous improvement of the service contributed to building

strong, trusting relationships with everyone feeling included. Regular communication with families took place through a variety of methods, including daily face to face discussion, questionnaires, play and stay session. Families described feeling "involved" and that they "know what is going on in the nursery and when appropriate asked to be part of things". Whilst another family stated "communication with parents could be better. I would like to know what my child has been doing and how they are progressing". We saw that suggestions from parents were taken onboard and shared with families. This practice ensured parents felt listened to and created a collaborative approach to improvement.

We found a confident staff team who were familiar with best practice and the national quality frameworks for early learning and childcare. Team meetings took place regularly and staff had the opportunity to take part in one to one meetings with management. These provided an opportunity to discuss any improvement ideas and identify any related training needs. Staff commented that they felt listened too and their "opinions were valid and any feedback we have was well received and that all the staff are constantly working towards improving the nursery". Staff had previously been involved in the self evaluation of the setting, through team meetings, in-service days and recordings in floor books. However, there were gaps in the ongoing evaluation process. It was not always clear what impact developments and areas of improvement had on children's outcomes. The leaders agreed to improve this to ensure all children could achieve and thrive.

Quality assurance practices were beginning to contribute to the delivery of good quality care for children. A quality assurance calendar was used as a working document, identifying tasks to be completed, such as audits, wellbeing meetings with staff and reviewing policies in line with guidance. This included regular checks on medication, personal planning and learning stories. The service should continue to audit and measure the impact of any changes made and use the feedback as a foundation for future improvements.

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children benefited from a nurturing staff team who were enthusiastic and committed to providing a positive experience for the children. They were warm and caring in their approach and demonstrated positive team working and good relationships. This in turn promoted a happy and secure environment for children. Families described staff as "approachable", "loving", caring, "amazing", "open" and "supportive".

Appropriate staff deployment within the nursery class meant that children's individual needs were being met by the right number of staff throughout each element of the day. Effective use was made of the differing experience, knowledge and skills of staff to ensure children's experience across the whole day were positive and that they were safe. Staff worked together to ensure effective supervision and attachments with the children across the day. However, there was scope to develop deeper engagement with children, which would ensure they received appropriate support to further enhance their learning and development.

Staff had taken part in professional development. Staff commented "training and learning keeps me up to date with current policies and child development that I can the use in providing enriching experiences for children". Leadership roles in digital learning, literacy and additional support needs had been distributed across staff team and links to related professional learning were evident. Staff were keen to reflect on

professional development and discuss the impact this had on outcomes for children.

To support children's safety, staff monitored the number of children in different areas. They moved naturally in response to where children wished to play or where children needed closer supervision to support their safety. We saw them undertaking regular head counts and had an effective registration process to keep children safe and accounted for. Families informed us that their children were safe at the service. Comments included "It is aways a happy and safe environment" and "My child is always safe and well looked after I couldn't ask for anything better".

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 help ensure that children's health needs are met staff should accurately complete the information necessary for the administration of long-term medication.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16. Standard 3 - Health and wellbeing.

This area for improvement was made on 6 November 2017.

Action taken since then

Children's health and wellbeing benefitted from quality assurance processes which supported medication to be well managed and correctly administered.
Although staff recorded when they had provided medication, this was not acknowledged by the family. The service reviewed this and have updated the system to ensure families were aware their child had received medication.

This area for improvement is 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

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

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