# Bell's Brae Primary School Nursery
# Day Care of Children

Gilbertson Road
Lerwick
Shetland
ZE1 0QJ

Telephone: 01595 743 720

**Type of inspection:**
Unannounced

**Completed on:**
16 September 2025

**Service provided by:**
Shetland Islands Council

**Service provider number:**
SP2003002063

**Service no:**
CS2003016115

## About the service

Bell's Brae Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 65 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The children are mainly cared for in one large playroom. There is a foyer and cloakroom with direct access to an outdoor shelter and play area. The nursery is in a predominately residential area of Lerwick, Shetland, close to local shops and other amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 September 2025 between 08:45 and 16:45 and on 16 September 2025 between 08:25 and 11:50. 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:

- spoke and spent time with children using the service and six of their family
- received 10 completed questionnaires
- spoke with staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

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 cared for by kind, gentle and caring staff.

• Staff knew the children well and were skilled in supporting their care needs.

• Children had fun and were engaged in their play.

• The indoor environment was inviting and spacious with exciting resources for the children to explore. This should be developed further outdoors.

• Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were effective to ensure high-quality care and learning opportunities.

• Staff worked well together and were enthusiastic and motivated in their professional development.

## 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? | 5 - Very 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? 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 1.1: Nurturing care and support**

Staff were warm, gentle and caring in their approach. They were in tune with children and their needs, picking up on their cues and responding to children's requests. Reassurance and comfort was given when needed, contributing to positive attachments being formed. When speaking to staff it was clear that they knew the children well, and were able to discuss likes, dislikes, personalities, sensitivities and how they were supporting them. When asked what they liked about the setting one parent said, "I feel my child is very well supported and understood. I feel comfortable leaving [them] in the care of the staff team." Another parent said, "The nursery feels calm and comfortable. My [child] goes in happily, speaks fondly of [their] time there and I know [they are] well looked after." This allowed care, support and experiences to be tailored to children's individual needs which supported them to feel safe and secure.

Children's personal plans were effective and supported their overall health and wellbeing. Parents were fully involved in the process of developing the children's personal plans and spoke positively about working together and sharing information. We discussed the value of incorporating the wellbeing indictors into these plans which would provide staff with a more holistic overview of children's health and wellbeing. This would further promote a continuity of care from home.

Experienced and knowledgeable staff demonstrated a very good understanding of supporting children with additional support needs. Clear strategies, developed with the support of other agencies, led to individualised support for children. This contributed to consistent approaches and children who were well supported.

Mealtimes were well organised, relaxed and unhurried. Staff took time to prepare lunches, meaning the food was well presented and looked appetising for the children. Children's independence was promoted through helping to prepare snack, pouring their own drinks and self-serving salad and bread on the table. Staff sat with and positioned themselves well to provide support, encourage social skills and keep children safe when eating.

Children were kept safe by staff, knowledgeable in the safe administration of medication. Medication was stored safely in line with best practice guidance, and procedures were followed during its administration. We asked that both staff and parents sign the medication form following the administration of any medication. This was promptly actioned by management. This contributed to the children's health and wellbeing.

**Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning**

Children were actively and meaningfully involved in leading their play. They were able to choose resources and where they played. Indoors some children spent extended periods of time in the craft area being creative, printing with a range of materials. Others enjoyed imaginative play in the house corner with the dolls, feeding them and putting them to bed. Some children spent time outside and enjoyed fresh air and exercise while playing on the bikes and the climbing wall. These opportunities promoted children's curiosity and encouraged them to be creative, problem solve together and use their imagination.

Staff demonstrated skilled interactions to support children's learning and development. They were very engaging when reading stories and in encouraging children's participation. Outdoors staff used a range of open questions to extend children's thinking and problem-solving skills when creating a robot with the large waffle construction. When a child was talking about their holiday, a staff member directed them to the laptop and smart board and together they found a map and where about to see where the child had been. This sparked further conversation and questions. This led to sustained play and high-quality engagement.

Opportunities for learning in language, literacy, and numeracy were embedded in practice. Children enjoyed stories and songs which were animated and children were encouraged to join in. Letters, numbers and environmental print were displayed to encourage early literacy and numeracy skills. Interesting writing materials were attractively displayed to support early writing and mark making. Children looked for numbers when walking to the library, and they enjoyed puzzles and games in groups along with adults. There was, however, scope to develop this outdoors. This would further support the children's early language, literacy and numeracy development.

Child-centred planning approaches were effective to support children's progress and development. Skilled staff used good quality observations of children at play and shared these with parents. These were reflected in a range of spontaneous and planned learning experiences. For example, children were pretending to make soup in the mud kitchen, so real vegetables were added for them to explore. The setting found using tracking tools beneficial as this gave them a clear overview of the children's progress which fed back into planning. Area planning sheets which then formed the setting's floor books captured the children's voice and evidenced the learning which had taken place. This led to children who were learning and progressing well.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their own and wider communities. Effective use was made of the school environment, and children were confident about using the library, and other communal areas. The service made good use of the local amenities and resources. Community volunteers assisted with planting vegetables and paramedics had visited with an ambulance. Children also enjoyed outings to the beach and flower park. Parents told us their children were involved in a range of opportunities and fun experiences. One parent said, "Extra activities were organised regularly such as walks, trips, music lessons as well as visits from members of the community." Another parent said, "My child has been involved in sports day, trips out to the beach as well as a sponsored walk, which [they] loved! We were given plenty of notice for each of these events and invited along to show support and/or help to supervise, which made these events very enjoyable for all involved and was another great opportunity for us to see [our child] interacting." This contributed to children having new opportunities and becoming familiar with their communities.

## How good is our setting? 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 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities**

Children were cared for in a welcoming and comfortable environment. The setting was well maintained, and furnishings and equipment were of good quality. The welcoming foyer and cloakroom were spacious and supported children's independence as well as quieter space to play. For example, children had space to change themselves for the outdoors and play on the floor with vehicles. There was plenty space for parents at pick up and drop off and information to support parents was attractively displayed. This promoted a sense of inclusion and belonging for children and families.

The playroom was spacious and well considered. Children were able to move freely and safely and choose resources independently. Developmentally, appropriate spaces were inviting with resources which reflected children's current interests. For example, a message centre had been set up for children to access mark making with interesting resources such as notepads and envelopes, which the children enjoyed exploring. The art and craft areas were well stocked and refreshed to ensure the area remained inviting for the children. A variety of natural materials and loose parts promoted opportunities for creativity and imaginative play.

The children had access to the outdoors most of the day, meaning they had the opportunity to be active. However, the outdoor space could have been more inviting and interesting for the children. For example, there were two spades and four vehicles in the digging area and very little resources for the children to mix and pour with in the mud kitchen. The setting had already identified this as an area for development as was recorded in the improvement plan. A rich outdoor environment would benefit the children's holistic development as well as providing spaces for greater risk-taking, resilience and making a deeper connection with the natural world.

Systems were in place to help keep children safe. Risk assessments helped staff to mitigate risk and enhance children's safety. We discussed the benefit of children being involved in developing their skills and awareness of staying safe. We suggested introducing the Care Inspectorate's 'SIMOA' campaign which would support a culture of talking about keeping themselves safe and understanding about risk. Accidents and incidents were documented well, and information was shared with parents. This contributed to the safety and wellbeing of staff and children.

Staff demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of infection prevention and control. Staff followed guidance when preparing and serving lunch and snacks. Hand washing was well embedded in practice to help keep children safe and well.

## How good is our leadership? 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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well**

The aspirations of families were reflected in the caring and inclusive ethos. We heard staff promoting the values with children supporting them to develop their understanding of what was important in their nursery. The setting was currently developing their values, consulting with families, children and staff as part of the process. This will ensure these were reflective of the needs of everyone working at and using the service.

Children and families were meaningfully involved in the development of the service. Parents felt very welcomed and there were good opportunities for them to express their views and become involved. Questionnaires had been issued to parents and, as a result, more families were accessing the nursery blog after taking time to promote this. Other ways to involve families included stay and play sessions which parents said helped them gain a good insight into the environment and their children's experiences. Most parents told us they were involved in a meaningful way to develop the setting. One parent said, "There are regular opportunities to visit the nursery with the child, see what they been up to recently and discuss anything with staff." This contributed to families being valued partners in ongoing improvements within the service.

The service was well led by an experienced leadership team. Staff told us the management team were very approachable and helpful and they felt well supported in their role. This contributed to ongoing change and improvement.

Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were fully embedded in practice. Staff were fully involved in the process and felt valued for their opinions. They were able to make suggestions and reflect on their practice and training during regular team meetings. This led to some changes in practice, such as offering new experiences for children such as extending block play. Audits and monitoring of practice contributed to improved mealtimes. A quality assurance calendar was in place to support management and staff in their roles. For example, monitoring of accidents and incidents had enabled support to be put in place to reduce these.

The setting had documented their developments within an improvement plan. They had recognised the importance of documenting their developments more clearly and had started using a floor book approach. This was supporting the service to consider whether there was a need for further development or if the outcome had influenced further improvements. For example, following staff monitoring, management recognised the need for staff training and were able to facilitate this. As a result, positive changes were made to outcomes for children and families.

## 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**

Staff were very enthusiastic and committed to their roles. Some staff had additional responsibilities and leadership roles to promote high-quality care and provision. This included promoting woodwork and creativity in the setting. All staff had undertaken training opportunities to refresh their skills and update their knowledge. They were able to reflect on their practice and discuss the impact training had on outcomes for children.

Staff were proud of the strong relationships built with children and their families. Parents and families were encouraged into the nursery at drop-off and pick-up times, and able to chat and share information. This led to improved outcomes for children by working together to meet their needs. Most parents told us they had a good relationship with staff caring for their children. One parent said, "There is always someone available to speak to at the drop off and pick up, no matter what time I come. All staff members are keen to give detailed information about what happened during the day." Another parent said, "It's nice they welcome you every morning and are very friendly and approachable. They ask questions and are genuinely interested in you and your child it feels." This supported parents to feel included in their child's experiences at nursery.

Children were supported by a team who worked very well together. They had developed trusting relationships and were flexible and proactive in supporting each other throughout the day. Staffing levels and deployment throughout the day supported the wellbeing and safety of children using the service. Staff absences were well managed and mostly covered by the flexibility of staff. This meant that children were cared for by staff who knew them well. Staff breaks were well planned and did not impact on the supervision of children at busier times of the day, such as mealtimes.

Children were supported by skilled staff. The newest staff benefited from an induction process. This included mentors for modern apprentices and students who were willing to share their skills with others. We signposted management to the 'Early Learning and Childcare National Induction Resource' to encourage questions and reflection. This would further support staff to have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

## 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? | 5 - Very Good |
|---|---|
| 1.1 Nurturing care and support | 5 - Very Good |
| 1.3 Play and learning | 5 - Very 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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