Dunrossness Nursery
Day Care of Children

Dunrossness Primary School
Dunrossness
Shetland
ZE2 9JG

Telephone: 01595 745 440

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 September 2026

Service provided by:
Shetland Islands Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002063

Service no:
CS2003016123

About the service

Dunrossness Nursery operates from two converted classrooms within the Dunrossness Primary School in the south area of mainland Shetland. During the operating times the service has dedicated use of two playrooms, toilets and changing areas, office, the outdoor area and shared use of school premises and grounds.

The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 30 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school. There were up to 13 children present during the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 September 2026 between 12:50 and 16:40 and 16 September 2026 between 08:40 and 17:00. 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 evaluation we:

- spent time with children using the service and spoke to three of their parents/carers
- received five completed questionnaires from staff
- received three completed questionnaires from parents/carers
- spoke with staff and the management team
- 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

- Staff were nurturing and responsive, supporting children to feel safe, included and confident.
- Leaders had established improvement processes but should continue to develop stakeholder influence and evaluation of impact.
- Skilled, knowledgeable staff used professional learning and reflective practice to provide responsive support that improved children's experiences and outcomes.
- Effective teamwork and improved deployment promoted continuity, safe supervision and meaningful interactions, helping children feel confident, secure and engaged.
- Warm, responsive relationships helped children feel secure, confident, respected and included throughout their nursery day.
- Effective transitions, personal planning and family partnerships promoted continuity, independence and positive 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	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - 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 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The nursery's values of being safe, respectful and included were clearly displayed and had been meaningfully explored with children through discussion, photographs and mind maps. This helped children understand what the values meant in their everyday experiences.

Leaders were planning a whole-school review that would seek the views of children and families. Once implemented, this should strengthen their influence on the service's values and priorities for improvement. A shared understanding of these values should help parents and carers contribute relevant suggestions for change, although the impact of this planned approach was not yet evident.

The values were evident in practice. Staff treated children respectfully and supported them to recognise and manage risks, helping children feel valued and develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Although children's rights were not explicitly referenced, the values promoted inclusion, respect and opportunities to learn and develop. As a result, children experienced respectful relationships and were supported to participate in nursery life.

Parents told us they had opportunities to share their views and felt confident approaching staff. Although they could not identify specific examples of their feedback influencing change, they believed their suggestions would be listened to and considered. Staff captured children's views through observations of their engagement and by recording their comments.

Quality assurance processes were established and manageable. Leaders identified priorities and recorded actions and responsibilities. Staff reflected together and used findings to inform the development plan. This promoted shared responsibility and more consistent approaches. However, reviews did not always measure the difference made to children. Stronger evaluation would help leaders sustain effective practice and adjust actions that were not improving outcomes.

The development plan identified actions, intended outcomes, timescales and responsibilities. Reviews were undertaken and recorded, some measured progress against outcomes for children, but this was inconsistent. For some completed actions, reviews identified further work without evaluating the difference already made. A stronger focus on impact would help staff sustain successful practice and adapt approaches that were not achieving the intended outcomes.

Leaders and staff used national guidance, including 'Realising the Ambition' and the 'Quality Framework', to inform development priorities. This provided a sound basis for improvement activity, although the resulting impact on outcomes for children should be evaluated more consistently.

Staff described improved morale and felt listened to and supported after earlier challenges. Team stability supported consistent approaches and secure relationships. This gave children continuity in their care, learning and support.

Newer staff described a supportive induction that included time to observe practice and become familiar with relevant policies and plans. Ongoing support from colleagues helped them develop their knowledge and confidence, enabling them to contribute more effectively to consistent, high quality experiences for children.

Quality Indicator: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

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 supported children well, showing a very good understanding of their learning and development needs. The support reflected staff knowledge of individual children, their skills, needs and support strategies.

Staff had accessed opportunities for continuous professional development. This included training around observations, numeracy within the environment and intensive interactions. Staff were confident when discussing the impact of training on their practice. They were able to relate this to improved experiences and outcomes for children.

There were opportunities for professional discussion which staff valued. They used these to discuss plans, individual children and to share experiences and ideas. To support communication further a communication book was used effectively. This meant staff could access information about individual children or planned activities regardless of their working pattern. A continuity of care and approach to support was therefore benefitting children.

Staff spoke confidently about overcoming recent challenges and being able to celebrate their successes. Where changes had been made staff had reflected on where this could be better and adjusted. For example, a weekly rather than monthly staff rota. This led to improved staff morale and motivation which promoted a relaxed, sociable atmosphere which children enjoyed.

All staff were registered appropriately with the relevant professional body. They were aware of the responsibilities of maintaining their registration and abiding by the organisation's codes of practice.

The staff team brought a strong balance of skills and experience. Staff worked closely together and used their individual strengths effectively. This supported varied, responsive experiences that reflected children's interests, learning and support needs.

Staff deployment had improved significantly. Greater team stability and reduced reliance on relief staff enabled sustained, meaningful interactions. Staff moved with children rather than transferring their care unnecessarily. This strengthened continuity and helped children feel safe and confident. Most parents were satisfied with communication, and all reported positive relationships with staff. Leaders managed the challenges of part-time working by sharing daily staffing arrangements with families and children. Effective verbal and written communication also enabled staff to follow children's ongoing interests and projects.

Effective communication throughout the day supported flexible staff deployment. Staff coordinated breaks and informed colleagues before leaving an area. This maintained consistent supervision and minimised interruptions to meaningful interactions. Children therefore remained safe while benefitting from sustained and responsive engagement.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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.

Staff had a good understanding of how children learn and develop. They provided a range of indoor and outdoor experiences that engaged children. As a result, children were confident, motivated and able to direct their play.

Children experienced a suitable balance of planned and responsive learning. For example, they extended an insect project through drawing, small-world play and research in response to children's interest. Outdoors, staff helped children develop a traffic-sign game using wheeled resources. These approaches enabled children to pursue their interests, test ideas and influence their play.

Children's skills in literacy, language and numeracy were supported through everyday play. Frequent conversations extended vocabulary and encouraged children to express ideas. Books were accessible, and children regularly invited staff to share stories. Individual jotters were used for children's drawings. This helped children and families recognise progress. Following recent training, staff enriched numeracy experiences. Children confidently measured, compared and counted, using mathematical language in their play.

Children used tablets, the smartboard and everyday technology to support their play. This included magnifying glasses, magnets, old phones, cash registers and measuring tools. However, staff did not consistently extend investigative learning. For example, children explored magnets without being encouraged to predict or test which surfaces were magnetic. More consistent questioning would deepen children's curiosity, reasoning and problem-solving.

The environment supported children's imagination and enabled them to lead their play. Staff interactions provided some appropriate challenge and helped children progress. However, resources and spaces did not consistently encourage children to investigate, solve problems or extend ideas independently. Increasing challenge within the environment would strengthen children's sustained learning.

Families received some information about learning through play in the nursery handbook and online learning stories. These approaches provided a helpful starting point. More regular, purposeful sharing would help families understand, celebrate and contribute to their child's development.

Staff interactions were warm, responsive and encouraging. Children confidently expressed feelings, made choices and shared their views. Staff helped them consider how their actions affected others. Improved deployment reduced interruptions and supported more sustained engagement. Staff extended children's thinking and problem-solving effectively. This was not yet consistent, limiting the quality of challenge for some children.

A system of planning and assessment was now more firmly implemented. Staff were building their confidence in the system and it had begun to have a positive impact on children's experiences. However, there were some areas where further time and development was needed to ensure a consistent quality in planning for children's progress and development. Observations included useful detail about children's experiences. They captured children's views and identified possible next steps. This supported staff to recognise interests and plan some progression. However, observations were not completed regularly

enough to provide a consistent picture of every child's learning. Leaders had identified this and planned further improvement.

Staff shared information with families about children's experiences at the end of the nursery day. This supported informal communication but could be less effective during busy periods. Some recorded experiences had not been shared with parents. Consequently, families did not always receive timely information about children's learning and progress. Staff should improve the regularity of sharing so families can celebrate achievements and contribute to next steps.

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 knew children and families very well and were developing secure relationships with newer children. Children and families generally received a warm welcome. Staff made time to exchange information at arrival and collection, strengthening continuity between home and nursery. Children were relaxed and confident. Most expressed their needs, feelings and preferences freely. A small number of families appeared less confident when staff were not immediately available. Leaders should continue to monitor arrivals, so every family experiences a consistently welcoming approach.

Transitions were planned carefully around individual needs. Home visits, nursery visits and clear information helped children and families prepare for starting nursery. Similar planning supported progression to primary school.

Daily transitions, including moving outdoors and mealtimes, were calm and well managed. Staff recognised when children needed additional support and used agreed strategies. This helped children feel secure and participate successfully throughout the day.

Staff promoted children's privacy, dignity and independence. They knocked before entering toilets and enabled children to choose where personal care took place. Children had time to practise self-care, make decisions and persevere with tasks such as dressing. Staff intervened sensitively when support was needed. This strengthened children's confidence and resilience.

The environment offered flexible spaces for energetic, quiet, individual and small-group experiences. Children confidently chose where and how to spend their time. Staff were beginning to manage noise levels, although the dining space became noisy near the end of lunch. Continued attention to this would further support children's comfort and engagement.

Mealtimes promoted children's wellbeing and social development. Children had adapted confidently to rolling snack and lunch routines. A consistent staff presence supported conversation, safety and help when needed. Staff encouraged children to try revised menus and offered alternatives where appropriate. Allergies and intolerances were managed discreetly, helping children remain included. Medication procedures supported children's health.

Personal planning was comprehensive and responsive. Leaders had tested and refined the format before implementation. Plans included essential safety, health, family and emergency information alongside

children's interests, preferences and routines. Clear support strategies promoted consistent approaches to toileting and transitions. Staff spoke knowledgeably about children's learning and home lives, demonstrating that information informed care. Plans were reviewed termly with families. Dating every update would ensure staff could identify the most current information quickly.

Families were very positive about the care children received. They described staff as approachable, helpful and "amazing", and most felt confident entering the nursery and sharing information. Staff were monitoring engagement with online learning journals and encouraging families to view children's experiences. However, participation varied, and one survey response indicated a less positive experience. Further targeted engagement would help ensure every family feels included and able to contribute to their child's care and support.

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

The manager and staff should ensure that children's learning through play is consistently supported by skilled and meaningful interactions.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking and investigation, and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling' (HSCS 1.30).

This area for improvement was made on 8 October 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff interactions with children were meaningful, led by children and extended their learning and experiences.

Staff told us that they felt more able to engage with children, which promoted their ability to positively impact children's experiences.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

In order to promote children's ongoing security, the provider should ensure that steps are taken to permanently remove risks associated with identified environmental hazards. This will support a consistently safe and secure environment for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.17).

This area for improvement was made on 8 October 2025.

Action taken since then

Temporary fixes to recognised risks had been made permanent supporting children's safety.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

The provider and manager should review staffing levels and deployment to ensure that children benefit from having enough staff available to consistently meet their needs and support positive experiences. This should include but not be limited to;

a. ensuring adequate supervision at all times to reduce potential risks and promote children's safety and wellbeing

b. ensuring staff have time to use skilled interactions to support and extend children's experiences and interests.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15); and

'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me' (HSCS 3.16).

This area for improvement was made on 8 October 2025.

Action taken since then

During our visit, staff were well deployed to ensure appropriate supervision to keep children safe and promote their wellbeing.

Staff had time to engage with children more meaningfully, enabling them to be more responsive and extend thinking processes.

This area for improvement has been met.

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
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	5 - Very Good

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

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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