Urafirth Early Years
Day Care of Children

Urafirth Primary School Nursery Class
Urafirth Primary School
Heylor, Urafirth
Shetland
ZE2 9RH

Telephone: 01595 807 460

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 September 2026

Service provided by:
Shetland Islands Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002063

Service no:
CS2003016129

About the service

Urafirth Early Years is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 22 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is accommodated within Urafirth Primary School in the Northmavine area of mainland Shetland. Children have direct access from the playroom to enclosed outdoor play areas and woodland. Local amenities including a shop and health centre are nearby.

There were up to four children present during the inspection visit.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 September 2026 between 13:00 and 15:55 and 16 September 2026 between 08:50 and 14:50. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform the evaluations we:

- interacted with children using the service
- spoke with three of their parent/carers
- reviewed five completed questionnaires from parents and staff
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily 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 cared for with nurturing and caring approaches.
- Children were having fun leading their own play and learning.
- Strong partnerships with families assisted communication and information sharing.
- Management and staff should continue to develop and embed self-evaluation and quality assurance systems which inform the service improvement plan.
- Children's health and wellbeing was enhanced through daily access to outdoor play.

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	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - 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 service was led by an enthusiastic manager with a clear vision and a commitment to ongoing improvement. Clear values, as part of a whole school approach, included teamwork, respect, safety and outdoor learning. These were reflected in practice through respectful, nurturing interactions and engaging play experiences both indoors and outdoors. The service's vison, values and aims were under review with input sought from staff, children and families. This supported a shared approach to improvement and helped promote positive outcomes for children.

The manager and staff recognised the importance of consultation with children and their families to support improvement to the service. Parents commented positively on the use of the online app to keep them informed and included in the life of the service. Daily chats, floor books, emails and questionnaires supported effective communication and opportunities for families to comment and make suggestions. One parent commented: "Every year they are always making improvements." Management and staff told us parental involvement was an ongoing area for development to further support partnership working.

Self-evaluation processes helped drive improvement across the setting. Staff regularly reviewed learning environments and experiences, making changes to reflect children's interests and learning needs. Recent improvements enhanced opportunities for imaginative play and spaces for rest and relaxation. Staff were engaging with self-evaluation documents, with reflections recorded in a self-evaluation floor book. These approaches were supporting improvements to children's experiences and contributing to positive outcomes.

Positive experiences for children were supported by a realistic, relevant and achievable improvement plan. This detailed improvements such as staff roles and responsibilities, children's numeracy and literacy and the outdoor environment. A quality assurance and monitoring calendar had recently been introduced to support ongoing service development. We discussed how further monitoring would help strengthen consistency across the service, particularly in relation to reviewing children's personal plans and medication records. The introduction of more formal observations of practice and peer monitoring would support the sharing of effective practice, enhance staff skills and help improve outcomes for children.

Staff told us they felt "well supported" by the "approachable" manager. Staff meetings provided opportunities to reflect on children's individual needs, share learning and discuss planning and developments within the service. Management valued staff contributions and were keen to distribute leadership roles. As a result, staff were taking on additional responsibilities, such as leading specific curricular areas. This helped staff feel valued and empowered, contributing to ongoing improvements across the service.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children were happy and engaged both indoors and outdoors, having fun whilst leading their own play. They participated in a variety of experiences which included building a train track, gardening, birdwatching and exploring the sensory play on offer. Parents commented positively on the range of play experiences. "My child has come on so much", "[My child] is happy and content" and "It's a lovely space for them with plenty to do."

Play spaces were welcoming, well-organised and reflected children's interests. High quality resources were accessible to children, promoting independence, choice and sustained engagement in play. Role play areas, which children identified as favourite areas, were well-resourced with everyday items, such as pots, pans and weighing scales. Natural open-ended materials encouraged imagination, problem solving and creative expression. This contributed to happy and engaged learners.

Staff demonstrated an understanding of child development and learning theory which they skilfully applied in practice. Learning was always unhurried and children were given time to explore at their own pace. Staff showed sensitivity in recognising when to observe and when to engage, using these moments to extend children's curiosity and interest. As a result, children were respected, valued and achieving.

Children benefited from regular access to outdoor play and learning. Staff recognised the value of outdoor experiences and provided opportunities for children to explore the outdoor play areas as well as going out into the local community for walks and trips to the beach. These experiences supported children's confidence, physical development and enjoyment of being active outdoors.

Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills were embedded throughout play experiences. Staff were animated and engaging when singing songs, reading stories and interacting with children. During the inspection, children visited the school library and chose books to take home. Staff made good use of everyday routines to promote early mathematical thinking. Children counted, compared sizes and explored sharing items into equal parts during snack preparation and lunchtime. Opportunities to explore digital technologies supported curiosity, investigation and problem-solving skills. This contributed to happy children who were making good progress.

Planning and assessment processes were child-centred and responsive. Floor books effectively captured children's voices and demonstrated how their interests influenced future experiences. Staff made good use of intentional and responsive planning, linking learning to children's next steps, wellbeing needs, rights and curriculum outcomes. This helped ensure experiences were meaningful, personalised and responsive to children's interests and stages of development. A child commented: "My bike, that's what I've been learning. I've been getting better at it."

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

Children experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care from staff who knew them well. Children demonstrated positive attachments and were supported sensitively with their emotional needs and daily transitions. Calm, consistent approaches helped promote confidence and emotional security. Families commented positively on the relationships that their children had developed with staff. One parent shared: "Nursery is like a second home for my child."

Staff worked effectively with other professionals to support children's wellbeing and development. Positive partnerships with services, including health professionals, helped ensure children received the right support at the right time. This helped children experience consistent, individualised care that met their needs and promoted their progress and development.

Children experienced positive snack and mealtimes. Staff provided gentle support and sat with children, creating a calm and relaxed atmosphere while promoting conversation, social skills and safety. Children were encouraged to be independent. For example, serving their own food, spreading crackers and pouring drinks. Water and milk were available throughout mealtimes, helping to keep children hydrated.

Medication was stored safely and securely and was easily accessible in case of an emergency. Information about the action to be taken by staff was documented and consent forms were completed with parents. However, medical care plans had not been reviewed with parents every three months in line with current guidance. We advised that more details around administering medication were included in forms, for example what to do if medication was refused. Management took immediate action to address this.

Children's care was promoted by staff's knowledge of their needs. Families shared important information that helped staff provide individualised care to children. For example, health needs, dietary requirements and children's interests. Support plans included clear strategies of support for children with additional support needs to assist them to reach their full potential. Parents strongly agreed they felt fully involved in their child's care. We discussed the importance of ensuring that all plans are reviewed with parents at least every six months to keep them current and up to date.

Across the day, transitions were well-supported. Established routines created predictability, helping children understand what to expect and promoting emotional security. For example, children showed excitement when preparing to join school children for play at breaktime. This helped them feel safe, secure and included, supporting their sense of belonging.

Connections with families enhanced engagement and contributed positively to children's experiences. The setting provided a warm and welcoming environment where families felt valued and supported. Parents spoke highly of communication with staff and valued opportunities to come into the setting. This helped strengthen partnerships and promoted positive outcomes for children.

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

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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