Newtongrange Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Sixth Street
Newtongrange
Dalkeith
EH22 4LB

Telephone: 0131 392 1976

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 August 2026

Service provided by:
Midlothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002602

Service no:
CS2003016403

About the service

Newtongrange primary school nursery is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 62 children, aged from three years to not yet of an age to attend primary school at any one time. At the time of the inspection, 29 children were registered. The nursery is located within Newtongrange primary school, in the village of Newtongrange, Midlothian. Children have access to two playrooms, toilet facilities, a cloakroom and a secure outdoor garden. Staff have access to an enclosed kitchen within the playroom. There is also a family room/office for small group work and meetings.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 August 2026 between 09:15 and 16:35 and on 25 August 2026 between 09:30 and 13:00. 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 since registration.

To inform our evaluations we:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with staff and the leadership team
- considered feedback from four families and seven staff through an online questionnaire
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents relating to the care of children and the management of the service.

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

- High aspirations and nurturing support enabled children to flourish, reaching their full potential.
- Inspirational leadership fostered a culture of excellence, inclusion and continuous improvement for children.
- Children consistently thrived through rich indoor and outdoor play experiences that promoted engagement, challenge, meaningful learning and achievement.
- Children demonstrated a strong sense of ownership and pride in their learning.
- Children benefited from responsive, nurturing interactions from a dedicated staff team who extended their learning and enriched wellbeing.
- Strong family connections were a notable strength, ensuring families felt valued, included and actively involved in their children's learning journey.

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	6 - Excellent
Children play and learn	6 - Excellent
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 6 - Excellent

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent, where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

Children and staff benefited from an exceptionally strong, passionate and ambitious leadership team. There was a warm and respectful ethos within the service. Families told us, "We as parents and the children are always asked for our feedback and it's taken forward. We have been involved with the values for the nursery." Meaningful consultation methods included questionnaires and interactive wall displays. This enabled children, families and staff to influence service development leading to meaningful improvements and positive outcomes. As a result, improvements were firmly centred on meeting the needs of children and securing the best possible outcomes for them.

Leaders had successfully embedded a culture of rigorous self-evaluation and continuous improvement that drove innovation, strengthened practice and secured consistently excellent outcomes. All staff evaluated priorities within the improvement plan and continued to identify actions to support ongoing development. Future actions were evidence-based, responsive to identified outcomes, and focused on driving continuous improvement within the service. Staff shared and learned from sector-leading practice locally and nationally, including mealtimes, recording learning progress and creating enabling environments. Collaborative learning with other services strengthened practice and inspired improvement. As a result, children benefited from exceptional experiences and outcomes.

Leaders empowered staff to build confidence using self-evaluation to develop their strengths, knowledge and skills. Staff used challenge questions from the 'Quality Improvement Framework' (QIF) for the early learning and childcare sectors to reflect on theory and best practice guidance as a team. For example, they developed a shared language around the wellbeing indicators with children and families. Additionally, staff demonstrated rights-respecting practice which had been reflected in the service's achievement of the gold rights respecting school award. This collaborative approach deepened their understanding, strengthened practice and brought about positive change for children. Staff leadership responsibilities included targeted support for learning, literacy, communication, parental engagement, science, technologies engineering and mathematics (STEM). These improvements were embedded successfully across interactions, spaces and experiences.

High-quality learning through play was at the heart of improvement planning. A culture of reflection and innovation led to continually improving experiences for children. Outdoor learning significantly enhanced engagement and achievement. One family commented, "The nursery and garden I would say is excellent." The development of outdoor science, technologies, engineering and maths enriched children's learning experiences. Gardening projects helped children connect with nature, sustainability and the wider world. The nursery garden and community garden was used exceptionally well to grow and explore food from seed to fork. Children, staff and the wider community worked collaboratively. Over an extended period, they achieved a number of gardening awards, which recognised gardening for wellbeing, wildlife and sustainability.

Quality assurance systems were highly effective and strengthened whole-service oversight. Staff used comprehensive digital systems, including a quality assurance calendar, tracking of children's learning and an annual schedule for training and reviewing policies and practice guidance. An example of this improved practice we identified, was the tracking of children's learning. Staff were now better able to identify key priorities and children's interests to extend their play and learning experiences. This resulted in enhanced individual learning, oversight, strengthened accountability and promoted consistency in practice.

Timely monitoring and data gathering provided leaders with meaningful oversight. As a result, staff and leaders had a clear and shared understanding of standards and expectations. These approaches were highly effective in driving sustained improvement and maintaining high-quality outcomes for children and families.

The service's innovative approach to recruitment empowered children to shape a workforce that reflected their needs, wishes and aspirations. Children shared that they wanted staff who were fun, happy, gave hugs and listened to them. We observed staff to practice with fun, love and care, demonstrating to children that their views were heard, valued and respected.

Children play and learn 6 - Excellent

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent, where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Playing, learning and developing

Staff's exceptionally high aspirations and nurturing approach ensured children were valued, enabling them to thrive and reach their full potential. There was a strong link between staff practice, theory and guidance, which reinforced high-quality play and learning experiences. Children experienced exceptional and innovative play and learning opportunities which resulted in sustained positive outcomes.

Children experienced joy, fun and deep engagement in their play and learning. Experiences at the tinker table, woodwork area, small world and home corner promoted creativity, imagination and problem-solving. Children were curious, confident and eager to explore and learn. They demonstrated planning, teamwork and thinking skills through block play indoors and outdoors. They used a range of resources, such as white boards, pens and books to design, build and extend their creations, confidently sharing their ideas. One child explained, "It's the airport, here's the runway and this is the control tower." Staff extended learning by introducing tools, such as metre sticks and levels, helping develop children's enquiry, critical thinking and problem solving within their developing mathematical skills.

Children benefited from skilfully warm, responsive interactions that supported their wellbeing and extended learning. One family shared, "My child is absolutely thriving in Newtongrange." Literacy and numeracy were naturally embedded throughout the environment, with skilled staff and open-ended resources fostering curiosity, communication and critical thinking. Children enjoyed sharing stories, using puppets imaginatively and creating their own narratives, supported by interactions that encouraged them to recall, predict and develop ideas. As a result, children felt confident, valued, secure and were making excellent progress in their learning.

The garden was full of wonder and excitement, featuring a pond, bird-watching areas and calm spaces that supported children to connect and 'be' with nature. Other experiences promoted confidence, turn-taking and physical development. Families told us, "There is an incredible garden full of all sorts of activities, including the nursery having its own gardening area where the kids learn to grow produce." We observed a small group of children creating an imaginative picnic under a tree. They drew on previous learning experiences using natural materials, such as grass, leaves and water to create soup and sandwiches. This demonstrated their creativity, collaboration and ability to apply prior learning in a meaningful context. These rich learning opportunities supported children to explore nature, recognise seasonal change and develop an appreciation of the environment.

Children demonstrated a strong sense of ownership and pride in their learning. Hands-on, real-life learning enabled children to make connections between their play and the world around them. Children engaged in gardening, baking and caring for living things, developing responsibility, curiosity and an understanding of how their actions impact others. During a tour of the garden by children, they proudly shared their experiences of growing, caring for and harvesting seasonal fruit and vegetables. One child told us, "We have to take care of them and water them gently." Another child said, "We made soup with the huge turnip and onions. We pulled the turnip out, washed it, then chop, chop, chopped it. It was yummy." These rich experiences enabled children to make meaningful connections between nature, healthy living and their everyday lives.

A rights-based approach to planning ensured that children's play and learning experiences were highly responsive to their individual interests, choices, strengths and developmental needs. Staff used skilled observations and meaningful engagement with children to inform planning, ensuring that learning opportunities were relevant, purposeful and challenging. As a result, children were deeply engaged in their learning, demonstrated sustained interest and curiosity and made exceptionally good progress across all areas of development. Children's achievements were consistently recognised, documented and celebrated, enabling them to reflect on their successes. This significantly contributed to children developing confidence, resilience, independence and ownership over their learning journey.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

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.

Nurturing Care and Support

Children and families experienced warm, nurturing care and support delivered by a dedicated staff team. One family commented, "Staff are extremely friendly, kind and caring. They not only support my child, but they have all gone above and beyond to support our family." Staff were calm, caring and responsive. Regular check-ins with a warm, loving approach helped children manage emotions, build positive relationships and develop secure attachments. Staff skilfully integrated care, learning and emotional support, helping children feel safe, valued and confident.

A caring, collaborative and inclusive approach to transitions ensured that families were fully supported before their child attended nursery for the first time. Staff developed a deep understanding of children's needs as they visited them at home before they attended the service. This enabled strong partnerships with families from the outset and an in-depth understanding of children's interests, needs and routines.

This enabled staff to develop individualised settling plans for children and families that reflected their wishes and choices. As a result, children experienced positive wellbeing, strong connections with staff and a sense of security.

Mealtime experiences were tailored to children's individual needs, with some children enjoying lunch in the quieter 'Wee Room' and others developing independence in the dining hall. Children confidently collected their food and cutlery, poured drinks and cleared away dishes, developing valuable life skills and responsibility. One family commented, "My child's eating has come on leaps and bounds since attending nursery and now eats wider variety of foods." Staff promoted healthy choices and social skills through conversations. They adapted support sensitively for children who were new to the service or settling back into routines. As a result, children experienced calm, positive mealtimes where they developed confidence, social skills and healthy attitudes towards food within a calm and nurturing environment.

Personal plans reflected children's individual care and support needs. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of each child's individual needs and preferences. Regular reviews with families ensured progress, wellbeing and next steps were monitored and shared. Staff worked collaboratively with other professionals to ensure children received joined-up care and support. As a result, children benefited from strengths-based, rights-focused approaches tailored to their individual needs. Some children had well developed wellbeing logs and clearly documented support strategies. There was scope to strengthen the recording of strategies for all children who needed them. This would help ensure support remains consistent, effective and responsive, further enhancing outcomes for children.

Partnership working with families was a key strength of the service. Daily communication, stay-and-play sessions, the family story time through the 'big bedtime read' initiative, family learning opportunities and 'Talking Ted' encouraged families to be actively involved in their child's learning. Children confidently demonstrated 'British Sign Language', sharing newly learned signs with families and the wider school community. Recording videos of children signing were shared at school assemblies and sent to families through the digital app. This further promoted inclusion and communication. Children benefited from strong links between home and nursery, enhancing wellbeing, confidence and a strong sense of belonging.

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	6 - Excellent
Leadership and management of staff and resources	6 - Excellent

Children play and learn	6 - Excellent
Playing, learning and developing	6 - Excellent

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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.scot

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.