Banavie Primary Nursery
Day Care of Children

Banavie Primary Nursery School
Tomonie
Banavie
Fort William
PH33 7LX

Telephone: 01397 772 402

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 May 2026

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003016420

About the service

Banavie Primary Nursery is situated in the village of Banavie within the Lochaber area of the Highlands. The nursery is located in a converted classroom space within the building of Banavie Primary School. Accommodation comprises of a cloakroom, bright playroom, kitchen, toilet provision, and a small, enclosed outdoor area. The nursery also has access to a large garden and playground space which they share with the school.

The service is provided by Highland Council and managed by the primary school head teacher. It is registered to provide a day care of children's service to a maximum of 16 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 20 and 21 May 2026. 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 since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the children using the service
- spoke with the manager and staff
- received and reviewed three questionnaires from family members and three from staff members
- spoke with two parents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

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.

Key messages

- The service had made significant progress since the previous inspection. This resulted in children and families being provided with positive outcomes.
- Children benefited from caring, respectful relationships with staff. Warm, responsive interactions supported children to feel safe, valued and confident.
- The environment was welcoming, however, there was scope to further develop environments and experiences to fully support high-quality play and learning.
- Partnerships with families were a key strength of the service. Families held the staff team in high regard and valued the care and support provided to their children.
- While medication was stored securely, medication records and procedures were not sufficiently robust to help staff understand children's health needs.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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 has made significant progress since the previous inspection. The manager and staff had worked collaboratively to implement and sustain improvements which had resulted in good outcomes for children and families. The staff team communicated respectfully, supported one another well and reported feeling valued. As a result, staff morale was high. The manager had identified that implementing regular support and supervision meetings with staff would further promote staff wellbeing, reflective practice, and continuous improvement.

The vision, values and aims of the service had been recently reviewed through meaningful consultation with children, families, and staff. This inclusive approach ensured stakeholders were actively involved in shaping the service. While these values were not yet fully embedded, they reflected high aspirations and were evident in the respectful and caring ethos we observed in practice.

Approaches to self-evaluation and quality assurance had improved and were effectively aligned with the service improvement plan. The manager demonstrated a clear understanding of the service's strengths and development needs. This had supported measurable progress in key areas, including children's experiences, staff interactions and infection prevention and control. While some priorities had progressed well, aspects of practice, such as, providing stimulating and challenging resources and the outdoor space would benefit from further work. We encouraged the manager to build on their systems to gather the views and opinions of children, families, and partners to inform change and secure improvement.

Staff were supported to engage in reflective practice through regular professional dialogue with the manager. This had helped to create a more inclusive culture, where staff felt confident to contribute to service developments which supported positive change. These approaches were at an early stage, and the manager recognised the need to strengthen the use of improvement methodologies and national frameworks, such as the Quality Improvement Framework, to fully embed reflective practice. We signposted relevant resources and improvement support on our website to help develop this further.

Staff were safely recruited and induction arrangements were in place. We identified opportunities to strengthen the induction process further, for example through regular mentoring meetings with an experienced staff member. This would support newer staff to engage in more reflective practice and build confidence in their roles and responsibilities.

The service demonstrated a commitment to promoting children's rights and had begun to embed these meaningfully into children's daily routines and experiences. This was supported by their achievement of the Bronze Rights Respecting School award and ongoing work towards silver accreditation. Children had benefitted from input from a Highland-based charity focused on helping young children to grow up safely which further strengthened the service's rights-based approach and promoted good outcomes for children.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces.

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 care and support in a clean, organised, and welcoming environment. Staff's interactions and approach created warmth and a sense of belonging for children. The welcoming entrance, with children's work and learning attractively displayed, celebrated children's achievements, and provided families with a wealth of useful information. There was scope to make the playroom more inviting and comfortable through softer lighting, real life experiences and more thoughtfully presented resources and experiences. A designated quiet space supported children's need for emotional regulation and rest which promoted their wellbeing.

Children's views had influenced aspects of the provision, including resources within the larger outdoor space. This supported children to lead their own play and learning, feel included and told them their opinions matter.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of the value of outdoor play and learning. Children benefitted from some opportunities to be active and explore their wider environment. For example, children had fun as they ran around, climbed and explored the school's large green space behind the nursery. This enabled children to experience appropriate challenge and risk in their play which supported their confidence, coordination and overall health and wellbeing. From their playroom children had free-flow access to a small nursery garden. Staff had identified the nursery garden as an area for improvement. Plans were in place to enhance this space, making it more inviting, interesting, and better equipped for use in all weathers.

Infection prevention and control procedures were embedded effectively. Children were supported to follow good hand hygiene practices, and they confidently changed into indoor shoes after playing outdoors. Additionally, the environment and resources were maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Personal care routines followed best practice guidance and if needed, nappy changing facilities were available within the school which respected children's privacy and dignity. This contributed to children experiencing a safe and healthy environment.

The staff team understood the importance of keeping children's personal information secure. This meant confidential information was managed in line with best practice guidance.

Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Playing, learning, and developing.

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Children experienced warm, responsive, and skilled interactions from staff. They communicated respectfully with children and were attentive to their verbal and non-verbal cues.

A strength of staff practice was demonstrated through their effective questioning techniques which were naturally woven into conversations with children. This approach meaningfully extended children's thinking and problem-solving skills.

Children had access to a range of activities and resources which offered choice and supported them to make decisions about their play. While some children engaged in meaningful play, the quality of resources and experiences did not consistently provide enough stimulation or challenge to sustain engagement for all children. For example, staff had planned an interesting sensory experience which sparked children's curiosity and they were eager to take part. However, as this coincided with snack time, children were redirected away from the activity and the opportunity to build on their interest and involvement was missed. As a result, children became disengaged and did not consistently benefit from experiences that were sufficiently inspiring or responsive to their curiosity. We discussed with staff how increasing the use of loose parts, natural materials and real-life experiences could strengthen children's engagement and depth of play. Some families also highlighted the need for more varied and engaging experiences throughout their child's day. (See area for improvement 1)

The playroom had free-flow access to a small nursery garden. At times throughout the day the door was closed for long periods of time. We encouraged staff to consider how free-flow play could be provided to children throughout their day. Staff had identified the nursery garden as an area for improvement. Plans were in place to enhance this space, and we agreed that developments would make it more inviting, interesting, and better equipped for use in all weathers.

Staff had adopted a responsive planning approach and used floor books as a starting point for learning. Children's views and interests informed some planned experiences. This meant staff listened to children, valued their opinions, and enabled them to lead their own play and learning.

Children's progress was monitored using the local authority's progression framework and tracking sheets. The quality of observations was inconsistent and did not always clearly identify what children were learning. As a result, next steps in learning and development were not clear or used effectively to support children to progress. The provider had recognised this as an area for development and planned to work with staff to strengthen this area of practice. This will help staff support children better to reach their full potential. Children had individual folders which evidenced their successes and achievements. These were regularly shared with families which meant they felt included in their child's play and learning.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's learning, curiosity and development, the provider should ensure that play experiences and resources consistently offer sufficient challenge and stimulation, in line with children's age and stage of development.

This should include, but is not limited to, increasing access to high-quality, open-ended, and natural materials, and providing more real-life experiences and loose parts across both indoor and outdoor environments to promote creativity, problem-solving and sustained, meaningful play.

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 can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27);

And

'I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors' (HSCS 1.25).

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 consistently warm, nurturing, and responsive care from staff who knew them well. Staff valued children as individuals, had high aspirations for them, and provided kind and caring support which helped children feel safe, secure, and valued. Positive relationships and calm, skilled interactions supported children to manage emotions, resolve conflicts, and build trusting relationships. As a result, children were happy, settled, and confident. Families spoke highly about the care their children received and told us, 'Staff at Banavie go above and beyond to ensure each child is having a positive enriching experience', 'Staff got to know my child well in a short time' and 'We could not have had a better experience'.

Children benefitted from personal plans that reflected their needs and provided staff with information on their changing interests. Staff worked in partnership with families to gather relevant information, which helped ensure care was consistent. Clear strategies were in place for children who required extra support. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of children's individual needs and had begun to adapt strategies accordingly. Some approaches had been effective; however, these were not yet fully embedded in practice or consistently applied by staff to fully support children to reach their full potential.

Children were supported well during transitions, both from home to nursery and into Primary One. Opportunities such as attending school assembly, eating in the school canteen, and spending time with their 'school buddies' helped children feel confident and prepared for their move into the school. A child told us, 'We are going to the big playground with our buddies, it's fun, they keep us safe.'

Partnerships with families were a key strength of the service. Families were warmly welcomed into the setting and effective communication, together with opportunities for families to stay and play and take part in fundraising events meant staff knew families well. This resulted in strong, trusting relationships. Families spoke very positively about staff and told us, 'Staff really know my child, they are so kind', 'Staff are fantastic' and 'My child goes in with a smile and comes out with a smile, the staff are great.'

Mealtimes were a calm, sociable, and unhurried experience for children. They were encouraged to make choices, develop independence and take responsibility as they helped prepare their snack and self-served at lunchtime. Staff used this time well to promote positive social interactions and meaningful conversations, which supported children's communication skills and confidence. Children also had access to water throughout the day, which helped keep them hydrated and promoted healthy routines.

Staff had a clear understanding of child protection procedures and were confident in responding to concerns. This contributed to keeping children safe and protected. Some improvement was required in relation to the management of medication. While medication was stored securely, medication records and procedures were not sufficiently robust to help staff understand children's health needs. Strengthening these processes would support staff further to safely administer medication. We signposted our guidance 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' to assist with this. (See are for improvement 1)

Areas for improvement

1. To keep children safe and healthy the provider should ensure medication paperwork is in line with best practice guidance, 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' and provides staff with the information they need to manage children's medication safely.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective' (HSCS,1.24).

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

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - Good

Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Playing, learning and developing	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

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