# Lybster Primary School Nursery
## Day Care of Children

Lybster Primary School
Main Street
Lybster
KW3 6BJ

Telephone: 01593 721 224

**Type of inspection:**
Unannounced

**Completed on:**
26 June 2026

**Service provided by:**
Highland Council

**Service provider number:**
SP2003001693

**Service no:**
CS2003017239

## About the service

Lybster Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 23 children, from the age of two years to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery is operated by The Highland Council. The head teacher is the registered manager of the nursery and is responsible for more than one school. The nursery operates term time only.

The service operates from a playroom within Lybster Primary School. There is also an enclosed outdoor play area which contains a range of loose parts and open-ended resources which extend and enrich the children's imaginative play and learning experiences.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 and 25 June 2026. Feedback was given to the leadership team and representatives from the provider on Friday 26 June 2026. The 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 information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:
- spoke with children using the service and their family
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- 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 the inspection there were 12 children in attendance.

## Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing relationships that promoted their wellbeing, emotional security and sense of belonging.
- Staff demonstrated a good understanding of children's interests, strengths and developmental needs, enabling them to provide meaningful learning experiences.
- Children were engaged, motivated and actively involved in their play and learning.
- Improvements to staff deployment, communication and teamwork ensured children received consistent support throughout the day.
- The outdoor environment provided rich opportunities for exploration, creativity and physical development.
- There was scope to develop the indoor environment to provide greater challenge, engagement and learning opportunities.
- Leadership arrangements had improved and contributed to better 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 | 4 - Good |

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

## Leadership 4 - Good

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.

**Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources**

The service's vision, values and aims were reflected in staff practice and interactions with children. Staff provided positive, nurturing support that promoted children's wellbeing, inclusion and learning. As a result, children appeared settled, secure, and well supported to engage confidently in their learning and daily experiences.

Improvements to leadership arrangements contributed positively to children's outcomes. The service benefited from a committed leadership team who promoted a supportive culture and maintained a clear focus on improving children's experiences. Since the previous inspection, leaders had successfully taken forward a number of developments to improve children's care, play and learning.

Quality assurance processes had been strengthened through the introduction of more systematic monitoring and self-evaluation processes. These helped identify strengths and areas for development. Findings from observations of practice, and feedback from children, families and staff were used to evaluate the effectiveness of provision and drive continuous improvement. For example, self-evaluation identified opportunities to improve staff deployment at key times of the day. Staffing arrangements were reviewed to ensure staff were positioned where children required the most support and engagement. This led to more responsive interactions and improved experiences for children. Regular observations of practice and ongoing review of children's experiences supported a culture of reflection and accountability. This led to a clearer understanding of the quality of provision and strengthened the setting's ability to sustain and improve positive outcomes for children.

Distributed leadership opportunities played an important role in driving improvement across the service. Staff were encouraged to take responsibility for specific aspects of practice. For example, parental engagement and the development of mark-making experiences. This promoted increased ownership of priorities and created opportunities for good practice to be shared across the team. As a result, improvements were embedded more effectively and was impacting positively on children's care, play and learning.

Children's experiences were enhanced by the service's commitment to involving families in the life of the nursery. Parents were encouraged to share their views and contribute to developments within the setting. This supported strong partnership working and a shared approach to meeting children's needs. One parent told us "I feel like we can come in anytime and any feedback is welcomed."

Leaders fostered positive relationships with staff and promoted a supportive working environment. Staff valued the support provided by leaders. However, some identified that a greater day-to-day leadership presence would strengthen communication and support across the team. This was acknowledged, and there was a willingness to increase opportunities for staff participation and collaborative learning.

The leadership team advised that changes to leadership and management arrangements were planned.

We discussed the importance of ensuring sufficient leadership and management capacity to meet the needs of the service. We also highlighted the need for leadership roles and responsibilities to remain clearly defined and understood as arrangements evolve.

**Quality Indicator: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment**

Improvements in staff practice had enhanced children's care, play and learning experiences. Staff used their knowledge of children's interests, strengths and developmental needs to plan and extend learning through play and everyday experiences. They recognised opportunities to build on children's curiosity and encouraged them to explore, investigate and solve problems independently. This meant children were engaged, motivated and fully involved in their play and learning.

Children with individual care and support needs experienced inclusive and responsive support. Staff had strengthened their knowledge and understanding through ongoing professional learning and were better equipped to identify and respond to children's individual circumstances. This helped ensure that appropriate strategies and supports were in place. As a result, children were being well supported to achieve their potential.

Children were supported by positive and meaningful staff interactions. Improved staff deployment, effective communication and strong teamwork ensured there were sufficient staff available to meet children's needs and maintain a consistent quality of care throughout the day. The effective use of walkie-talkies strengthened communication between staff and enabled them to respond promptly to changing situations across the day. Staff were less focused on completing tasks and more attuned to children's interests, ideas and cues. They took time to listen, engage in conversations and extend children's thinking through effective questioning and encouragement. This supported smooth transitions between routines, promoted children's emotional security and ensured children received appropriate supervision. As a result, children were safe, well supported and actively engaged in play and learning experiences.

Children were supported by a staff team committed to continuous professional learning. Staff engaged in opportunities to reflect on their work, share ideas and develop new skills. This contributed to greater consistency in practice and a stronger understanding of how to support positive outcomes for children. While arrangements to support staff development were in place, there remained scope to strengthen these further through clearer targets, more focused professional dialogue and increased accountability for agreed actions.

## Children play and learn 4 - Good

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.

**Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing**

Children experienced a stimulating environment that supported their curiosity and enjoyment in learning. They confidently led their own play and were highly engaged in the outdoor environment, which provided rich opportunities for exploration, creativity and physical development. Indoors did not provide the same level of challenge and engagement as outdoors. There was scope to further develop indoor spaces and resources to further enhance children's learning experiences and opportunities for exploration.

Children benefited from warm, responsive interactions that enhanced their play and learning. Staff engaged effectively in play, extending children's thinking through discussion and effective questioning. This helped children to develop their confidence and explore new ideas.

Children were highly engaged in meaningful play experiences. Creative experiences were a particular strength, with children enthusiastically exploring painting outdoors using a variety of materials and resources. Opportunities such as den building and active games promoted imagination, problem-solving, cooperation and physical development. Children were also developing a sense of responsibility and care for their environment as they looked after vegetables they had planted. Through these experiences, they developed early numeracy skills, confidence and independence. One parent commented "The staff have really helped my child's confidence and development."

Children's language and communication skills were well supported within a language-rich environment. Storytelling, singing and conversations helped build children's confidence and communication skills. Family involvement further enriched children's learning, with parents sharing stories linked to the fairy garden children had been developing. This built on children's interests, encouraging discussion, imagination and deeper engagement in their play and learning.

Planning and assessment processes increasingly supported children's progress. Staff were making better use of observations and developmental information to identify next steps and tailor support to individual needs. While improvements were evident, further development of observations would help ensure children's progress and achievements were consistently captured. Continued monitoring and support would help strengthen consistency in this area.

## Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

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.

**Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support**

Children experienced warm, nurturing relationships that promoted their wellbeing, emotional security and sense of belonging. Staff were responsive and attentive, providing reassurance and comfort when required. As a result, children appeared settled, secure and confident within the setting. Parents were complimentary of the staff team, highlighting positive relationships as a key strength.

Children were supported to understand and manage their emotions through sensitive and respectful interactions. Staff responded calmly and worked alongside children to help them develop emotional regulation skills.

Strong partnerships with families supported children's wellbeing. Families were welcomed into the setting and experienced a warm, inclusive atmosphere. Positive relationships and regular communication helped maintain consistency between home and nursery. Daily handovers provided opportunities to share information with families. However, the quality and detail of information shared varied. There was scope to strengthen consistency in communication to ensure all families receive meaningful updates about their child's experiences.

Overall, personal planning and health support contributed to a consistent and individualised approach to care.

Staff had a clear understanding of children's needs and responded effectively to their health, wellbeing and support requirements. They worked confidently with families and other professionals to identify and implement appropriate support strategies. This helped to ensure children received safe and personalised care. Regular reviews and key worker discussions supported responsive practice and helped staff adapt support as children's needs changed. Opportunities remained to strengthen planning processes so that recorded information more fully reflected these discussions, promoting continuity and consistency in care.

Mealtimes were positive social experiences that promoted independence and confidence. Children were encouraged to make choices, serve themselves and develop self-help skills within a relaxed and supportive environment. Staff encouraged conversation, promoting social interaction and language development. The use of real crockery and flowers on tables created a welcoming, homely environment that enhanced children's overall experience.

## What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

### Requirements

**Requirement 1**

By 23 February 2026 the provider must ensure positive outcomes for the children using the service. To achieve this, sufficient time and resources must be allocated to ensure the leadership role is carried out effectively.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

**This requirement was made on 7 November 2025.**

### Action taken on previous requirement

The service had established processes to support effective leadership and ongoing improvement. This work had been supported by the Early Years Team and had resulted in positive progress despite a range of competing demands.

There was a clear understanding of the areas requiring further development and a commitment to maintaining the pace of improvement. Significant progress had been achieved since the last inspection, demonstrating the service's capacity to improve. As a result, children experienced more consistent approaches to care, support and learning.

We discussed the importance of regularly reviewing leadership roles and responsibilities to ensure sufficient time continued to be allocated to leadership functions and to support the service's ongoing improvement journey.

**Met - within timescales**

## Requirement 2

By 23 February 2026 the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children and practice by implementing effective systems of quality assurance.

To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

a) regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented

b) clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service

c) the management team effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1)(a)(b) (welfare of Users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011(SSI 2011/10).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

**This requirement was made on 7 November 2025.**

### Action taken on previous requirement

The service had developed and embedded more effective quality assurance processes. Clearer systems were in place to monitor practice, evaluate the quality of the service and support ongoing improvement. The leadership team had strengthened oversight of the service and had implemented plans to identify and address areas for development. As a result, children experienced a service that was increasingly responsive to their needs and focused on achieving positive outcomes.

Support and supervision processes were established and were supporting staff in their roles. Continued development of these processes, including clearer monitoring of agreed actions, would further strengthen accountability and help sustain improvements in practice.

**Met - within timescales**

## 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**

To ensure children benefit from personalised and enriching experiences, which support their learning and development. The provider should support staff to develop their skills in engaging, responsive interactions that promote curiosity and creativity.

This should include but is not limited to:

a) upskilling staff to ensure interactions with children are consistently high quality.

b) strengthening planning processes to ensure they are child-led, flexible and informed by high-quality observations.

c) embedding a consistent approach to observation and assessment that clearly identifies children's progress and informs meaningful next steps.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

**This area for improvement was made on 7 November 2025.**

#### Action taken since then

Staff had developed their skills in providing engaging and responsive interactions that supported children's learning and development. Children experienced warm, positive interactions and staff used discussion and questioning to extend children's thinking and encourage exploration of new ideas.

Planning processes had become more responsive to children's interests and emerging learning. Staff were making better use of observations and developmental information to identify next steps and provide experiences that reflected children's individual needs and interests.

While opportunities remained to further embed and strengthen consistency across all aspects of observation and assessment, sufficient progress had been made.

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

**Previous area for improvement 2**

To support positive outcomes for children, the provider should ensure that personal planning enables each child to receive appropriate care and support to meet their needs; and

a) Ensure personal plans set out children's current needs and how they will be met.

b) Ensure all staff are aware of and understand the information within the personal plans and use this to effectively meet each child's needs.

c) Ensure staff are competent in completing chronologies and use these to take appropriate action to support children and their families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

**This area for improvement was made on 30 May 2025.**

### Action taken since then

Personal planning supported staff to understand and respond to children's individual needs. Staff demonstrated a good awareness of children's needs and were able to describe the approaches used to support them. Regular reviews and key worker discussions helped ensure support remained responsive to children's changing circumstances.

Chronologies were in place and were being used to record significant events and support informed decision making where required.

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

## Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure children are safe and receive high quality experiences at all times the provider and manager should as a minimum, review and make appropriate changes to staff deployment, to improve experiences for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

**This area for improvement was made on 30 May 2025.**

### Action taken since then

The service had reviewed staff deployment arrangements and made changes to better support children's experiences throughout the day. Staff were deployed more effectively to meet children's needs, support supervision and promote engagement in play and learning. As a result, children experienced more consistent support and benefitted from increased opportunities for meaningful interactions and high-quality experiences. The improvements made helped ensure children remained safe and received appropriate support across the service.

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 | 4 - Good |

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

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