Newton Park Primary Nursery
Day Care of Children

Newton Park Primary School
Seaforth Avenue
Wick
KW1 5ND

Telephone: 01955 609 702

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 November 2025

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017258

About the service

Newton Park Primary Nursery is registered to provide a service to a maximum of 60 children, aged from three 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. The nursery operates term time only.

The nursery is located within Newton Park Primary School in Wick, Caithness. It has its own separate entrance. The nursery premises consists of three playrooms, reception area, kitchen and toilets. There is 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 Monday 17 November 2025 and Tuesday 18 November 2025. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- reviewed online feedback received from seven families.

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.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning.

This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

• Strong leadership provided clear direction and supported continuous improvement, leading to positive outcomes for children.

• Families spoke positively about the staff team.

• Staff interactions were warm and nurturing, creating a caring environment that promoted children's wellbeing.

• Personal planning was not consistently effective in meeting the needs of all children.

• Children had fun and were highly engaged in play, supporting creativity, independence and enjoyment in learning.

• Planning, observation and assessment processes were at an early stage of development and needed further work.

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	5 - Very 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 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.

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The leadership team created a strong culture of collaboration and improvement, which had a positive impact on children's experiences. They provided clear and strategic direction, ensuring initiatives were well planned and targeted. For example, staff identified gaps in numeracy and addressed these through focused planning, leading to children engaging more confidently in numeracy activities across both playrooms. One parent told us, "We are extremely happy with how much our child has developed since starting here. Their numeracy skills have come on a huge amount, and I believe it's thanks to the Newton Park ELC staff".

Leaders recognised the need to review the vision and were engaging key stakeholders including, children, families and staff in this process. This work aimed to ensure the vision remained relevant and reflective of the community's evolving needs. A values and rights based approach was evident in staff interactions, promoting a nurturing and respectful ethos that supported children's wellbeing.

Self-evaluation processes were robust and inclusive, demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Staff were effectively empowered to lead key aspects of development, which fostered ownership and accountability across the team. Weekly room meetings provided a structured forum for reflective discussion, resulting in consistency of practice. Professional learning was purposeful, clearly aligned with service priorities, and contributed to improved staff confidence and capability.

Quality assurance processes were systematic and timely, underpinned by agreed standards and shared expectations that were well understood by all staff. Observations, feedback and data was used meaningfully to inform decision-making, ensuring improvement priorities were relevant. These actions were beginning to strengthen consistency and enhance children's experiences. While systems were well established, some initiatives remained in the early stages of implementation, meaning the full impact was not yet evident. The pace of change was measured and appropriate and supported sustainable improvement.

Newer staff reported that their induction was positive and supportive, which enabled them to settle quickly and feel confident in their roles. They felt welcomed and well-guided by the leadership team and colleagues, helping them understand routines and expectations effectively. This strong support contributed to consistency in practice and ensured newer staff were able to engage with children and promote good quality care and learning from an early stage.

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 were busy and engaged in play for most of the day. They enjoyed exploring a range of experiences that supported creativity, problem-solving and discovery. Children were able to make some choices about their play, including asking staff when they wanted to go outdoors, which promoted independence and confidence.

Children were developing early literacy and numeracy skills through meaningful conversations with staff. Access to good-quality books and stories across the setting encouraged engagement with reading and supported early literacy development. Play-based approaches, including messy and sensory experiences, promoted emerging writing skills and helped children build confidence in mark-making.

Staff interactions were positive and supportive. They listened carefully to children and responded to individual requests, which helped maintain interest and engagement in play. Effective questioning and shared interactions encouraged children to think more deeply and extend their learning. Staff's understanding of child development, different learning approaches and children's right to play supported experiences that promoted enjoyment.

The setting demonstrated positive links with the local community, which enhanced children's learning and experiences. For example, a recent visit to a local memorial garden supported children's understanding of remembrance in a meaningful way. These opportunities enriched children's learning and helped develop a sense of belonging within the wider community. This contributed positively to children's social and emotional development.

Planning, observation and assessment processes were in the early stages of development. Observations were not consistently used to inform individualised planning, which limited the ability to adapt experiences to individual needs and interests. As a result, opportunities to extend and challenge children's learning were missed. The staff and leadership team were aware of these gaps and were taking steps to address them to ensure children's learning is monitored and extended more consistently.

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

The setting provided a warm and nurturing environment where children were settled and comfortable. Staff interactions were caring and responsive, helping children feel secure and valued. For example, we observed staff offering comfort when children needed reassurance and providing sensitive support. Staff worked alongside children to co-regulate, which promoted emotional security and wellbeing. Parents spoke very complimentary of the staff team, comments included:

"Staff are fantastic and so caring."
"The staff are amazing with the kids!"
"Staff always greet you with a smile."

Transitions and routines across the day were not consistently well managed, which reduced opportunities for positive interaction and continuity of experiences. For example, routines before lunch and at the end of were not always well-structured, limiting children's engagement and flow of play.

Mealtimes were calm and unhurried, creating a positive experience for children. Homely touches such as, flowers on the table and real crockery contributed to a welcoming atmosphere. Staff encouraged social conversation, which supported children to interact and share experiences. Independence was effectively promoted through children self-serving food and pouring their own milk and water. This approach helped children develop confidence and practical skills while fostering a sense of responsibility.

Partnership working with other professionals was strong for some children and led to positive outcomes. Collaborative approaches enabled staff to access specialist expertise, which supported individual development and promoted positive transitions from home into the setting.

Personal planning was not consistently effective in meeting the needs of all children. Strategies for some children were not well considered, and where strategies were identified, they were not consistently followed. As a result, children's experiences were not always tailored to their individual needs and wellbeing, reducing continuity of care and learning.

The service demonstrated a strong commitment to building positive relationships with families, creating a warm and welcoming environment where communication was prioritised. Staff used a range of communication tools, including an online platform, to share information effectively. Family engagement was promoted through initiatives such as, Book Bug sessions, termly open days, and the development of a parent forum. These approaches supported positive relationships and helped families feel included in the life of the setting. One parent commented, "They're very open to parent opinions and regularly post on Class Dojo."

Clear procedures were not in place for the administration of some medication, which created potential risks. The leadership team responded promptly during the inspection and demonstrated a proactive approach by agreeing immediate actions to strengthen systems and ensure safe, consistent practice.

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	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very 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

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