Lundavra Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Lundavra Road
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 October 2025

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017285

About the service

Lundavra Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 60 children, aged three years to not yet of an age to attend primary school.

The nursery is an integral part of Lundavra Primary School. The nursery has it's own entrance and reception area, two playrooms with kitchen facilities, toilets and direct access to a large, varied outdoor play area. The service also makes good use of resources within the local community, including visits to the library.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 27th October 2025 and Tuesday 28th October 2025. 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:

- observed practice and daily life
- spoke with the children using the service
- spoke with staff and the management team
- received and reviewed nine completed questionnaires, six from family members and three from staff
- reviewed documents
- 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.

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

- Children were happy, engaged and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing support.
- Further work was needed to ensure the setting and resources offered children high quality play, learning and development opportunities.
- Children enjoyed relaxed, unhurried, sociable snack and meal times.
- Management and staff were committed to the ongoing development of the service.
- Quality assurance processes should continue to be embedded to secure sustained improvements across the service.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Leadership and management of staff and resources

At the time of the inspection, there was an acting headteacher in the primary school who was also the manager for the nursery, while the other senior management posts, deputy headteacher and principal teacher posts, were vacant. This had caused some uncertainty, resulted in some tasks not being completed and had impacted on the pace of change and improvement. However the manager and staff remained committed to providing a quality early years service which provided positive outcomes for children and their families.

Staff were positive about the service and felt supported by the management team. Staff engaged with the inspection process, with most demonstrating a positive attitude towards change and improvement. They were responsive to suggestions made during the inspection to continue to improve outcomes for children and families.

The vision, values and aims for the nursery had not been reviewed for several years. We discussed with the management team the need to review them as a matter of priority. They should ensure that they include all relevant stakeholders including children, their families and staff in the process. The reviewed vision, values and aims should then be shared with all stakeholders.

Quality assurance processes included an improvement plan which identified key areas the service wished to improve. The key areas for development included working in partnership with parents, a focus on literacy and provision for children with additional support needs.

Management and staff were developing their confidence and skills in implementing self evaluation and quality assurance processes. Some regular self evaluation was taking place with all staff being actively encouraged to be involved in the process. Staff confirmed that regular team meetings offered them the opportunity to reflect on practice and to be proactive in introducing improvements. To support continuous improvement and help promote positive outcomes for children, approaches to self evaluation and quality assurance should be more robust and become embedded in practice. This should include, but not limited to, monitoring and auditing of personal plans, the review of the environment and resources available to enhance and enrich children's playing, learning and development, and observations and monitoring of practice (see area for improvement 1)

The manager and staff identified working in partnership with families as one of the key areas they wished to improve. They recognised the importance of establishing strong partnerships with families and having opportunities for parents to visit the setting and share in their child's care and learning. Parents were welcome into the nursery at any time. There were regular stay and play sessions as well as parent meetings. Parents could also volunteer as helpers to assist during children's visits to community resources such as a the library. The manager and staff had recently held a fundraiser/social event in the nursery which had been very successful and the management and staff were considering similar events in the future. Parents commented that they were invited to offer their views and feedback and felt involved in a meaningful way

to help development the service. The service should continue to develop partnership with parents in all aspects of nursery life.

Recruitment and induction followed clear, safe practices, in line with safer recruitment guidance. New staff benefitted from a structured induction and opportunities to shadow experienced colleagues. The management demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the management of staffing and resources.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure improved and sustained positive outcomes for children, the provider should continue to implement and embed robust self evaluation and quality assurance processes covering key areas of practice.

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).

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 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.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces

Children were welcomed into a bright, inviting and engaging nursery where they were recognised and celebrated. Their artwork and photographs were displayed and they had access to their own space to store their personal items. The setting was visibly clean and organised, with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. These details let children know that they were loved, valued and provided them with a sense of belonging. Parents told us they were greeted with a welcoming smile and that their children felt comfortable and included when arriving at the setting.

During the previous inspection, it was identified that there were only limited spaces for children to rest and relax and that the introduction of more soft furnishings and homely touches could be used to provide a sense of cosiness around the whole setting. An area for improvement was made which recommended a review of the layout of the playroom be undertaken to look at how the playroom could be made more welcoming and homely, and identify the most appropriate and safe space to create a cosy area, whilst not restricting the play of the children.

We recognised the positive changes which had been made to the environment, especially the indoors. The layout had been reviewed and the range of resources and experiences had been extended to create a cosy environment. One room contained the quieter activities and the cosy area which children used across the day to rest and relax, supporting emotional development. Staff took it in turn to be 'host' for each playroom where they were responsible for reflecting on the layout, resources and activities available and how they were impacting on children's play and learning.

Indoor spaces were well organised and promoted independence and confidence. Children were able to freely access material, choosing where and with whom to play. The different play areas offered a balance of quiet

and creative experiences which reflected the children's interests. The displays of children's artwork celebrated their achievements.

Outdoor play was popular with all the children. Free flow allowed the children to freely move between the indoor and outdoor spaces. This approach supported children's choice, independence and wellbeing. Staff encouraged outdoor exploration and supported children to investigate and learn about the world around them. We recognised that some work had been completed since the last inspection to make the area safe and improve the play experiences available outdoors. The outdoor spaces were now better organised and promoted learning through real life experiences. The management and staff explained that further work was planned, particularly in relation to increasing the availability of loose parts and open ended resources to enrich children's play and learning. Further resources and play experiences to promote early language, literacy and numeracy skills outdoors were also to be resourced.

The safety and security of the children was a priority for the management and staff. Secure entry systems and close monitoring of visitors by staff contributed to children remaining safe. There were appropriate risk assessments and daily checks were completed which enabled children to explore freely in a safe environment, promoting confidence and wellbeing. Children were actively involved in the daily risk assessment and checks of the outdoor space, supporting their awareness of their own safety and that of their friends. Tools such as updated registers and regular headcounts helped children to move safely around the setting. Staff also made good use of walkie talkies when children were moving freely around both the indoor and outdoor play areas.

Effective arrangements were in place to ensure children and families' personal information was stored securely. Paperwork was stored securely within locked cupboards. This ensured confidentiality was maintained and complied with best practice guidance.

Children play and learn — 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Playing, learning and developing

The environment and experiences indoors engaged most children and enriched their play and learning. Children were observed having fun and generally engaged, happy and motivated. There were opportunities to lead their own play and learning and they were able to free flow between the indoor and outdoor areas. For the majority of the time, children benefitted from uninterrupted play, allowing them to be engaged in their play in a purposeful and meaningful way.

Some staff confidently used a range of effective language strategies for example, open-ended questions and conversations that encouraged children to think, predict and explore possibilities. They naturally got down to the children's level, showed interest and enthusiasm with what the children were doing and saying. For example, staff engaged in the children's role play activities in the home corner while others supported a messy play activity. This encouraged and extended imaginative play, creativity and emerging communication skills.

We identified missed opportunities when skilled interactions and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills and promote development of imagination. This was particularly evident during the latter part of the day when, many resources were no longer available to the

children and staff were more focussed on routine tasks. As a result children did not experience consistently rich and meaningful learning opportunities across the day.

Indoors, there were opportunities for children to enhance their skills in literacy, language and numeracy. These included access to books and other printed materials in various areas, mark making, sorting and counting activities. We observed children confidently approaching staff and asking for a book to be read to them. Responsive and skilled interactions by some staff effectively supported the development of communication and language skills.

Children's wellbeing was promoted through free flow access to the outdoor play area for much of the session. There were two outdoor areas which offered ample space for various activities, exploration and creativity. Children enjoyed running, balancing, digging and splashing in puddles. We recognised that the service had already made some improvements to the outdoor spaces following the last inspection. The management and staff confidently told us how they would be further developing the space to ensure children are appropriately challenged and consistently experience high quality play and learning opportunities. We discussed the value of ensuring that there were further resources to extend and enhance children's numeracy and literacy skills outdoors.

Children had good connections to their local community and a sense of belonging. They continued to make good use of their local community though walks and trips to their library and other places of interest. Staff highlighted how these outings were beneficial to the children as well as encouraging parents to be involved in their children's play and learning as volunteers. Effective use was also made of the school environment with the children confident in using the dining area, hall and other communal areas.

There were floor books in place which were used to record children's learning. These could be strengthened to include more responsive planning based on children's inputs, interests and ideas and deepen children's learning.

Each child had their own learning journey folder which was available to their parents to look at any time. We identified at the previous inspection, that they did not consistently contain written observations and evaluations of children's progression, and achievements were not always clearly recorded. The management explained work was ongoing to improve how they monitor and track children's learning and progression which in turn would improve planning. We were able to see some improvements in the observations however further work was still required to ensure they all clearly identify progression in learning and inform future planning and experiences.

Children are supported to achieve — 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Nurturing care and support

Overall, children benefitted from a warm and welcoming environment where staff interactions were caring and responsive. Staff were kind, helping children to feel safe and settled. Appropriate comfort and reassurance was offered, supporting wellbeing. However, there were some occasions where staff did not consistently respond to children's cues or attempts to initiate interaction. This resulted in missed opportunities for engagement and limited children's ability to feel fully supported. Parents we spoke with were complimentary of the staff team and described them as friendly, kind and caring.

Transitions were flexible and supportive. Staff worked with parents to understand preferences and needs. Settling in visits were flexible and informal. Transition for children moving to school included a "whole school" approach where children spent time in the wider school and with their older peers. This helped children feel safe, secure and confident during any changes.

Personal planning was not yet consistently effective in recording strategies to ensure children's health and wellbeing needs were being met. For example, there were no clearly recorded strategies of support for some children. Where strategies had been identified these were not always being followed by all staff, leading to inconsistency in the support children received. The management team had recognised this and were at the early stages of developing personal plans further along with chronologies, to clearly identify when support strategies were in place for children. As a result, not all children were being effectively supported to reach their full potential, therefore an area for improvement in relation to personal planning remains in place. (See section, What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection).

The management and staff recognised the importance of establishing good working relationships with parents and the positive impact this had on outcomes for children. Parental engagement was identified in the service improvement plan as a priority. Parents were invited to spend time in the setting during settling in visits, stay and play sessions as well as being able to volunteer as helpers for nursery outings. At the time of inspection, management and staff were exploring further ways to meaningfully involve parents in children's experiences. Consideration should be given to improving to the quality of engagement with parents at pick up times. We observed inconsistent levels of engagement with parents and quality of feedback provided about their child's day. Ensuring that all families are warmly welcomed and provided with opportunities to share information at collection would strengthen relationships further and reinforce parents' sense of being valued within the setting.

The children had lunch in the school dining area before the primary school children arrived. Lunchtimes were used to promote independence, learning and enhance children's experiences. Children were provided with meals which met their specific allergies, preferences and dietary needs. We observed a very relaxed, calm and sociable lunchtime with the children and staff sitting together. This supported supervision, social skills and language development. Snack times could be better organised to to enhance children's experiences. We asked the service to review current practice which often resulted in staff becoming very task orientated and children receiving limited supervision and interaction to enhance their experience and keep them safe. Children would also benefit from being involved in snack preparation to further build their independence.

Since the previous inspection, work had been completed to develop the playrooms, including the cosy area. This area provided children with a safe and calm space where they could safely rest or sleep. The staff had introduced more soft furnishing which made the space more homely, cosier, and comfortable for any children who required a nap or even just some quiet time away from the busier spaces to regulate their emotions.

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 each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met, the provider, manager and staff should ensure that personal plans set out children's current needs and how they will be met.

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 22 January 2025.

Action taken since then

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a sample of children's personal plans. Although there had been some improvements, many still needed to be fully completed with information clearly recorded. Personal plans were also not being routinely reviewed with parents at least every six months.

The management team recognised that further work was still needed and would continue to support staff.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote children's continued learning, development and enjoyment, children should have access to a wide range of resources and experiences which are challenging and suitable to their individual interests and stages of development. There should be a sufficient amount of resources to enable children to make independent choices and engage in deep and meaningful play. Language, literacy and numeracy should be fully embedded across all areas of the playroom and outdoors.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards 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).

This area for improvement was made on 22 January 2025.

Action taken since then

We were able to see that some work had been done to improve the setting and the range of resources and experiences available to children, especially indoors. Children were much more engaged and making good use of the resources and activities available to extend their play and learning.

The management team and staff explained that they had planned further development work, particularly for the outdoor area. They were also looking to fully embed language, literacy and numeracy across the whole setting, particularly outdoors.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 3

To enable all children to be cared for in an appropriate environment that meets their needs and supports them to reach their full potential, that manager and staff should review the environment. This should include, but is not limited to, providing children with an environment that is welcoming, comfortable and homely and appropriately resourced so that they are provided with sufficient opportunities to engage meaningfully with their play and learning environments.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment and can use a comfortable area with soft furnishings to relax' (HSCS 5.6)

And

'As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open ended and natural materials'. (HSCS 1.31)

This area for improvement was made on 22 January 2025.

Action taken since then

We recognised the positive changes which had been made to the environment, especially the indoors. The layout had been reviewed and the range of resources and experiences had been extended to create a cosy environment. Greater use had been made of soft furnishing and other homely touches. There was now a designated cosy, quiet area which was routinely used by children to rest or to enjoy some quieter time away from the busier areas of the playrooms.

Staff took it in turn to be 'host' for each playroom where they were responsible for reflecting on the layout, resources and activities available and how they were impacting on children's play and learning.

This area for improvement has been fully met.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Nurturing care and support	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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