Plockton Primary School Nursery - GM
Day Care of Children

Plockton Primary School
Plockton
IV52 8TW

Telephone: 01599 544 346

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 March 2026

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2004072981

About the service

Plockton Primary Nursery provides a Gaelic medium daycare of children service in the village of Plockton. This service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 15 children between the ages of two - five of whom a maximum of two children aged two - three can be cared for at any one time.

The setting consists of one main playroom, a quiet space, a lunch room, a large outdoor play space, cloakroom and toilet facilities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection, which took place on 24 March 2026 between 09:30 and 16:45.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with the children using the service
- received six questionnaires from families
- received four questionnaires from staff
- spoke with a parent
- spoke with management and staff
- assessed core assurances
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure that 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.

We have 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 experienced warm, consistent, and responsive care that fostered their growth, development and wellbeing.
• Children were able to be responsible and confident in their play, as a result of quality play experiences being offered to them.
• Children made informed choices about their play and learning, having fun as they explored both inside and outside.
• Strong relationships with families contributed to a welcoming and inclusive environment.
• Children's needs and interests were at the heart of the design of the service.
• Self-evaluation was being developed, with the aim of providing high quality care and learning.

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	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

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.

Vision, values and aims were in place and were observed in practice. In particular, the majority of staff fully promoted the Gaelic language and culture. Children benefitted from a caring ethos, staff and children led with kindness and respect. This enabled positive relationships. There was scope to review the vision, values and aims to ensure they were accurate and reflective of the children and families using the service.

An improvement plan was in place for the nursery. The previous Care Inspectorate report had been used to support the service to identify key priorities to support ongoing improvement, professional development and improve outcomes for children. This limited the ability for staff and leaders to identify strengths in real time. The manager recognised the benefits of using best practice guidance, such as the guide to self evaluation, to support continuous improvement.

A quality assurance calendar was in place which highlighted key tasks to be completed throughout the year. These included the reviews of personal plans and audits of medication, accidents and incidents. This had a positive impact on children by strengthening safe practice, reducing risk, and ensuring their care was consistent, well planned, and responsive to their needs.

Children benefitted from good quality learning and play experiences as a result of reflective staff. They were regularly encouraged to take part in monitoring and supervision to identify their impact. A parent shared, 'The staff are well tuned into my child's interests and provide a variety of stimulating and engaging experiences to challenge and support their development.' There was scope to develop their approach to self-evaluation to ensure it was robust and supported improved planning.

The manager ensured that new staff were safely recruited, and that they understood their responsibilities within the team. An induction pack helped to ensure that staff were being well supported and confident in meeting the needs of the children.

Quality Indicator - Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

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 could be confident that staff were skilled, knowledgeable, and able to meet their needs effectively. Staff were passionate about developing their knowledge, skills, and practice through a range of training opportunities. Staff shared how they reflected on their training and discussed how it improved their practice and play experiences for children. Staff skills and knowledge plan to be further developed through the ongoing development of targeted training for example Gaelic language tracking. This will support individual staff training needs and professional development.

There was a mix of skills, knowledge, and experience within the staff team. Staff were skilled at ensuring children were challenged during their play and learning.

This was supported through effective questioning, introducing further materials such a extra play dough cutters. This encouraged children to develop their critical thinking skills and supported opportunities for progression and achievement.

Staffing was consistent which provided continuity of care for children and their families. Staff deployment was well managed throughout the day and over busier periods of the day including lunch time. Staffing levels had been well considered to ensure children's needs were consistently met and there was no impact on their play and learning experiences.

Staff communicated effectively with their colleagues during movement between indoors and outdoors. Regular head counts took place, and staff were aware of how many children were outdoors at all times. Staff positioned themselves appropriately while outdoors, which maintained a high level of supervision of children during their play. This ensured children were cared for in a safe and secure environment.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Quality Indicator- Children experience high quality spaces

We evaluated both quality indicators as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children experienced a welcoming and homely nursery with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. It was a clean and inviting space for children to play, learn and relax in. Within the indoor space, children had access to resources that were well presented and encouraged exploration and fun. The continuous provision indoors had been well considered to include a variety of open ended and natural resources, enabling children to explore opportunities which promoted their curiosity and imagination.

There were cosy areas for children to rest and relax which supported their emotional needs. These spaces were also used for shared story reading, which promotes language development and strengthens relationships.

Children's lunch and snack experience had been improved as a result of staff developing and additional space to meet their needs. A parent commented that, 'the change was an improvement for the service as it provided more space for the children.' Other areas in the environment further supported children's sense of belonging and identity through the use of designated storage, name tags, and photographs. This helped children feel valued and gave them a clear message that they matter.

Children enjoyed imaginative play while playing outdoors. A good variety of equipment, such as a mud kitchen and loose parts play promoted exploration. An outdoor classroom was not fully utilised to provide children with a rich learning experience. Staff told us that it was used for storage. The manager agreed to explore how this valuable resource could be used more effectively by children.

Children were observed to be safe within the environment. Walkie talkies were effectively used by staff to ensure all children were accounted for at all times. Most entry and exit points were secure. There was some potential for children to leave unattended, for example through the fire exits, which had a push bar mechanism. The manager agreed to review all doors to ensure that they were fully secure at all times and if they were opened, staff would be alerted.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator- Play, learning and Developing

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.

Gaelic was spoken consistently throughout the day, which supported children to become familiar with the language. Children responded positively to interactions with staff, demonstrating engagement and understanding. For example, during outdoor play activities such as balancing, children confidently followed instructions and used Gaelic vocabulary naturally. This helped children understand and use Gaelic in a meaningful way, building their confidence with the language.

Children were able to be responsible and confident in their play as a result of quality play experiences being offered to them. Staff provided meaningful interactions that extended, challenged and sustained children's learning. A child expressed an interest in making a rainbow using the playdough. With support from a staff member, they rolled out individual pieces to represent the rainbow. The staff member encouraged them to count each piece in Gaelic, which supported the development of their numeracy skills alongside their learning of Gaelic. Overall, staff used effective modelling to support early social development, language and understanding.

Children were given time and space to explore at their own pace. Adults joined in with the play sensitively and purposefully, when appropriate. Free-flow play between indoor and outdoor environments is well established for most of the day, supporting continuity of learning. There were opportunities for children to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills, particularly through imaginative and role-play experiences.

Floorbooks captured and shared children's play and learning. The child's voice was evident throughout these. Staff recognised the need to include more next steps for learning based on children's own interests and ideas. This will support more responsive practice and ensure learning experiences are effectively extended to meet children's individual developmental needs.

Planning documentation was beginning to show increasing breadth and depth of learning across experiences. Staff were responsive to children's interests and carried out observations during play. Learning opportunities were being offered through a balance of intentional and responsive planning. Continued embedding and regular evaluation of observation practices would help secure consistency.

Learning was shared effectively with families during regular stay and play sessions and through an online platform. Feedback from parents highlighted this as a positive and valued approach. One parent shared, they thought the platform 'was fab.' Two parents had shared that they would like more opportunities to learn Gaelic with their child at home. The manager identified that it would be useful to put the newsletter onto the online platform improving access to Gaelic materials, strengthening support for learning and using Gaelic within the home environment.

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 warm, nurturing and responsive care that supported their wellbeing. Staff knew the children well and had a good understanding of their needs. They also had strategies in place to support children to achieve positive outcomes. A parent shared, 'The staff team and their commitment to creating the best experiences for the children is a really positive aspect of the service. The children and their families really are at the heart of everything they do.'

Children benefitted from staff who recognised mealtimes as a rich learning experience. They were well supported to develop independence and life skills by helping to prepare snack and pour their own drinks. They experienced good interactions and meaningful discussions with staff and other children at the table. This encouraged social skills and promoted language development. Children were encouraged to attend lunch and snack times together. This meant play could be interrupted and there was limited opportunities for children to choose when to eat, for example if they did not feel hungry. The manager agreed to consider how children could be given more choice to ensure their views and feelings were valued and respected.

Children's personal plans were detailed and included information relevant to meet their needs. The plans were reviewed and updated frequently. A parent shared, 'I am encouraged to review my child's plan during stay and play sessions which are usually every fortnight each term. They also update it at other times if needed and support my child with any specific strategies identified.' Plans included chronologies and identified other professionals involved in a child's care. This ensured that the needs of children and their families were fully met.

Staff understood their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe and protected from harm. They were confident about how they would respond if they had any child protection concerns. This contributed to keeping children safe. Medication was stored securely and well managed. Consents and medical plans were well documented to ensure any medications were given safely and effectively. This supported staff to understand their roles and responsibilities when administering medication.

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 support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure staff access training and development opportunities appropriate to their role, and apply this in practice. This should include, but is not limited to:

a) training in high quality interactions; and
b) developing staff's understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps.

This area for improvement was made on 23 April 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff have taken part in training to support them to improve their skills and develop quality interactions. Through sampling of learning journals, staff were assessing effectively in order to plan quality experiences and meaningful next steps.

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.com.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - Good

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

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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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