Milton of Leys Primary School Childcare Service
Day Care of Children

Milton Of Leys Primary School & Early Years Centre
Leys Square
Inverness
IV2 6HF

Telephone: 01463 773020

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
9 June 2026

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2011297021

About the service

Milton of Leys Primary School Childcare Service provides a daycare of children service in Inverness. The service are registered to provide care to a maximum of 96 children aged from 3 years up to primary school age. The school aged childcare service may be provided from the main school building within the hall. The service currently have 72 children registered.

The nursery consists of two playrooms. Each playroom has access to toilets and changing facilities. Both playrooms have free flow access to outdoor play spaces.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 8 and 9 June 2026 between 08:30 and 16:45. Feedback was shared with the service on 9 June 2026.

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 complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation we:

· spent time with 55 children using the service
· received four completed questionnaires from families and spoke to three parents
· spoke with staff and the management team
· assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
· 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 this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

• Leadership and improvement had been positively developed, with management taking meaningful action since the last inspection.
• Staff were supported well through training, reflection, appraisal, and teamwork.
• Children were happy, settled, confident and engaged in their play and learning.
• Staff provided warm, responsive care and knew children well, which helped children feel safe and secure.
• Observations and learning journals could be strengthened to ensure children's skills, progress and next steps were clearer.
• Some aspects of the indoor environment could be further developed to improve play and learning experiences for children.
• The service had developed their outdoor environment, and community links which provide more depth to children's learning experiences.
• Families were welcomed and involved, which supported positive partnership working.

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.

The management team had taken meaningful and responsive action since the last inspection to strengthen approaches to quality assurance and support improvement. These developing systems were beginning to positively influence practice. However, they needed continued focus and consistency to ensure they were fully embedded and led to sustained improvement over time.

The service was guided by a clear whole-school vision and values, which were reflected in daily practice. Staff demonstrated a shared commitment to these values, and we observed them being actively discussed and promoted across the setting. The service had appropriately identified that developing a more individualised vision and values for the nursery would support a stronger identity and further enhance their ethos. Involving families in this process would strengthen partnership working and ensure the vision reflected the wider community. This approach had the potential to further improve children's sense of belonging and shared purpose within the setting.

Management demonstrated a clear commitment to continuous improvement. While a whole-school improvement plan was in place, the nursery team had prioritised actions identified following the previous inspection. The action plan clearly evidenced progress and linked improvements to positive outcomes for children and staff. This targeted approach supported ongoing development and demonstrated an increased capacity for self-evaluation and improvement.

The service had strengthened its quality assurance processes. Monitoring of practice and environments were taking place regularly, including opportunities for peer observations. These approaches supported staff to reflect on their practice and identify areas for development. Leaders had begun to identify actions following monitoring activities; however, systems to revisit and evaluate the impact of these actions were not yet fully developed. Strengthening this aspect would help ensure that improvements led to measurable positive outcomes for children. Self-evaluation using quality indicators and illustrations from 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: early learning and childcare' had recently been introduced and was supported by staff training. This helped to build a shared understanding of what high-quality practice looked like.

Staff had taken on leadership roles across the service, including responsibility for parental engagement, the outdoor environment, and community links. This distributed leadership model had supported staff to take ownership of specific areas and contributed to improvement. For example, a staff member was leading on developing connections with a local care home and was passionate about their role. As a result, staff felt valued and motivated, and this contributed to a positive team ethos.

Arrangements to support staff development were in place. Termly check-ins encouraged reflection on practice and wellbeing, and 'two stars and a wish' supported discussions. Annual appraisals identified strengths and areas for development, with clear actions linked to professional learning. These processes supported staff to develop their skills and contributed to improving practice.

Staff shared that they felt well supported by both the management team and their colleagues. This strong sense of teamwork contributed to a positive working environment. This supported children to experience consistent care and support.

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.

Since the last inspection, staff had engaged in a range of relevant training opportunities which had enhanced their practice. Training in floor books and self-evaluation had supported staff to better understand children's learning and reflect on experiences. This contributed to improved planning and more responsive interactions. In addition, quality interactions training had been undertaken. This had supported staff to develop more meaningful engagement with children. Staff also accessed wider professional learning, such as Solihull training, which had strengthened their understanding of emotional wellbeing and supported their role in meeting children's needs. As a result, children had benefitted from more informed, reflective, and responsive approaches to play and learning.

There was a varied skill set across the staff team, with individual strengths recognised and used effectively. Leaders had begun to use these strengths to enhance children's experiences and support the development of leadership roles. This approach contributed to a more motivated staff team and supported continuous improvement, with positive emerging impact on the quality of children's experiences.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. Child protection training was up to date, and staff were confident in describing the procedures they would follow if they had concerns. They understood how to respond appropriately and how to make referrals where necessary. This ensured that children were supported by staff who prioritised their safety and wellbeing.

Staff deployment was well managed. Ratios were consistently maintained, and staffing arrangements were organised effectively to meet the needs of children throughout the day. Busier periods were managed well, which ensured that children continued to receive appropriate levels of support and supervision. As a result, children experienced continuity of care and their needs were consistently met.

Arrangements to support supply staff were positive. Temporary staff were well supported to understand routines and expectations within the service. This helped to maintain consistency in care and practice. This contributed to a smoother experience for children and helped to minimise any potential disruption.

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.

The environment was safe and secure, with appropriate measures in place to protect children. Entry to the service was well managed, with staff monitoring arrivals and departures. Internal safety measures, such as gates across playroom doors, supported supervision and prevented children from accessing unsupervised areas. Outdoor gates were also secure. A parent shared, 'Great staff and great protocols for drop off and pickups and for security with walkie talkies and lists of where children are.' These arrangements contributed to children being cared for in an environment where their safety was prioritised.

Indoor and outdoor environments were, in most areas, well-resourced which supported children's play and learning. Children had access to a wide range of materials, including loose parts outdoors, which encouraged creativity, curiosity, and imaginative play. The outdoor area was a particular strength, where children were actively involved in caring for their environment. They proudly shared their achievements, which included the planting and growing area where they named plants and told us about parental involvement. One child shared, 'My mum brought these plants to nursery, these are pansies and this is a sweet william.' This demonstrated a strong sense of ownership and responsibility. Parental involvement in developing these spaces further enhanced the environment and strengthened the sense of community.

Children were actively involved in assessing and managing risk within their environment on a daily basis. This supported them to develop an understanding of safety, build confidence, and take increasing responsibility for their own wellbeing. Risk assessments were in place and supported the safe running of the service.

Improvements had been made to infection prevention and control practices within the environment. Staff had reflected on the layout, had adapted snack arrangements and ensured these were located closer to handwashing facilities. This demonstrated a proactive approach to improving hygiene practices and supported children to develop good habits. This positively impacted on their health and wellbeing.

The layout of the service supported flexible use of space, with free flow between indoor and outdoor areas and across playrooms. This provided children with access to a broader range of play and learning opportunities and allowed them to make choices about where and how they played. As a result, children experienced a stimulating and responsive environment that supported their interests and development. Consistency in the use of space, particularly within the tree top room, would enhance the quality of the environment. This would further improve outcomes for children.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator - Playing, 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.

Children were happy, settled and actively engaged in their play and learning across the service. In the woodland room, children demonstrated creativity and imagination as they used open-ended resources to explore construction and design. In the tree top room, children showed a strong interest in stories and puzzles, with staff providing appropriate support to maintain engagement. Children participated enthusiastically in rhymes, stories, and the use of props, where laughter and enjoyment were evident. This created a positive and stimulating environment where children felt confident and motivated to participate.

Staff interactions were mostly of a high quality and supported children's learning effectively. Practitioners demonstrated an awareness of how to extend play through discussion and questioning. They used some questions that make children think more deeply to encourage children's thinking and problem-solving skills. As a result, children were supported to develop their communication, curiosity, and early critical thinking skills. There was scope to ensure this quality practice was consistent across all staff to maximise learning opportunities for all children.

Children benefited from regular access to a wide range of outdoor learning experiences. They were eager to access the outdoor environment and independently engaged in a variety of meaningful activities including construction, physical play, imaginative play and exploration within the mud kitchen and planting areas. One parent shared, 'There is an outdoor area the children have access to most of the time to play' and another shared, 'They play out in the nursery garden every day they want.' These experiences supported children's physical development, creativity and understanding of the natural world. This contributed to children being active, independent, and highly involved in their learning.

Learning environments were thoughtfully organised to promote key areas such as literacy, numeracy, colours, and shapes. Communication visuals were available within both playrooms. Some staff used these, including 'now and next' approaches, to support children's understanding of routines and transitions. Wider use would support children's communication and positive transitions.

Children experienced inclusive and meaningful wider experiences. For example, sports day offered high-quality opportunities for active participation, where children were supported sensitively and comforted when needed. A school aged child piped the children into the MUGA (multi use games arena) for their sports day. This helped children feel valued and part of the school community. School aged children were also well engaged, particularly in construction, creative and active play, with appropriate monitoring of screen time to ensure safety and balance. These experiences supported children's confidence, wellbeing, and sense of belonging.

Planning approaches supported a balance of intentional and responsive learning. Staff used children's interests to inform experiences, which enabled children to lead their play and helped them to progress. Tracking and monitoring systems were in place and supported staff to have an overview of children's development. Floor books were a key strength and clearly demonstrated how children's ideas and interests were revisited and developed over time. This supported a depth to children's learning. Children were proud of their contributions and confidently shared their experiences, showing that their voice was valued and meaningfully included.

Observations captured snapshots of children's experiences; however, these could be further developed to more clearly identify skills, learning and progression. Learning journals would benefit from a more streamlined and chronological approach to demonstrate children's learning journeys more effectively. In addition, more explicit links between identified next steps and children's experiences would strengthen how progress was supported.

Strong community links had been developed, particularly with a local residential care home. Children regularly visited and took part in shared experiences which supported intergenerational learning and social development. These experiences were thoughtfully evaluated, and further plans were in place to extend this work. A parent shared, 'They go for regular walks and trips to the local care home' and another shared, 'A walk to the woods last year which was fantastic, would be great to see this more regularly.' These opportunities had a positive impact on children's confidence, communication and understanding of their local community.

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.

Staff provided warm, responsive care and demonstrated a good understanding of children's individual needs. This resulted in children feeling secure, valued and supported. Positive, caring interactions were evident throughout the service. One parent shared, 'We are always welcomed into the service' and another parent shared, 'We have good relationships with staff.' Staff were responsive to children's needs and demonstrated that they knew them well. Strong, consistent relationships had been established, which supported children to feel safe and emotionally secure. As a result, children appeared settled and confident within the environment and were able to seek reassurance and support when needed.

Snack and mealtimes were generally positive experiences that promoted independence and the development of life skills. These were calm and unhurried, with staff sitting alongside children, engaged in meaningful interactions. Children were supported to make choices and develop independence, which contributed to their confidence and social skills. Older children were beginning to transition to the dinner hall, which provided valuable opportunities to develop independence in a new environment. While this was a positive experience overall, children experienced some delays during this transition. The service had already identified this and planned to improve the experience.

Personal plans were detailed and effectively used to support children's individual needs. They included relevant information, strategies and supports which promoted children's development and responded to their changing needs. Significant life events were recorded, which ensured that staff had a full understanding of children's circumstances. Additional resources, such as a strategy and health folder, ensured that all staff had access to important information. This supported consistency of care and ensured children received responsive, individualised support.

Systems to support children's health and wellbeing were well managed. Medication procedures were robust, with regular reviews involving parents. This ensured all information was up to date and accurately reflected children's current needs.

The service had developed strong, positive relationships with families. There were effective daily opportunities for sharing information at drop off and pick up times. A parent shared, 'The staff are always very friendly and person centred when we are dropping off and picking up our child.' This helped to ensure continuity of care between home and the setting. Families were welcomed into the service and encouraged to take part in activities such as open mornings and afternoons. The service demonstrated a responsive approach by adapting these opportunities based on parental feedback, which showed a commitment to partnership working. This contributed to families feeling involved, informed, and confident in the care provided.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 19 June 2025, the provider must ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met. To do this the provider must at a minimum:

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 personal plans are regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with parents.

This is to comply with Regulation 5(1)(2) (Personal plans) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is in order 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 requirement was made on 19 March 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

Personal plans now set out children's needs and include strategies to ensure children's needs are fully met. Staff have a good knowledge of the information in each child's plan and this is also shared in a specific folder to provide easy access to all information needed to meet children's needs.

Personal plans are now reviewed regularly with parents at review meetings. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of all information, supports and strategies contained in each plan and use this to ensure they meet each child's individual changing needs.

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 support improved outcomes for children the provider should further develop and embed effective systems of quality assurance. This should include but is not limited to:
a) Staff develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and increasing their involvement in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service.
b) The management team effectively monitoring the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, 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 area for improvement was made on 19 March 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff have taken part in self-evaluation training to support their approach to evaluating practice and environments. The Quality Improvement Framework is used to support self-evaluation along with reflection and mind maps.

Monitoring is now being effectively used within the service to support change and ongoing improvement of practice, spaces and experiences for children.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To keep children safe and healthy and to promote their wellbeing, the service should improve infection prevention and control by ensuring that correct hand washing routines are established and maintained, according to infection prevention and control guidance.

This is to ensure that infection prevention and control practices are consistent with the Public Health Scotland guidance document, Health protection in children and young people settings, including education. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: '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 19 March 2025.

Action taken since then

Infection control measures are in place and are being well managed and followed. Children wash hands after toileting, messy play and prior to having snack and lunch. Staff washed hands at appropriate times throughout the day to minimise spread of infection.

Staff have considered the snack time experience and have made changes to the locations of snack to ensure hand washing facilities are located close by.
Surfaces were cleaned and wiped before and after use to minimise the potential for spread of infection.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To effectively support children's individual learning and development, the service should develop an enriching environment which supports curiosity, interests and imaginative play indoors and outdoors, and ensures high quality interactions support progress.

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 have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling.' (HSCS 1.30); 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 19 March 2025.

Action taken since then

Environments have now been considered and developed to improve play experiences and outcomes for children. Children now have ownership of a planting and growing area outdoors which they were very proud of and were keen to share their learning with us. Spaces are now promoting curiosity, creativity, construction and problem solving to support children to develop and progress.

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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