High School of Dundee Nursery
Day Care of Children

Mary Lily Walker Building
Mayfield Sports Centre
193 Arbroath Road
Dundee
DD4 7HS

Telephone: 01382 306 222

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 September 2025

Service provided by:
Corporation of the High School of Dundee

Service provider number:
SP2013012123

Service no:
CS2013319142

About the service

High School of Dundee Nursery provides a daycare of children service in Dundee. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 64 children between the ages of three years and those not yet attending primary school.

The service is based in a residential area of Dundee and is close to green spaces and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 September 2025 between 08:45 and 16:30. Feedback was shared with the service on 17 September 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:

- observed practice and daily life
- spoke with staff and the nursery leadership team
- spoke with children
- reviewed documents
- received 12 completed questionnaires from families.

As part of this inspection, we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how the service supports 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 confident and independent which demonstrated that they felt safe and secure.
- Interruptions to play meant there were missed opportunities to enhance children's learning and choice.
- Children benefitted from sociable mealtime experiences where staff engaged in meaningful conversations.
- A rich indoor and free-flow outdoor environment enabled children to create, explore, problem-solve and take risks.
- Most quality assurance systems were effective in ensuring positive outcomes for children.
- Staff were mostly deployed effectively to maintain supervision and children's safety.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, confident and independent in the nursery. They were keen to share their experiences which demonstrated that they felt safe and secure. Staff interactions were mostly kind, warm and nurturing. They knew children well and had formed positive relationships with them and their families. One parent commented, 'The nursery feels like an extended family.' As a result, children and their families were respected.

Families were welcomed into the nursery to collect their children and shared that they valued this time with staff. One parent commented, 'The staff are fantastic, welcoming and make you feel at ease.' This demonstrated that families were recognised as important in children's nursery life.

All children had a personal plan which gathered their likes, dislikes and information from home. Staff had a good understanding of children's needs and strategies to support individuals. Verbal updates were shared between staff and families. One parent commented, 'I am unaware of individual personal plans' and another commented, 'They actively seek updates about any new requirements.' We asked that staff review this process to ensure that personal plans are formally updated, at least every six months, with families. This would ensure that children's care and support remained consistent.

Mealtimes provided a nice, calm and sociable experience for children as they sat and ate together with staff. Snack promoted opportunities for children to develop their independence and life skills. A water station ensured that children remained hydrated throughout the day. Children would benefit from the lunch time experience being developed to provide opportunities for more independence and life skills. This would enable children to be fully involved and engaged during mealtimes.

Safeguarding measures and staff understanding of child protection processes and procedures, meant that children were kept safe. Staff had completed child protection training and spoke about keeping this knowledge refreshed throughout the year. This maintained children's wellbeing.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Most of the play and learning experiences were child-led and reflected children's interest. Children engaged in a range of play opportunities where they used their imaginations and problem-solving skills to become engrossed in play. For example, children were observed creating bracelets and necklaces, talking about length, size and counting. Another group of children were observed on a bug hunt where they spoke about 'shy centipedes' and slugs. This highlighted their creativity and imaginations. This demonstrated that children's play and learning was fun and meaningful.

Opportunities to extend children's play and learning were limited due to several interruptions from staff. For example, children shared lots of laughter together as they balanced, jumped and splashed in muddy puddles. One child shared, 'I'm having a bath' with the biggest smile on their face. However, this play ended as staff suggested children should wash their hands. Another child was interested in floating, sinking and experimenting with different objects. This experience grew to include more interested children, however staff did not support or extend this play. As a result, children's choice, play and learning were limited.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests and recorded how play and learning was extended to support challenge and progression. One parent commented, 'I love that the learning experiences are child-led, the staff plan and adapt to suit the needs of the children.' Some staff were skilled in using open-ended questions to extend children's learning and enhance their experiences. Floor books recorded planned and spontaneous play and learning opportunities. These were linked to the Curriculum for Excellence and children's voice was evident throughout. They had not been updated recently which limited children's opportunities to reflect on recent learning. We suggested the service review this approach to ensure that they are relevant and updated regularly. This would enable children to revisit experiences and provide depth of learning.

Children's learning was enhanced through the use of online learning journals. These were used to gather observations and were created in partnership with families. Families had opportunities to share valuable learning experiences from home and this provided a holistic view of their child. We noted that the quality and consistency of staff observations in the learning journals could be improved. We found that not all observations shared learning specific to individual children and significant time had lapsed between these. Some parents commented that they would like more information on their child's learning. One commented, 'Possibly a few more updates on what they are about to be learning so we could help at home.' We supported the leadership team's recognition that next steps could be further developed to ensure these were significant, tracked and enabled children to experience success in their achievements. This would ensure that children's individual learning and development were progressing and meaningful.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

A warm, bright and inviting space ensured children and families felt welcomed. For example, staff had recognised the need for children to explore their emotions and were creating a collaborative display to enable them to do this. The space was well ventilated and had plenty of natural light. All areas were furnished to a high standard and focussed on providing quality spaces for children. Children had a sense of belonging and ownership within the environment and this demonstrated they were respected.

Free-flow access to outdoors meant that children could choose where to play and learn. They demonstrated respect for their environment as they carried their wellington boots to the door before putting them on. The garden provided extensive opportunities for children to explore, problem-solve and take risks. Staff had plans to further develop the outdoor space which would extend children's experiences. The outdoor space was well used during the inspection which resulted in child-led experiences. One parent commented, 'My child thrives being outside and loves to play outside whenever they can.'

Children had a sense of pride within their environment as they readily participated in maintaining the cleanliness. We observed children sweeping up the sand and showing a genuine interest in keeping the nursery tidy. This contributed to the positive infection prevention control measures in place, which minimised the risk of infection.

Soft furnishings both indoors and outdoors provided comfortable spaces for children to rest and relax. Staff used these spaces effectively supporting children to feel reassured and settled in the environment. For example, a staff member was observed sharing a story with a child outside on a blanket, recognising their need for some quiet time. This meant that spaces reflected children's needs.

Children's safety was reinforced as staff reminded children of the need for and importance of wearing a helmet when on the bikes. Risk assessments were in place for the environment and we asked that these be kept up to date to reflect current practice. This would ensure that children's safety is maintained.

Accident and incidents were recorded and had been identified as an area to further develop by the leadership team. The forms were small which limited the information recorded and space to record further information about medical treatment. Where staff felt further information was required, they used an alternative record. We asked that staff ensure that families sign these forms to evidence that they have been shared. This would further support children's wellbeing.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Leaders had a strong vision for the setting which demonstrated their high aspirations for positive outcomes for children. We recognised that this had been a time of change for the nursery with a new manager and staff team. A whole school review of the vision, values and aims had taken place and the service had plans to create a nursery specific version of these. This would support the inclusive relationships established with children and families.

Children and their families were actively involved in sharing their views on a range of topics, for example, new menus recently introduced. One parent commented, 'Parents and children are always asked for ideas.' Newsletters and opportunities to share learning from home enabled families to participate in children's experiences. Families were invited in to share their knowledge and skills, which valued their role as active participants in the nursery. Where questionnaires were gathered from families, we asked the service to consider how their feedback is shared and actioned. This would ensure families views are valued and acted upon.

The leadership team and staff demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement, which contributed to the positive ethos across the service. Improvement planning was collaborative and involved staff, children and families. A floor book was used to enable all to be fully involved in the process. We found some priorities to be fully evidenced, however this was not consistent. Where improvements had been identified, we asked the leadership team to consider how these are actioned to ensure progress. This would ensure that improvements are sustained.

The manager had begun to use audits to assess some aspects of the nursery, for example, floor books, learning journals and outdoor provision. There was scope for these to be further developed and extended to include monitoring of staff practice and interactions. This would highlight missed opportunities and limits within play and learning and promote staff confidence in recognising these. This would support positive outcomes for children as their play and learning would be enhanced.

Most quality assurance systems ensured children experienced quality care. Some systems could be further developed to ensure they are robust, for example medication and accident audits. We suggested that audits of accidents identify any triggers and patterns, to enable staff to identify actions needed, to maintain children's safety. We asked for medication audits to be more detailed which would support the team to identify and action any gaps in the information held. This would ensure that all permissions were sought to administer medication and children's medical needs were met.

The manager had begun to lead appraisals with staff and these identified what was going well and possible future targets to support their professional development. We found that these were not completed consistently as some forms did not include manager comments, and were not signed off. The manager planned to review this process with staff. This would demonstrate that staff views were valued and provided opportunities to develop their skills.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children were cared for by a responsive and passionate staff team. One parent commented, 'All staff within the nursery team are warm, welcoming and approachable. They initiate pleasant conversation and take a genuine interest in our child and family.' There was a mix of skills, knowledge, and experience, which staff readily shared with one another to promote good outcomes for children. A positive ethos had been created where children and their families were loved and valued.

Staff communicated well with each other and shared information to support the needs of the children. For example, emergency medication moved with staff as children transitioned across the nursery, which promoted children's wellbeing needs. They used walkie talkies and completed regular headcounts which maintained children's safety.

A detailed training program provided opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge on a range of topics. They reflected on these opportunities and considered how they could impact their practice. Most staff communicated respectfully with children and each other. At times, staff could consider their interactions and language used so that these remain positive for children. For example, when discussing children's needs and transitions with other staff. Further training and monitoring would provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and promote positive outcomes for children.

New staff valued the opportunity to develop their understanding of the whole nursery and felt supported by staff. The manager planned to provide an in-depth induction for new staff following the National Induction Resource. This would ensure that staff skills and knowledge were supported and developed.

The setting was appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the children attending. Staff breaks were managed and did not impact on children's experiences. Most staff were deployed effectively which contributed to positive outcomes for children. We asked that staff consider their position, for example, when between a cloakroom and playroom, to maximise supervision and maintain children's safety and wellbeing.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	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.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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.