Green Tree Nursery
Day Care of Children

Murray Road
Smithton
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 August 2026

Service provided by:
Green Tree Nursery Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2016012685

Service no:
CS2016346063

About the service

Green Tree Nursery is a day care of children service situated in the Smithton area of Inverness. The service is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of 75 children up to and including primary school aged children. The service is provided by Green Tree Nursery Ltd.

The service is situated in a residential area near to local schools, shops, woods and other local amenities. Children are cared for in purpose built accommodation over two floors. On the ground floor children aged two to five years have access to two large playrooms. The rooms open directly onto enclosed outdoor areas. Babies up to two years of age are cared for on the first floor, they have access to a large playroom and a sleep room. Staff support the babies to access outdoor play experiences. Each of the playrooms has access to a to a kitchen area, toilets and nappy changing facilities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 17 and Tuesday 18 August 2026 with feedback on Wednesday 19th August 2026. This 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke/spent time with the children present during the inspection
- reviewed eighteen questionnaires completed by parents
- spoke with staff and the management team
- reviewed five staff questionnaires
- 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

- Children experienced high quality, nurturing and responsive care that supported their emotional wellbeing and development.
- Children were able to play and learn at their own pace, having fun as they explored the rich play experiences indoors and outdoors.
- Children's play and learning was well supported by staff who provided a range of experiences which promoted curiosity, creativity, confidence and independence.
- Play spaces were inviting, well resourced and reflected children's interests.
- Strong partnerships with families assisted communication and information sharing.
- Positive improvements had been made across a number of improvement priorities, including personal planning, resources, planning and assessment processes.
- The management and staff demonstrated a strong commitment to reflection, self evaluation and continuous improvement.
- A strong and meaningful system of quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement had been developed and was having a positive impact on outcomes for children and their families.

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

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.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

The management team promoted a positive attitude to change and continuous improvement, and were reflective in their approach. They recognised the importance of working in partnership and involving all relevant stakeholders in self evaluation processes. Staff were positive about the service and felt included in the improvement journey, fostering a shared sense of responsibility and a positive team culture. Staff fully engaged with the inspection process and demonstrated a positive attitude towards change and improvement. Staff confidently discussed the changes they had already introduced in the playroom and outdoors to improve outcomes and experiences for the children and were receptive to any feedback or suggestions.

The vision, values and aims of the service had recently been reviewed to reflect the ethos and aspirations of the service. The management team had included the children, their families and staff in the process. Having shared vision, values and aims has the potential to further strengthen a sense of belonging and ownership and supports the service to remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of children and families attending. They were clearly embedded in daily practice as staff promoted a warm, welcoming, inclusive environment where everyone felt respected, valued and included. The management and staff had created a tree display with large leaves attached as a child-friendly interpretation of their vision, values and aims which children were free to add to.

A collaborative approach to self-evaluation was embedded across the service with children, families and staff actively encouraged to contribute to its development. The management routinely invited feedback and suggestions through a range of approaches, including newsletters, stay and play sessions, a closed Facebook group and daily conversations at drop off and pick up times. This helped to foster a sense of community and both staff and families commented that they felt very involved in the ongoing evaluation and development of the service.

Parents told us they felt involved in the life of the nursery and valued opportunities to contribute. Comments included, "I feel that parents are genuinely included in helping to shape the service. Recently, we were invited to contribute to the development of the nursery's new values, which I thought was a positive step - it showed that the nursery wants to reflect what matters to families, not just make decisions in isolation", "We were asked to provide our opinions on developing the vision, values and aims. In addition to this I feel like if we had any suggestions we are welcomed in bringing theses forward", "The nursey regularly seeks our input through parent questionnaires, regular updates, and friendly daily chats. They are incredibly open to feedback, suggestions and ideas, making us feel like a valued part of the nursery community".

Quality assurance and self evaluation was contributing towards the development of the service. Following previous inspections, the service had created an action plan which outlined clear and realistic priorities. An appropriate pace of change had supported staff to make improvements and work together towards shared goals. As well as the action plan, there was a quality assurance calendar in place which covered key aspects of nursery provision and was effectively supporting the service to monitor practice and outcomes. This include monitoring interactions, experiences and the environment. Effective self evaluation and use of audit tools highlighted strengths and where improvements could be made.

Team meetings, room meetings and informal discussion provided opportunity for the manager and staff to reflect on practice, discuss ongoing improvements and progress in meeting identified actions points, and the impact of these on securing progression and positive outcomes for the children. They had made use of a floor book to record evidence of what progress they had made to meet any action points, identify improvements and reflect on how these had impacted on outcomes for children. We were able to see the improvements which had been made since the previous inspection and how they had impacted positively on children's experiences, their play, learning and development.

The management demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the management of staffing. Robust recruitment processes were in place ensuring staff were safely appointed with appropriate checks completed. All staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council, supporting safe practice and ongoing professional learning across the setting. The service made use of the national induction resource and new staff benefited from a programme of induction and opportunities to shadow experienced colleagues. This supported new staff to settle into their role and become part of the staff team.

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how children learn and develop and were all committed to supporting children to play, learn and achieve. They were all caring and nurturing in their approach and they all had a good knowledge and understanding of the children's individual needs. Secure, positive attachments had been developed between children and staff. Parents were all complimentary about how friendly, approachable and caring the staff were.

Staff were positive about the service and felt supported by the management team. Staff engaged with the inspection process, 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.

There was a range of opportunities available for staff to have professional discussions and use these to inform practice, for example, regular team meetings. All staff attended a support and reflection meeting with a member of the management team on a quarterly basis. These regular check ins provided an opportunity for staff to be involved in professional dialogue with the management team, reflect on their own practice, recognise their strengths, identify their goals and any training needs.

Staff had completed core professional training including first aid, food safety, health and safety and infection prevention and control training. This training helped to support children's wellbeing and enhance staff knowledge. There was system to record post training reflection and evaluation. This demonstrated how learning had enhanced staff knowledge or informed changes to practice. Staff had completed child protection awareness training and ensured that they attended refresher training on a regular basis. Staff commented positively about the child protection training and how it made them more confident in understanding how to keep children safe.

Deployment of staff across the setting and throughout the day supported children to lead their play and engage in free flow opportunities whilst remaining safe. Staff were providing good levels of supervision and support to children during mealtimes and snacks. There was good communication between staff, they were flexible and supported each other. They communicated clearly with on another especially when they moved from one area to another or when additional support was needed. Staff also made good use of walkie talkies, particularly when some or all of the children were outdoors.

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 experience high quality spaces

Children experienced an environment that was safe, welcoming and inspiring. The setting was clean, bright and well organised, with ample natural light and good ventilation. Both the indoor and outdoor spaces were well laid out and provided a variety of areas to play, to be physically active as well as to rest. This gave children a strong message that they mattered, were valued and provided them with a strong sense of belonging.

The playrooms had been further developed since previous inspections. All three playrooms were well thought out and offered children appropriate levels of challenge, enabling children to develop confidence, resilience and build independence. There were homely touches and cosy areas which offered space to rest and supported emotional wellbeing. Areas were defined and included literacy, role play, arts and crafts, block play, water play and messy play. Children comfortably moved around the playrooms, independently accessing resources and were focussed in their play.

Staff periodically reviewed the layout of the playrooms to ensure the environment and resources were motivating and met the needs and interests of the children. This reinforced that children's views were valued and supported growing confidence, and a strong sense of ownership within the environment.

The staff all recognised the importance of regular outdoor play and the benefits of this for enhancing learning and wellbeing. Children enjoyed a variety of meaningful outdoor experiences that supported their learning, creativity and physical development. The two ground floor playrooms opened directly onto the outdoor play areas which continued to be developed by the staff There was a good range of rich and meaningful learning opportunities, including water play, large mud kitchen, sand pit, and various pieces of equipment to support children's developing gross motor skills including balancing and climbing. Good use was also made of the local community with regular visits to the woods, the Gruffalo walk as well as visits to a small croft to learn about the animals and how to care for them.

Appropriate measures were in place to support children's safety and security. Entry to the nursery was secure, and the outdoor garden areas were fully enclosed, providing children with a secure space to play and explore. There were appropriate risk assessments in place and daily checks of the setting were completed with any maintenance requirements reported to the manager. Routine health and safety checks were completed.

Infection prevention and control practices were in place to support children's health and wellbeing, including handwashing routines, cleaning practices and the use of protective equipment. Staff cleaned surfaces before snack preparation and any spillages were promptly cleared up.

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.

Playing, learning and developing

Children in each of the playrooms were busy, happy, confident and having fun as they played.
They experienced a rich, engaging environment which supported their wellbeing and development. Staff had created play spaces that promoted curiosity, creativity and independence. Children were encouraged to lead their own play and freely explore a range of experiences and activities that supported their development and interests. Experiences were thoughtfully planned and responsive to children's ideas. For example, children in the 3 - 5 room wanted to learn about dinosaurs and in response to this staff had introduced various activities and resources both indoors and outdoors. This contributed to children being happy, confident, and independent learners who were engaged in purposeful and meaningful play.

Staff confidently got down to children's level, picked up on children's verbal and non verbal cues, showed interest and enthusiasm, gave praise and celebrated children's achievements. Staff interactions were warm, calm and responsive and were adding value to children's play and learning. Most staff used effective questioning and extended children's learning, for example open ended questions and 'I wonder' statements, and allowed enough time for children to think and respond. We saw many of examples of this when we spent time with the children from each of the rooms outdoors. However, there were some missed opportunities when skilled interactions and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills and promote development of imagination.

Staff were able to confidently discuss the improvements they had made to the layout and range of resources available to children since the previous inspection. In each of the playrooms there was a good range of real life resources, loose parts, open ended resources, mark making, construction, role play and messy play activities. Children's language, literacy and numeracy skills were supported naturally through play and daily interactions. For example, children had opportunities to develop their language and communication skills through songs and rhymes and having stories shared with them while mathematical language and skills were promoted through daily routines as children and staff counted together and played games. The service should continue to develop the range of literacy and numeracy resources and experiences available, particularly outdoors.

All children benefited from regular access to outdoor play and learning. Staff recognised the value of outdoor experiences and provided opportunities for children to explore the outdoor play areas as well as going out into the local community for walks, visits to the woods, the park and a croft to see and learn about the animals. These experiences all supported children's confidence, physical development and enjoyment of being active outdoors.

Parents commented positively about the range of activities and opportunities available to the children. They particularly appreciated the amount of time the children spent outdoors and the good use made of local walks and visits to the woods. Comments made included, 'The nursery offers an amazing variety of fun and educational experiences. Our child is constantly trying new things from sensory and messy play to arts, crafts and group story times. The activities are perfectly tailored to keep a 2 year old engaged and learning', 'Such diverse learning for my child from inside and outside play areas, walks to the woods, songs, fixed learning i.e. weather, animals, and he comes home telling me amazing facts in great detail!', 'My son loves outdoors and this is the biggest benefit to him at Green Tree.'.

Children experienced a responsive approach to planning which reflected their interests, developmental stages and individual needs. This ensured activities were meaningful and engaging for children. Well thought out wall displays allowed children and their parents to see what the current interests were. Good use was made of the children's art work and mark making, and photographs to illustrate what the children had learned. There were also floor books which were being used to record children's voice and how their interests were extended and developed. The service recognised the need to continue to develop systems for planning.
The management and staff should ensure planning consistently reflects children's interests, strengths and next steps in learning, supporting experiences that are meaningful, responsive and tailored to individual children.

Management and staff were continuing to develop the quality of written observations of children's experiences to ensure they were evaluative and focussed on children's learning. Some contained only limited evaluation of children's progression and achievements. As a consequence, information was not effectively being used by staff to plan appropriately to meet children's individual needs, show progression in learning and identify next steps.

Learning journals supported staff to record and celebrate aspects of children's experiences, progress and achievements. These included photographs and observations. The older children could readily access their journals and add pieces of their work they were proud of. Folders were routinely shared with parents. As well as being available during stay and play sessions, they were also regularly sent home which gave families the time to go through the folder with their child and talk about what they had learned at nursery. Parents were invited to add comments to the folders which many routinely did. The comments we saw were very positive about their child's learning and achievements.

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.

Nurturing care and support

Children and their families all received a warm welcome when they arrived. Children experienced kind, caring and nurturing interactions from staff, helping them to feel safe and secure. Staff knew the children well and recognised their cues and responded sensitively, providing comfort, cuddles and reassurance when needed. This showed positive relationships and supported children's emotional wellbeing. Parents valued the positive relationships that had been formed. Their comments included, "Nurturing staff - I feel they know my child really well", "Every morning they run to the door with a huge smile, excited to see the staff who are always so warm and welcoming", and "the staff are exceptionally warm and approachable and professional. Every day we are welcomed with genuine smiles".

Positive working relationships with parents promoted and supported good communication and information sharing which in turn supported consistency and continuity of care for children. We observed parents being provided with good levels of feedback about their child's day during pick up. Parents commented, "I am aware that there is an open door policy. I regularly send emails and get a prompt response and regularly chat with staff at drop off / pick up", "The nursery are clearly open to communication and welcome parents to let them know if they want a meeting to discuss anything. Daily discussions are held at pick up", "The door is always open for speaking to Teresa and the team. We get feedback daily at handover/collection", "we also enjoy the stay and play events to have the opportunity to see what our child gets up to in the day", "the setting also runs several events for parents throughout the year, such as a Christmas concert which the children love".

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning approaches. Personal plans were in place for all children and provided detailed information about their wellbeing, interests and support needs. Where required, additional strategies and support plans were in place and had been developed alongside families and other professionals. Personal plans were reviewed regularly with parents, which ensured information was kept up to date and reflected children's current circumstances.

Across the day transitions were well supported. Embedded routines created predictability, helping children to understand what to expect and promoted emotional security. Children were appropriately prepared for transitions between areas and activities, supporting smooth, calm movement throughout the setting. Across each of the rooms, routines provided consistency and helped children feel safe and secure and supported their sense of belonging.

Sleep arrangements reflected children's individual needs and family wishes. Children were provided with a calm, quiet space that followed safer sleep guidance, ensuring their comfort and wellbeing. Individual beds, bedding and comforters were available to children ensuring their sleep and rest was comfortable. Sleeping children were supervised and regular checks were made and recorded. Changes to sleep routines were communicated to parents during the day.

Personal care needs were carried out by nurturing staff who respected children's dignity and privacy. Younger children were invited calmly and sensitively to have their care needs met. Staff gently supported handwashing, nose wiping and cleaning after meals. This approach helped children to feel respected, valued and comfortable within the setting.

Snack and mealtimes were calm and unhurried. They were relaxed, social experiences where children were able to enjoy eating and chatting with friends. Staff sat with children and promoted social skills and independence. Children's dietary requirements and preferences were catered for, and alternatives were offered when needed. Consideration should be given to extending the opportunities for children to develop independence skills, for example being involved in snack preparation.

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

So that children's health and wellbeing needs continue to be met. The provider should ensure that staff maintain a clear understanding and implement a consistent approach to strategies, that supports children's individual needs.

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

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This area for improvement was made on 11 March 2026.

Action taken since then

The staff spoken with during the inspection were able to confidently discuss the health and wellbeing needs of the children in their care and the strategies needed to support any identified needs.

This area for improvement has now been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure that children benefit from improvements which have the greatest positive impacts on their experiences and outcomes, the service should ensure that they have clear, robust quality assurance processes in place.

This should include but is not limited to:

a) regular opportunities for staff to reflect and self-evaluate practice and improvements;

b) regular, formal monitoring of staff practice to identify good quality skills and practice as well as training needs;

c) providing staff with constructive feedback to support them to fully meet children's needs;

d) regular monitoring of the quality of children's experiences and care;

e) Auditing all children's information recorded, including medication information, ensuring this corresponds between recording formats.

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).

This area for improvement was made on 12 September 2024.

Action taken since then

The service now had in a place a more robust system for quality assurance which was contributing towards the development of the service and was having a positive impact on outcomes for children.

There was a quality assurance calendar which supported management to undertake regular monitoring of all key aspects of service provision including monitoring of staff practice, experiences for children, the auditing of children's records, medication records, accidents and incidents.

Following the monitoring of practice, staff were provided with constructive feedback both informally and during quarterly support and reflection meetings with a member of the management team.

The management team should continue to embed systems of quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement

This area for improvement has now been met.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

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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