Kirkhope Nursery
Day Care of Children

Woodend Road
Ettrickbridge
Selkirk
TD7 5JJ

Telephone: 01750 522 31

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 April 2026

Service provided by:
Scottish Borders Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001976

Service no:
CS2016348295

About the service

Kirkhope Nursery is a day care of children service situated in the rural village of Ettrickbridge near Selkirk, within the Scottish Borders.

The service is registered to provide care for a maximum of 20 children at any one time, aged between three years and entry into primary school. Children are cared for in a playroom which is attached to the school with its own access point for parents to drop off and collect. There is an enclosed garden space, which the children have access to. The service has access to local amenities and greenspaces.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 of April 2026 from 9:00 to 15:30 and 28 April 2026. from 9:30 to 13:00. 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with several children during their play
- spoke with four parents during our visit and reviewed online comments from nine families
- spoke with members of staff and the leadership team
- observed staff practice and daily experiences for children
- 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 in relation to core assurances.

Key messages

- Staff were reflective within a well supported team, resulting in a positive impact on children's wellbeing, confidence and enjoyment.
- Children benefited from responsive play and learning experiences that were carefully balanced to support their development, curiosity and engagement.
- Strong partnerships and communication with families enhanced outcomes for children's learning and wellbeing.
- Professional learning was meaningful and impactful, strengthening staff practice, improving interactions and enriching learning experiences across the setting.
- Safeguarding and personal planning were well managed, ensuring children's health, wellbeing and protection needs were clearly recorded, monitored and acted upon.
- Nurturing care and support were a significant strength, with children benefiting from warm relationships, emotional security and responsive care.

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	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Leaders had a strong focus on inclusion, teamwork and improving the service. The vision, values and aims were clear in practice and demonstrated respect, kindness and nurture. These were being reviewed with input from children, staff and families, helping to create a shared understanding for staff and consistency for children. Leaders promoted children's rights through consultation, listening to and respecting their ideas. Leaders had introduced children to the language of rights, helping them become familiar with these to build confidence to share their views and feel heard. As a result, children were more engaged, included and able to take part in decisions that affect them. This could be seen in their development of the outdoor space as well as throughout the daily interactions.

Leaders listened to families and kept them well informed. Families expressed high levels of trust in leadership and the staff. They expressed feeling involved and valued. One family shared, 'Children and parent opinions are considered when making changes to nursery'. With others adding that they have been actively invited to help develop the play spaces for children and stating, 'The transformation in the place over the five years has been great'. This involvement of children and families in the development of the service strengthened relationships and supported better outcomes for children.

Leaders used effective self-evaluation processes to drive improvement. For example, feedback from previous inspections, alongside ongoing reflection, led to a clear focus on strengthening literacy experiences. Leaders ensured staff accessed training, including emerging literacy. Staff described that this had influenced how they plan spaces and the resources on offer. Reflection on improvements were evident within online records and digital "floorbooks". These included reflection on the impact these have had for the children. Staff told us that they felt empowered and fully involved in identifying priorities and reviewing impact.

Leadership also ensured children's voices meaningfully influenced developments. Improvements to the outdoor environment were clearly shaped by children's views. Children were supported to contribute ideas, plan changes and reflect on developments. These changes had increased engagement and enjoyment of outdoor learning. Pride in their efforts was evident as they enthusiastically showed us the spaces they had helped to create. Leaders were receptive to discussion around strengthening documentation to further highlight children's voices and impact, demonstrating reflective and responsive leadership.

Quality assurance processes were well established. Leaders ensured staff were involved in audits and monitoring activities, building shared responsibility and understanding of standards. Staff were given areas of responsibility, enabling them to lead improvements and develop their skills. The introduction of peer observations was identified by staff as a useful reflective tool to support improvement. Leaders shared that these reflections will be used to identify further training needs to ensure progress across the team is sustained.

Regular staff meetings and leadership meetings ensured quality was discussed, reviewed and maintained and information about children's needs were shared. Staff felt supported, valued and confident to contribute to change. This created a stable, motivated team who worked well together to enrich experiences and improve outcomes for children.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

The staff team made effective use of professional learning, guidance and local authority support. Training, such as inspiring environments and emerging literacy had strengthened staff understanding and enhanced the quality of interactions and experiences offered to children. Staff reported that training strengthened their processes of how to plan and sustain meaningful, engaging play. As a result, children were experiencing rich, responsive play opportunities that supported deeper engagement, curiosity and progress in their learning.

During the inspection, children were observed to be happy, confident and engaged in play. They experienced a wide range of child-led, exploratory learning opportunities that supported collaboration and problem solving. Parents expressed satisfaction with the experiences on offer to their children, with one telling us, 'My child has taken part in various activities from, role play to a visit to the local farm to meet the lambs'. Another told us, 'The activities have helped develop my child's learning'. A strong example of high-quality practice was observed during bug exploration, where children demonstrated sustained engagement over consecutive days. Staff responded sensitively to children's questions, ideas and emerging interests, providing additional resources and information to extend learning. Digital technology was used purposefully to research insects, take photos and magnify images, enhancing curiosity while maintaining a balance with active play.

Children showed independence, confidently selecting resources while skilled and sensitive staff interactions supported them to extend play. The environment effectively supported literacy and numeracy. Literacy was embedded through play and enhanced by resources such as story and song props, increasing children's engagement and enjoyment. Children were excited to share what they had been creating for these resources. Staff worked well with the primary one teacher to support progression, ensuring resources matched children's development and provided challenge. Numeracy was weaved effectively into play, through sand, construction, digging, block play and everyday routines such as mealtimes. Staff used mathematical language well, supporting children's understanding of number, quantity and problem solving. Overall, the breadth of resources supported meaningful learning. Increasing consistency in variety and choice across all areas would further improve outcomes for children, and leaders were committed to this improvement.

Planning reflected a balance of long, medium and short-term approaches, with learning shared effectively with families through the Showbie app. Staff demonstrated skill in adapting plans to follow children's interests. Observations demonstrated breadth across the curriculum and staff knew the children well as learners. Next steps for children's learning were identified for all children, enabling staff to plan for their interests and progression. The team had identified a need to improve how observations, next steps and planning were linked, showing insight. Strengthening this will make children's learning clearer and better support their progress and development. All families agreed that they were able to be involved in their child's learning and had opportunities to discuss learning with the staff team. One family summarised, 'There is lots of information on Showbie about learning and play, we attend stay and play where we can discuss what they have been doing'.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced a highly nurturing, safe and emotionally supportive environment where their wellbeing was prioritised. During the inspection, children were observed to be relaxed, settled and confident in approaching staff for comfort, reassurance and to join in play. Staff interactions were calm, gentle and respectful, supporting children to feel secure and valued. This was echoed in feedback from families who consistently praised the staff, with one saying, 'They are an amazing group of individuals'. Another added, 'The staff are wonderful and genuinely care for the children'.

The service's values and commitment to respecting children's rights were evident through warm, responsive interactions. Staff were skilled in supporting children to express feelings, negotiate during disagreements and understand the perspectives of others. This demonstrated leadership's success in setting clear expectations and supporting staff to translate values into daily practice.

Personal planning was well organised and highly effective in safeguarding children's health and wellbeing. All personal plans were reviewed within required timescales and updated consistently, demonstrating good oversight. Clear front sheets enabled staff to quickly identify changes, supporting continuity and consistency of care. Where children required additional support, appropriate plans were in place and regularly reviewed in partnership with families and relevant professionals, ensuring provision remained responsive to changing needs. Strong links between personal plans, chronologies and medical care plans ensured information was accurate, accessible and understood by staff. Medication procedures were robust and well managed. Careful planning for dietary and allergy needs, alongside regular parental consultation, reduced risk and ensured children were cared for safely and confidently.

Transitions were managed thoughtfully and sensitively. Staff worked closely with families to support children joining the setting, responding flexibly to individual circumstances or needs. This collaborative approach strengthened trust and supported children to feel emotionally secure. Transitions to school were well planned, with opportunities for families to discuss concerns and agree enhanced approaches if needed. Effective communication with other schools further supported continuity for children who may be moving out with Kirkhope Primary.

Mealtime routines were calm, well organised and supportive of children's independence. Staff worked collaboratively with kitchen staff to manage allergies, dietary requirements and routines consistently. Children were supported to self-serve, clear away independently and engage in conversation, contributing to a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere. Snack routines promoted healthy choices, and the children were familiar with the routine.

Personal care routines, including sleep, toileting and nappy changing, were agreed with families and recorded clearly. Daily information was shared through digital systems, supporting continuity and ensuring families remain informed. This reduced the risk of missed information at collection times and strengthened communication.

Families described communication as purposeful, balanced and reassuring. They felt welcomed into the service and confident in staff care and judgement. Strong partnership working was evident, with families reporting positive impacts where staff have supported additional challenge, sensory regulation and emotional wellbeing. One family described Kirkhope Nursery as, 'Just like a little family'. We observed staff and families to be open and respectful in their interactions at the informal stay and play session that had

been arranged. The nurturing care and support from the staff team was a significant strength. Children benefited from secure relationships, responsive care and effective safeguarding. Trusting partnerships with families enhanced outcomes and continuity for the children.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 31 August 2025, the provider must ensure the service has a clear understanding of local and national child protection policies and procedures.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

a) the staff revisits and reviews local protocols and national child protection policies and procedures, to support a joint understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

b) ensure all staff within the setting feel empowered to take appropriate action if necessary to ensure the effective protection, welfare and wellbeing of all children in their care.

c) implement training, learning and development activities to support the staff's understanding of safeguarding children. This should include, for example, exploring roles and responsibilities, keeping accurate records, information sharing and analysis. Training should also cover quality assurance and the effective auditing and monitoring of children's care plans, wellbeing records and chronologies.

d) review children's plans including their chronologies to ensure significant events or changes in children's circumstances are accurately recorded to support their wellbeing and holistic care.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1)(a) (Welfare of users) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI/2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:
'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.' (HSCS 3.20)
'I am listened to and taken seriously if I have a concern about the protection and safety of myself or others, with appropriate assessments and referrals made.' (HSCS 3.22)

This requirement was made on 3 June 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

All staff had revisited and reviewed local and national child protection procedures, alongside the local authority child protection officer. Clear guidance and updated flowcharts were displayed across the setting,

ensuring staff could readily access information. Ongoing training and regular revisiting of child protection at in service days had strengthened staff confidence and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff demonstrated clarity about reporting processes and escalation routes to safeguard children effectively.

Children's chronologies, personal plans and care plans were reviewed and updated, with digital systems improving accessibility and efficiency. Regular moderation and auditing by leaders ensured key information was recorded, monitored and acted upon appropriately and timely, supporting children's welfare, wellbeing and protection.

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

Personal planning approaches should be reviewed to ensure the service consider all the information provided by families and ensure children receive the right support at the right time. Support strategies, should reflect information contained in the child's plan, wellbeing notes and chronologies, to ensure each child's health, welfare and safety needs are 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 3 June 2025.

Action taken since then
All personal plans had been reviewed within the six-month time frame and there was evidence of updates being added. A front sheet gave details of what had been changed and when. This was useful to inform staff where changes had been, helping to ensure they were aware of all up to date information. Those with support needs had strategies in place and these were reviewed alongside families to reflect any changes. Links between chronologies, care plans, strategy sheets and medical needs could be seen throughout children's records. This meant that children were receiving the support that was right for all.

This area for Improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's breadth and depth of learning, the setting should provide a wider range of learning experiences, including more open ended play indoors, such as, large block play, construction and open ended materials. Staff should facilitate and extend children's learning, including their language, literacy and numeracy skills. They should engage children in a meaningful way through open ended questioning,

interactive stories, and using concepts such as size, quantity and shape during play, mealtimes and in organising materials for functional play.

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)
'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 3 June 2025.

Action taken since then

The team had reflected on the range and purpose of learning resources using audits and recognised guidance, including Curriculum for Excellence, loose parts approaches and emergent literacy research. This had resulted in clear improvements to the learning environment, with expanded construction areas, increased access to large blocks, and a wider range of open ended and loose parts materials available indoors and outdoors. These developments have enhanced children's opportunities for exploratory, creative and sustained play.

Staff training in literacy had strengthened practice, with staff confidently engaging children through open ended questioning and shared thinking to extend learning. Observations confirmed children's curiosity and problem solving were effectively supported. While literacy development has been a key focus, plans are in place to strengthen numeracy further, with audits already underway to support continued progress and ensure breadth and depth across learning.

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	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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