FossoPLAY Outdoor Nursery
Day Care of Children

Fossoway Stables
Fossoway
Kinross
KY13 0UP

Telephone: 07738 682 016

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 October 2026

Service provided by:
Christopher McConnell

Service provider number:
SP2019990890

Service no:
CS2019377682

About the service

FossoPLAY Outdoor Nursery is registered to provide care to a maximum of 24 children aged two years to under nine years. Of those children, no more than four are aged two years to under three years and no more than four are aged five years to under nine years.

The service is a fully outdoor service and is located in Kinross. The service operates from a 70-acre wooded estate and provides nature-based play and learning experiences.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 29 and 30 September 2026. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate who was accompanied by an inspector undertaking shadowing opportunities.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with children using the service;
- spoke with two families during our visit;
- sought feedback from families and staff through an online survey; five responses were received from families;
- spoke with staff;
- spoke to the provider/manager of the service;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection, we assessed 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within Leadership.

Key messages

- The service's vision of providing nurturing outdoor experiences through child-led play was reflected in practice, supporting children to explore and learn through meaningful experiences in the natural environment.
- Self-evaluation processes were beginning to support reflection and improvement.
- Provider oversight should be strengthened to ensure leadership responsibilities, quality assurance activities and regulatory requirements are monitored and completed effectively.
- Children enjoyed a wide range of play and learning opportunities that promoted curiosity, creativity and investigation. A relaxed, child-led approach, supported by natural and open-ended resources, encouraged children to explore their interests and engage in meaningful learning.
- Developing a more consistent approach across the staff team would help ensure children benefit from the same high standard of interactions, support and learning opportunities throughout the day.
- Children experienced positive relationships with staff. They appeared happy, settled and secure, confidently seeking support and reassurance when needed.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

The service's vision to provide nurturing and inspiring outdoor experiences through child-led play was reflected in practice. Children accessed a range of hands-on opportunities within the natural environment, encouraging exploration, creativity and independence. Leaders had identified the need to strengthen awareness of the vision, values and aims and had included this within improvement planning. Plans were in place to make these more visible and to gather the views of children and families, so that they continued to reflect the needs and aspirations of those using the service.

Children's safety was promoted through effective procedures to assess and monitor risks within the environment. Staff were confident in carrying out assessments to identify potential hazards and take appropriate action to reduce risks. This helped staff to respond promptly to concerns and maintain a safe environment, and supported children's wellbeing.

The team had begun to use self-evaluation to reflect on practice and identify areas for development. This informed improvement priorities, with numeracy, family involvement and broadening the curriculum identified as current areas for development. Some progress had been made in these areas, supporting improvements for children. While staffing challenges had delayed aspects of this work, there was evidence of a continued focus on improvement. Ongoing review of improvement activity could help the service understand the difference changes are making and evaluate the impact on outcomes for children and families.

Support and supervision meetings, alongside team discussions, provided opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and professional development. These approaches supported them to identify strengths in practice and areas for development, while encouraging ongoing learning. This contributed to staff developing their skills and knowledge. Leaders recognised that increasing opportunities for focused team time would further support reflection, collaboration and continued improvements in practice.

Leadership and quality assurance arrangements needed to be strengthened to ensure effective oversight of the service. While some monitoring processes were in place, these were not sufficiently robust or consistently implemented to ensure all regulatory responsibilities and quality assurance activities were carried out within required timescales. For example, systems had not effectively monitored professional registrations to ensure all staff remained registered with the appropriate professional body. As a result, leaders could not always demonstrate effective oversight of key aspects of the service or provide assurance that all requirements were consistently met.

Strengthening provider oversight, clarifying leadership responsibilities and improving the planning, monitoring and delegation of leadership tasks would support compliance, strengthen quality assurance processes and contribute to improved outcomes for children and families (see Area for improvement one).

During our visit, staffing levels and deployment varied due to staff absence and ongoing recruitment challenges. At times, staff moved with children, communicated effectively with colleagues and adapted their roles to support children's care and wellbeing. These approaches were not always consistent, and there were occasions when oversight was reduced. This meant the quality and consistency of children's experiences was not always maintained. Strengthening contingency planning and staffing arrangements could support more effective deployment, minimise disruption to children's experiences and promote consistency in care (see Area for improvement two).

Some aspects of recruitment procedures aligned with best practice and supported children's safety and wellbeing. However, the records sampled identified gaps in processes. Induction procedures had not been applied consistently for all staff, and references did not provide enough information to support a robust assessment of candidates before employment. This reduced assurance that recruitment procedures consistently supported safe recruitment practices and safeguarded children (see Area for improvement three).

Areas for improvement

1. The provider should strengthen leadership and quality assurance arrangements to ensure effective oversight of the service. This should include, but not be limited to:

- establishing clear leadership roles and responsibilities;
- improving the planning, monitoring and delegation of leadership tasks; and
- implementing effective systems to monitor professional registrations and regulatory requirements.

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).

2. The provider should continue to strengthen contingency planning and staffing arrangements to support the consistent deployment of staff across the service. This should include ensuring staffing arrangements remain effective during periods of staff absence or recruitment challenges. This will help minimise disruption to children's experiences and support the consistent delivery of high-quality care.

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

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15);

and

'My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event' (HCSC 4.14).

3. The provider should strengthen recruitment procedures to ensure safe recruitment practices are consistently implemented. This should include applying induction processes consistently for all staff and ensuring references provide sufficient information to support robust recruitment decisions. This will increase assurance that recruitment practices promote the safety and wellbeing of children.

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

'I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

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 enjoyed play and learning opportunities that promoted investigation, curiosity and creativity. They were engaged and active throughout the day, with a relaxed, child-led approach supporting them to make choices about how they spent their time. Natural and open-ended resources, together with the outdoor environment, encouraged exploration, imagination and problem-solving. This supported children to follow their interests and engage in meaningful play and learning experiences.

Most children were motivated in their experiences, spending sustained periods of time exploring, playing and learning. For example, one child spent time investigating how different cars travelled down ramps, testing ideas and making changes to explore what happened. This supported children to develop their curiosity, problem-solving skills and ability to concentrate on activities for sustained periods of time. There were missed opportunities, particularly within the yurt, for staff to extend children's thinking and deepen learning through meaningful interactions. Further developing staff awareness of these opportunities would enhance children's learning experiences and outcomes.

Interactions mostly supported children's thinking and engagement in their experiences. Some staff used skilled questioning and discussion to extend learning and deepen children's thinking. At times, some interactions were more instructional, limiting opportunities for children to think independently, share their ideas and lead their learning. Continuing to build on this practice across the team would help ensure children consistently benefit from high-quality interactions.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's individual interests and stages of development. Through observations and tracking of learning, staff monitored children's progress and identified next steps to support ongoing development. For example, during a carrot-growing experience, children engaged in the same activity in different ways, demonstrating how planning could be adapted to support individual interests, learning and outcomes. This helped provide children with opportunities that were relevant and meaningful to them.

Staff reported increasing confidence in using observations to inform planning and support children's learning. They were beginning to use this information to shape experiences and respond to children's emerging interests and development needs. Continuing to build this confidence, alongside evaluating the impact of planned experiences, would help ensure children continue to make progress and achieve positive outcomes.

Floor books supported children's involvement in planning their experiences. Children's marks, comments and feedback were captured, providing opportunities for them to share their ideas, interests and views. This helped staff understand what was important to children and use this information to inform future planning. Further developing children's contributions and demonstrating how their feedback influences experiences could strengthen children's participation, promote a greater sense of ownership and support them to see the impact of their views within the service.

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.

Warm and nurturing approaches supported children's wellbeing and helped them feel safe and secure. Most interactions were caring, responsive and respectful, promoting positive relationships with children. We highlighted a small number of occasions where interactions were more directive, which had the potential to impact children's experiences. Further reflection on the consistency of interactions across the team would help ensure all children experience positive, nurturing relationships.

Children appeared happy, settled and comfortable. They confidently sought support and reassurance from staff, reflecting the positive attachments that had been developed. Staff responded to children's emotional needs, providing comfort and physical reassurance when appropriate. This helped children feel supported and confident in their environment.

Transitions for children settling into the service were planned in response to their individual needs. Families we spoke to highlighted settling-in processes as a positive experience and felt staff took time to understand the needs of both children and their family. This included providing opportunities for families to spend time in the setting and gradually support their child to become familiar with the environment, routines and staff. As a result, children were supported to develop positive relationships and confidence as they settled into the service.

Daily routines and transitions were generally calm, respectful and well managed, helping children prepare for changes throughout the day. Staff explained what was happening and supported children to move between experiences at a pace that met their needs. There were opportunities to further support children during personal care routines. Ensuring children are consistently given time to prepare for transitions and understand what is happening would promote their dignity, choice and sense of control during these experiences.

Personal plans were in place and developed in partnership with families. Regular reviews ensured plans reflected children's current needs and circumstances. Information supported staff to understand children's preferences, routines and individual needs, with plans outlining how support would be provided. This helped promote responsive care that reflected children's individual needs and supported their wellbeing.

Overall, mealtimes were calm and positive. Children sat with friends, and some staff sat alongside them to encourage conversation and a social atmosphere. Children were supported to develop independence through clearing away dishes and collecting their belongings. At times, staff were focused on tasks, reducing opportunities for interaction. Increasing opportunities for staff to sit alongside children and further involving children in routines would support social interaction, while promoting children's independence and self-help skills.

The service recognised the importance of involving families in their child's experiences and the life of the setting. Families had regular opportunities to visit the service and take part in learning experiences alongside their children. They spoke positively about the service and their relationships with staff, describing them as approachable and supportive. Feedback from families reflected positive views of the care and experiences provided. Families shared that children were happy, settled and enjoyed their time at the service.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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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