

# Ellon Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Ellon Primary School Nursery  
Modley Place  
Ellon  
AB41 9BB

Telephone: 01358 281 090

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
24 April 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeenshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000029

**Service no:**  
CS2003015451

## About the service

Ellon Primary School Nursery is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children, aged from three years to not yet of an age to attend primary school.

The nursery is accommodated within Ellon Primary School in the town of Ellon, Aberdeenshire. Children are cared for in one open plan playroom with access to a sensory room and separate dining area. The children have direct access from the playroom to an outdoor play area. The service is close to local shops, parks and other amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 and 24 April 2025 between the times of 08:30 and 17:10. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations we:

- Spent time with children using the service and spoke with seven of their parents/carers
- Received 10 responses to our request for feedback from parents via MS Forms
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice and children's experiences
- Reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support 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.

## Key messages

- Children experienced warm and caring interactions, helping them feel loved, safe and secure.
- Children had fun and were actively involved in leading their learning.
- Improvements had been made to the environment, which helped create welcoming and comfortable play spaces for children.
- Self-evaluation and quality assurance procedures led to good quality care and support for children and their families.
- The staff team was committed to the service and worked well together to meet children's needs throughout the day.

## 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?	4 - 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 evaluated different parts of this key question as very good and good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children and their families were warmly welcomed by peers and staff. They experienced caring and nurturing interactions. Care was responsive to children's needs. Cuddles, eye contact and smiles made children feel safe. This helped to build positive and trusting relationships. One parent told us, "My child has good relationships with all staff." Another parent commented, "My child loves going [to nursery] which shows they feel safe."

Children's wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. Plans included individualised information on children's needs and how these would be met. Staff knew children well and were aware of their individual needs, which aided them in providing tailored care and support for children. Individual support plans were in place, where required, which identified specific strategies of support for children. These contributed to consistency of care provided. Parents told us they felt fully involved in their child's care, and regularly reviewed their personal plan. One parent commented, "We have termly reviews of my child's personal plan. I also know that if there was anything I wanted to discuss or add in between meetings that this could easily be done by speaking to their key worker."

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through nutritious food options and access to fresh water throughout the day. Overall, mealtimes were well organised, unhurried and supportive of children's needs. Staff sat and ate with children, promoting conversation and providing effective supervision to keep them safe. Children were encouraged to be independent and benefited from opportunities to self-serve side dishes, pour drinks and clear away dishes. Children's allergies and food preferences were well catered for through staff awareness of any allergies or dietary requirements. This helped keep children safe and well.

Children's personal care needs were met in a dignified and respectful manner. Staff were sensitive and kind in their interactions and promoted children's independence. This supported children's confidence and security. Children's safety and wellbeing was promoted through effective arrangements for sleep routines. Staff were responsive to children's individual needs and cues and ensured they were offered a sleep in the quiet sensory room.

Appropriate storage and systems were in place for medication being administered safely to meet children's needs. Information was collated and displayed which ensured staff were knowledgeable about children's health needs and knew the signs, symptoms and actions to take where a child may require medication.

Children's safety and wellbeing was promoted as staff showed a good understanding in their role of identifying, recording and referring any safeguarding concerns. This meant children and their families were provided with the support and help they needed.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun and were happy and engaged in their play. They benefitted from a balance of spontaneous and planned play experiences which included cooking in the role play areas, building models and planting seeds. As a result, children confidently led their learning. Parents spoke positively about children's play experiences. One parent commented, "The staff allow the children to lead the learning, investigating different topics they have shown an interest in." Another parent commented, "The staff make a lot of effort to plan new experiences for the children."

Children independently chose where they played and moved confidently between the indoor and outdoor play spaces. Children had opportunities for risky play outdoors and made good use of natural open ended materials to create obstacle courses and challenge themselves. Staff used open ended questions to support children to consider how to keep themselves safe when taking risks.

Staff interactions were supportive and helped to promote a fun and relaxed atmosphere. Some staff used effective questioning to extend and develop children's individual learning. For example, staff helped children find items and make predictions whilst exploring floating and sinking. They listened to children's ideas and encouraged children to play games and take turns. This extended and developed children's individual learning. There were a few missed opportunities to extend children's thinking and develop their ideas. Staff should continue to develop questioning to extend learning and the manager advised further training was planned to support this.

Play experiences developed children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Children had opportunities to listen to stories and sing songs. A variety of mark making tools supported children's emerging writing skills. The use of environmental print, such as packaging, labels and signs, provided opportunities for children to recognise and become familiar with letters. Mathematical language was used as children and staff played games, counted, compared and measured.

Online journals shared with parents informed them about their children's learning experiences and development journey. Parents told us these supported communication and they, "Liked seeing what their child had been doing." However, most observations we sampled were general rather than specific to individual children's experiences. Next steps were not yet consistently logged to progress children's learning. We discussed this with management who advised a new planning format was in the early stages of development. This aimed to provide a more individual approach to identifying and supporting children's progress.

Meaningful links within the school and local community had been established and included visits to school workshops and assemblies, local shops and parks. During the inspection a group of children visited the local woods and enjoyed imaginative play, climbing trees and den building. As a result, children were exploring their wider world, while developing a sense of belonging within their community.

### How good is our setting?

**4 - Good**

We evaluated this key question as good. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children benefitted from a welcoming environment which was warm, well-furnished and comfortable. There was plenty of light and ventilation to support children's wellbeing. The entrance area displayed information

for parents and children's photographs, comments and achievements were displayed within the playroom. This supported communication and children's sense of belonging and self-esteem.

Since the previous inspection, a significant amount of work had been done to improve the quality of the environment. The indoor and outdoor play areas were inviting and well defined. These included art and craft, sensory play, construction, role play and quieter, cosier areas. Children enjoyed choosing from a variety of developmentally appropriate, good quality resources. There were some open-ended, real life and natural objects which offered challenge and promoted children's curiosity and imagination. The manager and staff spoke enthusiastically about further developing the outdoor area and resources on offer.

Parents and staff spoke positively about changes made to the environment. One parent told us, "My child is very creative and the environment lets them explore their creativity. Its brighter and more inviting." Another parent said, "The environment has had huge change and that has made a big difference. It looks so much better and more inviting."

Cosy spaces provided children with areas where they could spend time alone or with peers. These included direct access to a sensory room and an outdoor shelter. These spaces allowed children to rest and relax in comfort, offering quiet or focused play times when needed. These offered safety and security to support children's emotional wellbeing.

Children's safety was supported by risk assessments which were in place. These covered the indoor and outdoor environment as well as individual children's needs. The nursery was safe and secure with controlled entry and an enclosed outdoor area. Staff involved the children by encouraging them to identify risk and consider how to manage it. The characterisation of the wellbeing indicators such as 'Safe Sam' supported children's awareness of their health and safety.

Children's health was promoted by staff's understanding of infection prevention and control. The service was clean, tidy and well maintained. Handwashing was well supported at appropriate times such as before and after eating and after toileting. This meant children were protected from the potential spread of infection.

Effective arrangements were in place to ensure children and families' personal information was safe and secure. Paperwork was stored securely within locked cupboards and digital information was password sensitive. This ensured families privacy and confidentiality.

## How good is our leadership?

**4 - Good**

We evaluated this key question as good. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Vision, values and aims were shared with parents, supporting them to know what to expect from the service. These were in the process of being reviewed as part of a whole school approach. Children, families and staff views were being gathered. This will support everyone to know what is important for the service to meet the needs of children and their families.

Opportunities for children and families to be meaningfully involved in the development of the service had improved. Families were welcomed into the setting and children and families views were actively sought through discussions, mind maps, stay and play and questionnaires. One parent commented, "Staff are open and honest and take our views/concerns on board." There was some evidence of suggestions and ideas

being taken forward to support improvement. This was fed back to parents to show the impact their voices had. This led to positive relationships and partnership working to promote good outcomes for children.

Quality assurance processes were in place and included audits of medication, accidents and incidents which helped keep children safe and well. Observations of practice helped identify where staff may benefit from further training. This helped deliver good outcomes for children and families.

Positive experiences for children were supported by a realistic, relevant and achievable improvement plan. This included an action plan of key priorities identified at the previous inspection. A positive ethos helped to ensure that staff were working towards the same goals and progress was seen to be contributing to improved experiences for children. Parents and staff spoke enthusiastically about improvements within the environment and increased family engagement. We asked management to consider developing how they consistently measure the impact and record actions they have taken throughout their improvement journey. This would ensure children benefitted from a service that continues to improve.

Staff told us they felt 'well supported' by the 'approachable' management team. Regular staff meetings provided opportunities for staff to reflect on children's individual needs, share learning and discuss planning and developments within the service. Management valued staff's contributions and were keen to distribute leadership roles. Staff were taking on further responsibilities such as environment areas. This contributed to staff feeling valued and empowered to contribute to improvements.

### How good is our staff team?

### 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were supported by a caring and motivated staff team. A supportive induction process for new members of staff helped them grow in confidence and become competent in their role. A mix of staff skills and experience helped to ensure children's experiences across the day were positive.

Children were allocated a key worker who maintained records of their development and was a point of contact for parents. This promoted positive transitions for children and good communication with families.

Management recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed to support the wellbeing of children. Where possible, staff absences were covered by staff within the setting. Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensure positive transitions and communications with families. Busier times of the day, such as mealtimes or arrival and departure times were recognised and planned for.

A variety of training and professional development opportunities allowed staff to develop their skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children. Staff understood the benefits of training in furthering outcomes for children and were motivated and keen to further their development. In addition to core training, such as child protection and first aid, staff had attended training on topics such as block play, interactions and supporting children's speech. This meant that children experienced care from a team that were committed to ensuring positive outcomes for all.

Staff communicated well, sharing information to support the needs of children or when tasks took them away from their areas of responsibility. They were respectful to each other through their interactions and worked well together. This created a positive environment that allowed children to feel safe and secure, with

adults who cared for them. Most parents told us they were happy with the care and support their children received. One parent commented, "The staff are always welcoming." Another parent shared, "We are extremely grateful to all staff members for their amazing work."

## 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 children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure staff access training and development opportunities appropriate to their role, and apply this in practice. This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) Training in high quality interactions.
- b) Developing staff understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

**This area for improvement was made on 21 June 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

The staff team were using a range of national guidance to develop their practice and had completed training in high quality interactions. Children benefitted from a range of good quality learning experiences that followed their interests to enhance and extend learning. Some staff used effective questioning to extend and develop children's individual learning. Observations were undertaken of children's achievements. Some next steps were identified to support children's learning. However, the frequency and consistency of these could be improved to support challenge and depth of learning. We discussed this with the manager and were satisfied that a plan was in place to address this.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's play and learning the manager and staff should ensure the environment is well resourced and inviting for children.

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

'I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices' (HSCS 5.23).



**This area for improvement was made on 20 February 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

A range of good quality resources were available for children to play with. These included some real life and open ended natural materials to support children's curiosity and creativity. Play spaces were well thought out and looked clean and inviting. The manager advised this was an ongoing area of development.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 3

To keep children safe and promote their wellbeing, the provider and manager should ensure effective quality assurance processes are in place, including robust audits and monitoring of staff practice.

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 20 February 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

Quality assurance processes were in place and included audits of medication, accidents and incidents which helped keep children safe and well. Observations of practice helped identify where staff may benefit from further training. This helped deliver good outcomes for children and families.

**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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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