

Ardgour Nursery Day Care of Children

Ardgour Primary School
Ardgour
Fort William
PH33 7AB

Telephone: 01855 841 347

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 September 2025

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003013552

About the service

Ardgour Nursery is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 16 children from two years to those not yet attending primary school, of whom no more than five are under three years of age.

The service is provided from modern purpose built premises in the grounds of Ardgour Primary School. There is a playroom with reception area, toilets, kitchen facilities, a separate office and storage facilities. Children had access to an enclosed outside play area which surrounded the building.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 1 September 2025. 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, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with the children attending
- reviewed feedback from parents
- spoke with the early years practitioners and the manager
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced very warm, caring and nurturing support from staff who knew them very well.
- Children were developing their curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills through high quality play experiences.
- Children were very happy and engaged, and having fun taking part in various activities, both indoors and outdoors.
- Work had been completed to develop the outdoor play area which now offered children a fun and challenging space to explore, play and learn.
- Quality assurance processes were now embedded to support continuous improvement of the service.
- The entry system to the play room was a potential risk to children's safety, as was the height of the fence to the side of the outdoor space.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children were very happy and having fun as they played alongside or with friends. They experienced warm and nurturing care from staff who knew them well and were responsive to their individual needs. Staff valued children's voice and sensitively listened to their requests, which told us that their views and opinions mattered. Children were effectively supported through well timed and thoughtful interactions. They were offered cuddles and reassurance with warmth and affection which contributed to their sense of emotional security and promoted their overall wellbeing and resilience

Children and families benefited from a service that valued the importance of establishing strong trusting relationships with families creating a welcoming and inclusive ethos. Staff took time to to engage in meaningful conversations with parents and carers, discussing their child's day and individual needs. Parents were welcomed into the nursery and there were opportunities for them to spend time in the nursery during stay and play sessions as well as being actively involved in developing the outdoor space.

Personal plans were created in partnership with parents and carers and reflected children's health, wellbeing and safety needs. Staff were skilled at using the information to ensure that children received consistent care and support. Where children required further support, staff had established good working relationships with other agencies and were confident in their role in liaising with them. They worked closely with other professionals to ensure consistency in their approach. As a result, children experienced a collaborative approach to their care and development.

Mealtimes were relaxed, unhurried and sociable. Children were offered opportunities to develop their independence and life skills, for example pouring their drinks, self serving snacks and clearing their dishes. This created a sense of responsibility. We discussed how these opportunities could be increased, for example supporting children to help prepare snack. The food provided adhered to nutritional guidelines, promoting children's health. Staff sat with children during mealtimes encouraging healthy habits, facilitating conversations and supporting language and communication skills.

No children currently attending the nursery needed a regular nap during their time there. Staff, however, acknowledged the importance of sleep for children's wellbeing. Mats were available and consideration had been given to where to place these to ensure any sleeping children would be safe should the need arise.

Children's health was promoted through the processes in place to manage the storage and administration of any medication. These were in line with best practice. Accidents and incidents were recorded and appropriately shared with parents. These processes supported children's overall wellbeing.

Children's safety and wellbeing was protected through the staff understanding of their role in identifying, recording and referring any safeguarding concerns. Staff had attended relevant child protection training and demonstrated a good understanding of the service's policy and procedures.

Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Play and learning opportunities impacted positively on children's development, health, wellbeing and happiness. For the majority of the time, children benefited from uninterrupted play, allowing them to become absorbed in what they were doing.

Children were engaged in their play and having fun with their friends. Children were encouraged to freely explore a range of experiences and activities that supported their development and interests. There was a wide range of open-ended and real life resources which encouraged children to be creative in their explorative play and investigative learning. There was a good balance of planned and spontaneous play opportunities which were in response to their interests.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests. Carefully considered wall displays, at children's height, allowed the children to see what their current interests were and good use of the children's own art work, mark making and photographs brought the learning to life for the children. There were floor books which were used to record how children's interests were extended and developed.

Staff understood their role in supporting children's development and were adding further value to children's play and learning through their carefully considered interactions. They were skilled in recognising children's interests and the level of support they needed. Staff naturally engaged with children, showed interest and extended children's learning through meaningful conversations. Skilled interactions by staff encouraged children to think independently and to reflect. As a result children were respected, valued and achieving.

Staff were knowledgeable about children's individual development. Observations of children's development and learning were recorded and shared with families. Each child had their own learning journey folder which contained photos, examples of their art work and staff observations and summary of what skills the child had been developing. Children were proud of and enjoyed looking at their individual folders and talking about what they were doing in the photographs.

Families were meaningfully engaged in their child's play, learning and development. Staff ensured that parents were well informed of children's learning, progression and next steps, and were encouraged to give their feedback. As well as parents and carers being able to look at their child's folder any time they were in the nursery, the folders were also routinely sent home to give parents and carers the time to go through the folder with their child.

Numeracy and literacy were promoted throughout the various areas within the playroom. Resources, displays and conversations with staff encouraged children to be curious and naturally explore literacy, numeracy and mathematical concepts during their play. Staff interactions gently encouraged children to extend their play and learning. For example, staff made good use of songs, rhymes and reading stories to encourage children's vocabulary and language skills. Children had the opportunity to develop their numeracy and literacy skills and mathematical language while playing with real life resources in the home corner and while taking part in investigative play outdoors.

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were welcomed into a homely, comfortable nursery where they were recognised and celebrated. Their artwork and photographs were actively displayed and they had access to their own space to store their personal items. The setting was visibly clean and organised, with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. There were a variety of areas to play, rest and be active. These details let children know that they were loved, valued and provided them with a sense of belonging.

Although it was a small playroom, staff had created a well thought out, inviting and fun play space with homely touches and cosy areas. The storage of resources supported quality play and learning experiences. Staff told us that due to the limited space available, they continuously reviewed and adapted areas to ensure that children had appropriate space and easy access to all activities. Children were able to independently select resources of their choice and lead their own play. Children comfortably moved around the room and were focussed in their play. We saw most of the children fully engaged in their imaginative play. The children told staff they were going on holiday. They had dressed up in various hats, waistcoats and had packed an assortment of bags. Quieter children took part in a sensory play activity.

Appropriate infection prevention and control practices were in place and minimised the spread of infection. For example, the setting was clean and well maintained, surfaces were regularly wiped down and there were child and adult sinks. Food safety practices were appropriate and provided good levels of safety for children. We observed children being supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing where appropriate throughout the day.

Children's safety was generally well managed as staff were attentive and alert to children's movements. Tools such as updated registers and regular headcounts helped children to move safely around the setting. During previous inspections, the security of the door entry system was highlighted as a potential concern. Unfortunately this had not been rectified even though it had been reported on more than one occasion to the provider. The fencing at the side of the outdoor play area was also a potential risk to children's safety. It was not of a height to prevent deer entering the area and damaging the trees as well as causing a potential risk to children's health and wellbeing. As a result of the potential for children's safety to be compromised, a requirement was made. **(see requirement 1)**

Effective arrangements were in place to ensure children and families' personal information was safe and secure. Paperwork was stored securely within locked cupboards. This ensured confidentiality was maintained and complied with best practice guidance.

Staff had a good understanding of the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall health and wellbeing. The playroom opened directly onto the outdoor play area which the children could access on a daily basis. Following the previous inspection, the outdoor play space had been developed by the staff and parents. It now offered children access to a good range of rich and meaningful learning opportunities, including a large sand pit, water play, attractive mark making area, large mud kitchen and wheeled toys. The

staff were working on developing a literacy area. Staff took a positive risk benefit approach, and this supported children to assess their own risks and understand their own safety.

Requirements

1. By 28 November 2025, the provider must ensure that children are kept safe by implementing effective systems to prevent children leaving the service and prevent strangers from entering.

This should include but is not limited to:

- a) ensuring the premises are secure at all times;
- b) reviewing the risk presented to children by the outdoor fence in the garden.

This is in order to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of the Social Care and Social Work and Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

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

'My environment is safe and secure'. (HSCS 5.19).

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

Children and families experienced a welcoming, warm and inclusive ethos that valued them as partners. A culture of continuous improvement was embraced by staff, which enabled children to have consistently positive experiences. This resulted in a very happy, safe and supportive environment for children and their families.

The manager and staff fully engaged with the inspection process, demonstrating a positive attitude towards change and improvement. They were motivated and responsive to suggestions made during the inspection to continue to improve outcomes for children and families. There was a positive working environment, where staff felt confident to share ideas to initiate change and were encouraged to share the responsibilities. This was highlighted by the improvements which had been put in place since the previous inspection.

Following a previous inspection, a requirement had been made in relation to quality assurance. This had now been fully actioned. The manager and staff have continued to develop systems of quality assurance to ensure that the quality of the service was monitored and assessed in a focussed and meaningful way. These systems were now embedded and leading to sustained improvements across the service. The service had an improvement plan in place which included their focus priorities for supporting ongoing improvement. Improving the outdoor play area had been identified as a priority. Staff efforts in this area were very evident and were having a positive impact on children's experiences.

The manager continued to monitor the setting and observe staff practice to ensure children receive high quality play and learning experiences. The management also met with staff to discuss the continuous improvement of the service to secure progression and positive outcomes for children. Team meetings

supported staff to develop self-evaluation skills and help to plan for improvement. Staff felt confident that their views were valued, and regular opportunities for them to have a say were provided.

The manager was a regular visitor to the nursery to monitor the setting and observe staff practice to ensure children received high quality play and learning experiences. The manager also met with staff to discuss the continuous improvement of the service to secure progression and positive outcomes for children. There were regular staff meetings which provided time for the manager and all staff to reflect on their practice, identifying what they do well for children in their care, and highlight areas for development across the service. This supported staff to be reflective practitioners and showed commitment to providing a high quality service to maximise children's outcomes and wellbeing. This contributed to staff feeling valued and listened to and children receiving consistently positive outcomes.

The community ethos of the nursery was reflected in the manager and staff's positive relationships with families. Engaging children and their families in the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the service was important to the manager and staff. They had established positive working relationships with families which supported regular communication through daily informal verbal feedback. Parents were also invited to 'stay and play' sessions which offered another opportunity for them to provide feedback about the service provided to their children.

How good is our staff team?

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children benefitted from a nurturing, caring and dedicated staff team who were warm and responsive in their approach. They were respectful and considerate in their interactions with each other and with the children in their care. Staff promoted a very happy and welcoming environment where children were valued and respected. A parent commented 'The team are great, there really is very little, if anything to improve'.

The deployment of staff was well managed and effective to meet children's needs across the day. Staff were able to deploy themselves around the setting to support the movement and choices of children. Children were cared for by a consistent staff team who worked well together. The staff team had a balance of skills and experience which were used to promote positive experiences for children throughout the day.

Staff worked well as a team to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. They communicated effectively with each other and worked flexibly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. All staff were aware of how many children were in the nursery at any given time and took regular head counts when leaving different spaces. Staff also communicated with each other if a task took them away from children. During busier times of the day, routines had been established which promoted children's safety. This promoted a happy and secure environment for all children.

Staff new to the setting were supported through an induction process which assisted them to gain confidence in their new role and meet children's needs. Support was also offered during the regular visits to the playroom by the nursery manager.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 9 June 2023, the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children and practice by implementing effective systems of quality assurance. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- a) regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented
- b) staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service
- c) clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service
- d) the management team effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole
- e) clear systems are in place for children and their families to provide feedback and to be actively involved in the evaluation of the service provided.

This is to comply with the - Regulation 3 Principles and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210). (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, SSI 2011/210.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, 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 requirement was made on 7 February 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

Throughout the inspection, we were able to collect evidence which supported that the service had a system of quality assurance which was now embedded and having a positive impact on outcomes for children.

For more detailed information, please refer to the recording under QI 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

This requirement has now been met.

Met - outwith timescales

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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