

St. Peter's RC Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

37 St. Peter's Terrace
Buckie
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Telephone: 01542 831 339

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 November 2025

Service provided by:
The Moray Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001892

Service no:
CS2003016015

About the service

St. Peter's RC Primary School Nursery is situated within St. Peter's Primary School in the town of Buckie in Moray. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children aged from three years to not yet attending primary school at any one time. During August, children aged two years 11 months may attend the service.

Children have access to playrooms, kitchen, toilet and changing area, the school playground and an enclosed outdoor area provided by St. Peter's Church joined onto the school playground. The service is close to the beach, woods, local shops, the library and other amenities.

Up to 33 children were present during the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 04 November 2025 between 08:30 and 16:10 and 05 November 2025 between 08:15 and 16:25. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with two of their parents/carers
- received eight responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how the service supported 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.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children.
- Staff knew the children well and supported their individual needs.
- Staff had developed good relationships with parents who felt welcomed into the setting.
- Mealtimes should be reviewed to ensure children are safe and are experiencing a nurturing, relaxed unhurried lunch.
- Quality assurance process should be developed to meaningfully involve children and families.
- Using quality audit tools effectively would support the service to measure impact and guide future planning, ensuring continuous improvement.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Leadership and management of staff and resources

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

The setting had been working hard to strengthen relationships with the school since the manager was appointed over a year ago. The school had recently updated its vision, values, and aims to include the nursery. However, the setting recognised the importance of having its own vision, values, and aims that reflect the service. Plans were in place to develop these collaboratively with all stakeholders, ensuring they are meaningful and inclusive.

Self-evaluation was beginning to support care tailored to children and families' needs. Staff had gathered feedback mainly on an informal basis through conversations with parents and short questionnaires after stay-and-play sessions. Parents highlighted they would like more photos of play to share daily experiences and would welcome the return of children's learning journey folders. The setting had acted on this and was currently changing its system for observing children and sharing progress with families. The setting should now consider how feedback from families is shared and used to inform improvements. (See area for improvement 1)

Protected time enabled regular staff meetings to take place were used effectively to discuss children's interests, upcoming events, training, and signposting staff. The setting was in the early stages of using challenge questions from the quality framework to deepen staff involvement in self-evaluation. Developing this further would strengthen partnerships and drive positive change.

Some parents told us that they felt they were involved in a meaningful way in the development of the setting. One parent said, "Teachers are always asking for help or ideas from parents making us feel very involved". Other parents also shared that they hadn't been involved in making changes or developing the nursery. Meaningfully including families in developments would support them to feel valued, with their contributions reflected in the day-to-day experiences and development of the setting.

Some quality assurance processes and moderation were in place but could be further developed. For example, scheduling regular monitoring slots in the quality assurance calendar and reflecting on outcomes would help identify priorities for improvement planning. Auditing was in the early stages of implementation and should continue to be reviewed with staff to ensure clarity. One-to-one meetings with the manager allowed staff to reflect on practice and receive guidance, including signposting to relevant literature and training. This was helping staff understand their responsibilities and build stronger working relationships. For example, the manager used a recent staff meeting to play a team-building game around responsibilities, which supported better understanding. Leadership training had recently been sourced for senior staff. Senior staff should now work collaboratively and their strengthen communication and decision-making skills, enabling them to lead with confidence and fairness while fostering a positive team culture. (See area for improvement 1)

The manager and staff were passionate about play-based learning, and this was central to improvement planning. Plans were in place to make positive changes; these should now be implemented, with developments documented and evaluated. Using quality audit tools would support the service to measure impact and guide future planning, ensuring continuous improvement. (See area for improvement 1)

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure quality care and positive experiences for children, the provider and manager should ensure effective quality assurance and self-evaluation is in place. This should include but not limited to:

- a) Providing meaningful opportunities for staff, children and families to provide feedback that impacts positive changes.
- b) Providing consistent support to enhance staff morale and monitoring of staff practice.
- d) Ensuring that improvement planning leads to continuous improvement.

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) and 'I am supported to give regular feedback on how I experience my care and support and the organisation uses learning from this to improve' (HSCS 4.8).

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of child development and learning, applying relevant theory and practice to enrich play experiences and engage children. For example, staff described play based training with Greg Botrill, which helped them bring experiences to life for children, such as visits from the Golachy fairy. They also spoke positively about the impact of Talk Boost (a programme supporting speech and language development) and TEACCH baskets (a structured approach to learning), noting improvements in children's confidence and speech development.

Children were mostly encouraged to lead their play with time and space to explore their interests. Outdoors, they had opportunities to be curious, creative, and solve problems. For example, children engaged in imaginative play using seats on pallets to pretend they were buying fish and chips and taking them to the beach to eat. In the mud kitchen, they worked together to fill the water butt, carrying it together while deciding where best to place it to support their play. One child made 'chocolate soup,' mixing and stirring in a large basin while others fetched resources such as leaves and sticks. These experiences demonstrated that children were motivated and engaged in play. We asked the setting to consider adopting a slower pedagogy and reviewing the overall flow of the day to support uninterrupted play and ensure children make the most of their full session at nursery.

Language, literacy, and numeracy were naturally embedded within play. Children explored descriptive language as they described 'spikey' leaves, counted and discussed quantities, saying, "We need five leaves," while holding up their fingers. They also enjoyed storytelling and mark-making opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Adult-initiated interactions supported skill development through playful, meaningful experiences.

Staff were actively engaged in children's play, showing genuine interest while listening attentively. They used modelling, commenting, and questioning effectively to extend children's thinking. For example, when children wanted a crocodile to float, staff encouraged them to consider where it should go and how to fetch water efficiently. One child then took the lead, creating a large puddle for the crocodile by repeatedly filling, carrying, and pouring water. This supported problem-solving and teamwork. However, some missed opportunities were noted. For instance, children who were building with blocks outdoors were not supported to extend this play and moved away, although it was noticed later. Later animals, leaves, and stones had been added to the structure. More frequent monitoring of staff practice would support staff to confidently extend learning in the moment, having a direct impact on the quality of play and learning experiences.

Parents told us the children were involved in a range of opportunities and fun experiences, including outdoor play, to meet their needs and support their development. One parent said, "I love that the kids are encouraged to play outside in all weathers. I love seeing my [child] come home covered in mud it always means [they have] had a great day". Another parent said, "Rolling down mud piles. Playing in the mud kitchen. Going for walks". These experiences promoted physical development, curiosity, and social interaction.

Children were central to planning, with a balance of intentional and responsive approaches. All staff contributed to the planning process; however, they expressed a desire to be involved more effectively. For example, having protected time for planning meetings would allow staff to share ideas and discuss play and learning, leading to improved outcomes for children. The setting was in the process of changing how observations were recorded and shared. Greater consistency in observations would help identify progress and achievements more accurately, ensuring children develop a broad range of skills for life and learning. Tracking children's progress and support from an early intervention teacher enabled the setting to provide appropriate challenge and support where needed. To help children reach their full potential, the setting planned to strengthen relationships with families by sharing information both formally and informally. Parents told us they would welcome better opportunities to discuss their child's development. Staff had also built connections with other professionals, deepening their understanding and enhancing planning for each child's learning journey.

Children are supported to achieve 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Nurturing care and support

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

Children benefited from care in a setting that understood the importance of nurturing relationships. They experienced warm, responsive interactions that supported their wellbeing. For example, children knew staff by name and received cuddles and comfort when upset. Staff recognised that transitions vary for each child and used tailored approaches. For instance, all children were given warnings in advance of transitions, and some were supported with visual cues. These strategies promoted smooth transitions, minimised disruption to learning, and helped children feel safe and sensitively cared for.

Daily routines, such as mealtimes, offered some opportunities for independence and learning. However, children were not involved in preparation, and tasks such as serving food and scraping plates were carried out by adults. We discussed the benefits of enabling children to take on these responsibilities to promote independence. Most staff sat with children at lunchtime, at their level, and some ate alongside them, supporting supervision, social skills, and language development. However, other staff moved around clearing plates, which made the experience hurried and less relaxed. Meals were nutritious, culturally appropriate, and took account of allergies and food preferences. Snack time took place outdoors but did not support good hand washing practices. Children were offered one basin of water for all to use along with wipes and gel to wash their hands. Supervision was limited, with staff moving away from children while they ate. On one occasion, a child was allowed to run around with food in their mouth. We directed the service to best practice guidance to strengthen staff understanding of keeping children safe and healthy. (See area for improvement 1)

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning, which highlighted their interests, strengths, and needs. Staff worked with children, families, and professionals to sustain wellbeing. Wellbeing indicators provided a holistic overview, helping staff plan care and support. Where strategies were needed, these were mostly recorded in support plans. The setting should now ensure all strategies in use are documented and that all staff are aware of them. This would ensure consistent approaches to supporting individual children.

Staff knew children and families well and were welcoming during arrival and collection in the cloakroom area. We discussed the benefits of families coming into the setting daily to strengthen relationships and gain better insight into children's experiences. We directed the service to practice notes and webinars available through the Care Inspectorate. The setting displayed welcome messages on the nursery door in different languages and had worked hard to translate information for parents. We discussed a number of ways to become more culturally sensitive and inclusive so that care and learning are influenced by families. For example, inviting families to share stories, songs and celebrations would enrich learning experiences and strengthen relationships.

Parents spoke positively about their engagement with the setting. One parent said, "Staff are always on the ball and clearly know each child very well my [child] loves [their] teachers, they're always so friendly and welcoming to everyone." Another parent shared, "Friendly staff, how organised everything is and good communication between nursery & parents."

Areas for improvement

1. During mealtimes, to ensure children are kept safe and healthy, the provider and manager should strengthen staff's understanding of best practice guidance. This should include but not limited to; safe and effective hand washing practices and the prevention and management of choking.

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

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11) and 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

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	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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Nurturing care and support	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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