

# Sandhaven School Nursery Day Care of Children

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Fraserburgh  
AB43 7EQ

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
6 November 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeenshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000029

**Service no:**  
CS2003015727

## About the service

Sandhaven School Nursery is accommodated in an annexe building adjacent to Sandhaven Primary School. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children not yet attending primary school at any one time.

Adult:child ratios will be a minimum of three years and over 1:8 if the children attend more than four hours per day or 1:10 if the children attend for less than four hours per day.

The children are cared for in one main playroom with a kitchen area and integral toilets. They have access to a designated outdoor play area. The nursery is well situated for buses, local shops, and the sea shore.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 November 2025 between 09:30 and 16:00 and 6 November 2025 between 09:00 and 15:00. 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, registration information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with three children using the service
- spoke with one family member
- received two completed questionnaires from families
- received three completed questionnaires from staff
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within 'Leadership and management of staff and resources' and 'Nurturing care and support'.

During this inspection we 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.

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

## Key messages

- Children thrived with the individual attention provided by caring staff.
- Ongoing quality assurance and self evaluation supported positive outcomes and high standards of care.
- Children had fun and played in an attractive and welcoming playroom. However, improvement was needed to ensure children played in a safe and welcoming outdoor environment.
- Children experienced positive and safe mealtimes.
- The transition to online personal plans was ongoing. However, staff knew the children well and provided tailored care and support.

## 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                        | 4 - Good |
| 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 4 - Good

### Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The service was effectively led by a committed manager who fostered a positive culture. Staff felt valued and empowered to contribute, resulting in strong collaboration between leadership and the team.

Engagement and consultation with staff, children, and families helped shape a clear vision, values, and aims for the service. These were reflected in the caring ethos of staff and in the positive learning experiences for children.

Self evaluation within the service led to some positive changes and improvement. This included a more spacious and welcoming environment and the addition of more organised daily routines which supported children's wellbeing and confidence. Staff advised these were welcome changes and children's engagement had improved as a result.

Strategies to involve staff in service development and sustain improvements had been introduced. This included champion roles in areas such as health and wellbeing, communication, and infection prevention and control. This was beginning to impact on staff morale and contributed to improved outcomes for children. To drive further progress, we signposted the service to the guidance 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sector: early learning and childcare'.

The service had introduced initiatives to strengthen family engagement, including stay-and-play sessions with coffee and chat. Families were consulted in shaping the service's vision, values, and aims, and regular newsletters kept them informed of new developments. Parents contacted strongly agreed that they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service.

Children's voice was captured using tools, such as mind maps and talking mats. This contributed to improved learning experiences where children took part in activities they enjoyed and were interested in.

Quality assurance of the service was effective to support children's safety and care. Regular staff meetings and one-to-one sessions facilitated discussion and sharing of best practice. This promoted consistent nurturing approaches and positive outcomes for children. Audits of children's learning journals had been completed which led to consistent recording and improved learning experiences.

Children were cared for by an experienced staff team, recruited through Aberdeenshire Council's safer recruitment processes. Staff, including relief staff, were supported in their role and responsibilities through effective service induction and mentoring procedures. This helped create a welcoming ethos and positive outcomes for children.

## 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.

Children were highly motivated and enjoyed a range of planned and spontaneous play experiences. Morning routines and gather time provided staff with an opportunity to chat with children and find out how they were feeling and what they would like to do during the day. This contributed to play and learning tailored to meet children's interests, preferences, and life experience.

The playroom looked attractive with interesting provocations for play. For example, the role play area supported children's imaginative play and was resourced with a range of items relevant to the police and fire brigade. The art and craft area looked exciting and children had fun printing and creating the patterns, colours, and shapes made by fireworks. As a result, children were happy and engaged learners. Parents contacted felt their children were always involved in a range of fun experiences that met their individual needs and development.

Children had some opportunities for outdoor play, including playing games and cycling. However, some items of equipment and furnishings required maintenance. For example, a planter with a protruding nail posed a safety risk. We raised this with the manager who advised families and parents were due to help tidy, fix, and make the outdoor area safe and more inviting for play. Parents commented, "My child loves playing outdoors but the area is needing a revamp but there has been fundraising to help with this".

Children's play and learning was enhanced through connections to their own and wider communities. For example, during inspection they walked to the Post Office to post a letter. Good use of the coastal classroom was made to develop children's understanding of the world around them.

Children had opportunities to develop language, literacy, and numeracy skills. Staff regularly counted with children and numbers were displayed in the playroom and incorporated into routines, such as lunch and snack. Familiarity with the weekly story and access to a lending library promoted a love of reading. Children were encouraged to listen, talk, and share stories, while staff responded to song requests using the smartboard to create engaging group activities.

Digital learning was supported through tools, such as talking buttons and guided use of the iPad for photography. The smartboard is used appropriately for songs, research, and exploring topics like "people who help us".

Children benefited from responsive, caring interactions and individual support from staff, who remained focused on encouraging next steps and praising effort. Children were able to play and learn at their own pace and were encouraged to play and interact with each other. This led to an inclusive learning environment where children had fun together.

Planning approaches were child-centred, with staff tailoring experiences to meet individual needs and extend learning. Recent changes to improve assessment and promote children's progress had been introduced. These included learning goals displayed on a learning wall and achievements which were

recorded in detailed learning journeys. Continued support to build staff confidence in using the new system was ongoing.

## Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

### 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.

Children were cared for with kindness and love. They thrived on the individual attention provided by staff who were warm and welcoming in their interactions. Staff smiled and chatted with the children, taking time to listen to their stories from home. This provided children with a sense of worth, helping them to feel valued and included. A child said, "I love everyone, my friends and teachers".

Children's privacy and dignity was respected when supported in their personal care. Information to support children's toileting needs was displayed discreetly in the toilets, enabling consistent and individualised support to children.

Daily routines and transitions were well planned to promote children's confidence and sense of security. Tools, such as emotion monsters, helped children express feelings, enabling staff to tailor care to individual needs. Visual timetables and talking buttons supported understanding of routines, resulting in happy, settled children.

Children's wellbeing was supported through sensitive arrangements for rest and relaxation. Children looked forward to relaxation time after lunch and enjoyed a story and music whilst cuddled up in cosy blankets. As a result, children were refreshed and ready to play in the afternoon.

Children experienced positive snack and mealtime routines. Opportunities to help prepare snack, cut fruit, and set the table promoted children's independence, self help skills, and responsibility. Children were offered nutritious meals which looked and smelt delicious. Staff sat with the children and modelled good eating habits, while maintaining a child-centred approach. Lunch was calm and sociable, creating a family-style atmosphere. Parents commented, "My child says they love snack and the school food" and "My child always enjoys telling me what they have had to eat at nursery. They are always happy to have second helpings of what is provided and chooses their snack in the morning". A well positioned hydration station ensured children had access to drinks throughout the day, supporting their wellbeing.

Parents and carers completed an 'All About Me', contributing to staff knowing the children, their care needs, interests, and preferences. However, children's personal plans were in the process of moving to an online format. As yet, staff did not all have access, raising the potential for inconsistent care. We discussed this with the head teacher and manager who advised there had been issues with technology. These had been resolved and the development of children's personal plans was ongoing.

There were no children attending the service who required medication. Through discussion, staff demonstrated a good understanding of children's medical needs, however, for one child, recorded information was insufficient to support their wellbeing. We discussed this with the manager who agreed to create a medical care plan detailing signs, symptoms, and potential triggers.

Strong family connections positively influenced children's experiences. Families were warmly welcomed and the spacious environment allowed for confidential conversations. This fostered positive relationships and an inclusive ethos. Occasional shared activities, like enjoying soup prepared by the children, further strengthened connections. A parent commented, "I feel staff are very friendly and welcoming, easy to approach".

## 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 improvement to the service and improve outcomes for children, Sandhaven School Nursery must ensure that the service uses a robust monitoring system to effectively monitor the quality of work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16. Standard 13: Improving the Service; and Standard 14: Well Managed Service.

**This area for improvement was made on 29 March 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

Self evaluation and quality assurance processes and procedures were effective and led to quality care and provision for children. Staff demonstrated quality interactions when supporting children, always getting down to their level, listening, and responding appropriately. Staff told us they were well supported by the leadership team in their own professional development.

**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

|  |          |
|--|----------|
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| Leadership and management of staff and resources | 4 - Good |
| 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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