

Great Western Pre-School @ Portlethen Day Care of Children

7 Muirend Court
Portlethen
ABERDEEN
AB12 4UU

Telephone: 01224 780 765

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 November 2025

Service provided by:
Lorndale Aberdeen Limited

Service provider number:
SP2013012192

Service no:
CS2013321323

About the service

Great Western Pre-school @ Portlethen is situated in Portlethen in Aberdeenshire.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 82 children aged from birth to not yet attending primary school, where no more than 15 places are available for 0 - 2 year olds, or a maximum of 77 children aged from birth to not yet attending primary school, where no more than 30 places are available for children aged 0 - 2 years.

Children are cared for in four playrooms with access to a large, enclosed outdoor area. The service is close to local amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 12 November 2025 between 09:30 and 17:30 and 13 November 2025 between 09:00 and 17:50. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

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

To inform our evaluation we:

- spent time with children using the service
- reviewed 26 completed questionnaires: seven from staff and 19 from parents/carers
- spoke with staff and the management team
- spoke with three parents/carers
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- 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 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

- Strong leadership supported a collaborative team culture with responsibilities shared to take account of staff's strengths and skills in meeting children's needs.
- Very good outcomes for children and families were supported by a culture of continuous improvement and effective quality assurance.
- Planning for children's learning had been developed to promote age-appropriate depth and breadth of learning.
- Children experienced consistent, kind interactions with staff who understood the importance of nurturing relationships.
- Children were happy, relaxed and confident in the setting.
- Children's play and learning benefitted from a well-considered environment with high quality resources.

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	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children were cared for in a service with a clear mission statement which included providing a stimulating, safe, caring environment for children. These aims were reflected in practice, with staff aspiring to high quality care, play and learning for children. The mission statement, which was shared with parents, reflected the ambitions of the wider organisation, and work was planned to include families in developing vision, values and aims individual to the service.

Positive outcomes for children and families were underpinned by a culture of continuous improvement. An interactive and comprehensive quality assurance calendar supported ongoing monitoring of practice, helping to identify strengths and areas for development. It was displayed in the reception area to promote transparency and encourage involvement from staff and families. Leadership was devolved effectively, empowering staff to use their professional knowledge to lead improvements in specific areas of practice. This approach resulted in robust and sustained developments across the setting.

Staff reflected on their practice to identify where children's experiences could be improved. They were knowledgeable about the improvement priorities for the setting and felt confident to make suggestions and initiate change. Findings from self-evaluation informed planned improvements, which were monitored for effectiveness. Recent developments included the introduction of new menus and changes to mealtime routines. These improvements were well-timed, evaluated, and embedded in practice, contributing to sustainable change and positive outcomes for children.

Families had opportunities to share their views. They received questionnaires, were asked for suggestions and gave feedback when changes were made. Most parents felt listened to and included in helping the service to develop, with one telling us, "There is a book at the front reception to gain parents thoughts/ ideas for development". Another commented that, "Feedback is regularly asked for on things such as, menus, resources or development areas".

Children were cared for by a stable staff team, who worked well together. They were recruited safely and most parents told us they knew the staff caring for their children. New staff were supported effectively through a detailed induction programme. This included a mentoring system where more experienced staff guided colleagues in their new role. Staff told us this helped them feel confident in learning their roles and responsibilities.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children were well supported in their play and learning through responsive interactions. Staff consistently observed and interpreted children's cues, demonstrating a clear understanding of when to step in and when to promote independence. By joining in games and extending ideas with developmentally appropriate questions and suggestions, staff promoted creativity, problem-solving and engagement in play.

Children enjoyed a stimulating environment indoors and outdoors. They chose freely where to play in thoughtfully designed spaces which included a wide range of high quality, age-appropriate resources in all areas. Real life resources such as, fruit and vegetables, fresh flowers and herbs provided sensory experiences which fostered children's curiosity and imagination.

Opportunities for developing language, literacy and numeracy were embedded throughout. Children engaged in activities such as, measuring and pouring water, using mark-making resources and painting. Staff supported learning by modelling positive communication and joining in games, reading stories and singing. They encouraged early literacy and involved children in creating environmental print for room signs. One child told us about trips to the local library and another commented, "You can read and you can play too, its good here". Well planned experiences created an enabling environment where children were busy, happy and fully engaged in sustained play.

Children had opportunities to learn about safety. A climbing frame and obstacle courses built with loose parts such as, crates provided opportunities for physical and risky play. Children were excited to play outside in the dark, using head torches to help them see. Conversations about safety were supported through a recently introduced project involving the use of, "Simoa" a toy elephant to prompt conversations. Staff supported children well to participate, encouraging them to understand risks and how to minimise these.

Children's learning was fostered by a recently developed planning format. Staff told us they had been supported well to understand this and had attended training to promote their skills and knowledge in this area. Responsive planning, which supported spontaneous learning, was underpinned by staff's understanding of child development. Staff carried out regular observations to help them assess and track children's progress, which were shared with families on the recently introduced Family app. Observations supported staff to identify next steps to help ensure breadth and depth of learning. Staff used relevant supporting guidance to inform their plans and more experienced staff took the lead to support less confident colleagues. This resulted in a staff team who skilfully planned for child centred learning.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced consistent, positive interactions. Staff understood the importance of nurturing relationships and responded to children with smiles, cuddles and reassurance. Children were comfortable and relaxed around staff, seeking them out and choosing to sit on their knees. When asked what they liked about nursery, one child responded confidently, "The teachers, they help us stay safe. I like everything at nursery".

Staff communicated well to meet children's needs. They passed on information and checked any changes with each other. For example, when one child did not appear to be enjoying their lunch, a staff member asked colleagues whether this was usual for them before offering an alternative. This helped ensure children's individual needs and preferences were met.

Children's transitions were well managed. Daily routines, including mealtimes, personal care and staff breaks, were organised effectively to minimise disruption to children's play and learning. Staff welcomed children and their families warmly and shared relevant information to promote smooth transitions at the end of the day. Parents had opportunities to meet with staff regularly to discuss their children's care and progress. Parents reported they felt welcome and valued, with one parent commenting that staff were, "welcoming at every drop off and pick up" and that the manager was, "often available to answer any questions." When children moved between rooms, these moves were planned carefully, allowing children to visit first with a familiar member of staff. These approaches contributed to continuity of care and children feeling secure and confident during transitions.

Children's privacy and dignity was respected. They were able to make choices about their care, with staff asking children's permission before carrying out personal care such as, nappy changes. They supported children to wash their own hands, dress themselves and decide which warm clothes they needed for playing outside. When children needed to rest, staff followed routines from home, with children accessing their own comforters to support them to feel comfortable.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Plans held key information to support staff's understanding of children's needs, with strategies for support clearly recorded. Information was reviewed regularly with parents; however, some updates were clearer than others. Some parents told us they were familiar with information recorded on the Family app, but not always with their child's paper file. Management had identified this as an area for development. This would further strengthen communication and consistency in supporting children's needs.

Mealtimes were pleasant and relaxed. Meals were appetising and menus followed nutritional guidance. Children had opportunities for independence. Older children chose when they wanted to eat, served their own food and cleared away afterwards. Babies enjoyed feeding themselves with appropriate support. Allergies and preferences were managed well and staff sat with children, chatting to them and supervising them closely. This contributed to a safe and sociable mealtime experience.

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	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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