

Ness Castle Nursery Day Care of Children

Ness Castle Primary School
Brodie Road
INVERNESS
IV2 6FW

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
11 December 2025

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2022000241

About the service

Ness Castle Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 110 children at any one time, from the age of three years up to children attending primary school. The Service is operated by The Highland Council. The head teacher is the registered manager and the service operates term time only.

The service is located within Ness Castle Primary School in Inverness. It has its own separate entrance. The nursery premises consists of two large playrooms. There is an enclosed outdoor play area which extends children's play and learning experiences.

The service is situated in a residential area near a supermarket and other local amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced follow up inspection which took place on Thursday 11 December 2025. 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 information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Outstanding requirements relating to staff deployment, personal planning, and quality assurance, which were identified at our inspection in December 2024 and extended at our inspection in May 2025, have now been met. This demonstrated progress in improving the quality of care and support across the service.
- Staff effectively supported and supervised children, ensuring their safety.
- Effective audits for medication had not yet been established.
- Ongoing actions were needed to further enhance personal planning.

Leadership

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We previously evaluated practice for this quality indicator under Key Question 3 'How good is our leadership? Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well'. We evaluated practice as adequate.

At our inspection in December 2024, we identified a requirement for the provider to ensure robust quality assurance systems were in place. This requirement was extended at our inspection in May 2025 and has now been met. However, effective audits for medication had not yet been established. As a result, we have made a new area for improvement in relation to ensuring robust medication audit processes are implemented. (See Area for improvement 1)

Areas for improvement

1. To promote children's wellbeing and ensure medication is safely managed, the provider should implement robust medication audit processes.

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).

Children are supported to achieve

We previously evaluated practice for this quality indicator under Key Question 1 'How good is our care, play and learning? Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support'. We evaluated practice as adequate.

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

Some progress had been made with personal planning, with improved staff knowledge of individual needs and a more responsive approach to care. At our inspection in December 2024, we identified a requirement for the provider to ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and that their needs are met. This requirement was extended at our inspection in May 2025. The provider has now met this requirement. However, personal plans sometimes lacked clarity and practical strategies to guide staff in consistently meeting children's needs. Information was not always well-structured or integrated, and review processes were inconsistently documented. As a result, we have made a new area for improvement to strengthen the clarity, structure and integration of personal plans. (See Area for improvement 1)

Areas for improvement

1. To promote children's wellbeing and emotional security, the provider should ensure staff have clear, practical guidance within personal plans to deliver continuity and consistency in care.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Care Inspectorate document 'Guide for providers on personal planning'.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 24 February 2025, the provider must ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met.

To do this the provider must at a minimum ensure:

- a) Personal plans set out children's current needs and how they will be met.
- b) All staff are knowledgeable and understand the information within the personal plans and use this to effectively meet each child's needs.
- c) Personal plans are regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with parents to reflect children's current needs.

This is to comply with Regulation 5(1)(2) – (Personal plans) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Care Inspectorate document 'Guide for providers on personal planning'.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This requirement was made on 6 December 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

Staff demonstrated increased understanding of individual children's needs and responded sensitively when children required support and reassurance. These responses were not always supported by clear strategies in personal plans. Passports for children with additional support needs had become clearer and easier to navigate, which was a positive development. Some personal plans continued to lack consistency and actionable strategies, with some gaps in linking information to practical approaches. While progress had been made, further work was needed to ensure plans provide clear guidance for staff to support high-quality, responsive care.

This requirement has been met. We have made a new area for improvement under 'Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support' for staff to strengthen the clarity, structure and integration of personal plans.

Met - outwith timescales

Requirement 2

By 24 February 2025, the provider must ensure that children are effectively supported and supervised in order to keep them safe.

To do this the provider must at a minimum:

- a) ensure staffing is well planned to keep children safe and their needs are met
- b) ensure staff communicate and work together effectively
- c) monitor staff practice and deployment, and where necessary, make improvements
- d) effective systems are implemented to ensure children are always accounted for.

This is in order to comply with section 7(1)(a) of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019.

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

'I am confident that people respond promptly, including when I ask for help' (HSCS 3.17); and

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15).

This requirement was made on 6 December 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

Staff effectively supported and supervised children to keep them safe. Staffing was well planned to meet children's needs, and staff communicated and worked together effectively. Monitoring of staff practice and deployment resulted in improvements where required, and systems were in place to ensure children were always accounted for. These actions contributed to positive outcomes for children. The service should continue to monitor staff deployment outdoors, to ensure staff interactions outside are consistently high quality.

Met - outwith timescales

Requirement 3

By 4 April 2025, the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children by implementing effective systems of quality assurance.

To do this the provider must at a minimum, ensure:

- a) the manager effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole
- b) clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service
- c) effective audits of accident and incidents, and medication are in place.

This is to comply with 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).

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 requirement was made on 6 December 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

The provider had successfully implemented systems of quality assurance that improved outcomes for children. Monitoring of individual staff members and the service as a whole was carried out effectively, and clear plans were in place to maintain and improve the service. Audits of accidents and incidents were completed successfully. However, effective audits for medication had not yet been established. As a result, a new area for improvement was identified to ensure robust medication audit processes are implemented.

Sufficient progress has been made to meet this requirement. We have made a new area for improvement under Leadership: Leadership and management of staff and resources to ensure robust medication audit processes are implemented.

Met - outwith timescales

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 effectively deliver high quality play and learning experiences, the manager should support staff to access training appropriate to their role and apply the training to their practice.

This should include but is not limited to:

- a) supporting and extending children's learning through high quality interactions and effective questioning
- b) using best practice guidance to support high quality play experiences
- c) using children's interests to plan experiences.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2024.

Action taken since then

This area was not assessed at this inspection, and progress will be reviewed at a future visit.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

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