

Monquhitter School Nursery Day Care of Children

Monquhitter School
Thornhill Road
Cuminestown
Turriff
AB53 5WH

Telephone: 01888 530 840

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
20 January 2026

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003016327

About the service

Monquhitter School Nursery is accommodated within Monquhitter Primary School, located in the rural village of Cuminstown, near Turriff, Aberdeenshire. It is close to the local shop and other community services. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children at any one time aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

Children are cared for in a playroom with direct access to a spacious outdoor area. Children also make use of various spaces within the school including the gym hall and dining room.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19 January 2026 between 09:45 and 16:30 and 20 January 2026 between 08:30 and 13:30. The inspection was carried out by two 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 throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spent time with children using the service
- reviewed 15 completed questionnaires: nine from parents/carers and six from staff
- spoke with staff and the management team
- spoke with six 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

- Children were happy, confident and having fun.
- Management and staff were committed to the continued development of the service to improve outcomes for children.
- Planning for children's learning was being developed. Staff were being supported to develop skills and confidence in this area.
- Management and staff should continue to develop and embed self-evaluation and quality assurance systems which inform the service improvement plan.
- Children experienced warm, kind, nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well and were responsive to their individual needs.

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	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work, and some aspects which could benefit from improvement

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service's vision, values and aims were in the process of being reviewed and updated as part of a whole school approach. Management recognised the importance of involving children, families and staff in this work and had begun consulting with families. Completing this process will support a shared understanding of what is important for the setting to meet the needs of children and families.

Most families shared that they felt they were involved in the service in a meaningful way. A parent commented: "Surveys and questionnaires are often shared asking for feedback." Another parent shared: "Feedback from parents is regularly asked for." A variety of ways was used to engage with families, such as daily chats, newsletters, emails, noticeboard information and the use of digital platforms. This meant that families were valued and their preferred way of communication was offered.

Positive experiences for children were supported by a realistic and achievable improvement plan. This included clear actions linked to key priorities such as children's support plans, planning and assessment. Staff spoke enthusiastically about the improvements made to the environment and how these had enhanced children's engagement and extended their learning. We asked management to consider developing how they consistently measure the impact and record actions they have taken throughout their improvement journey. This would ensure children benefited from a service that continues to improve.

Staff told us they felt "well supported" by the "patient" and "approachable" management team. Regular staff meetings provided opportunities for staff to reflect on children's individual needs, share learning and discuss planning and developments within the service. Management valued staff's contributions and were keen to distribute leadership roles. Staff were taking on further responsibilities such as environment champion areas. This contributed to staff feeling valued and empowered to contribute to improvements.

A quality assurance and monitoring calendar had recently been implemented to support ongoing service development. Some audits were completed and included, the environment, chronologies and mealtimes, alongside informal observations of staff practice. These helped to identify what was working well and areas for development to support improvement of the service. We discussed the introduction of more formal observations of staff practice and peer monitoring to strengthen the sharing of practice, enhance skills and promote consistency across the team.

Children were cared for by a stable staff team who worked well together. Most parents told us they had a good relationship with the staff caring for their children. All staff were registered with the appropriate regulatory bodies and engaged in ongoing professional learning to ensure their practice was informed by current theory, practice and national guidance.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work, and some aspects which could benefit from improvement

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

Children were happy, settled and having fun. They confidently explored the play spaces as they participated in a variety of experiences which were developmentally appropriate and relevant to their interests. As a result, children were developing their confidence, independence and creativity.

Indoors, the play areas were well-resourced with natural, open ended and real life materials that were easily accessible to children. These included opportunities for dressing up and cooking within the role play areas. One child told us: "This is vegetable soup, I made it. I just need lots of vegetables and mix it all together." The outdoor environment promoted active play, offering natural resources and sheltered spaces that encouraged sensory exploration. These experiences enriched children's play, sparked their curiosity, and supported the development of problem solving and imaginative thinking.

There was consideration of creating diverse spaces that supported children to socialise, play in small groups, or alone, if they wished. This positively impacted on children's ability to regulate their emotions and build social skills.

Staff were responsive to children's requests in their play and intervened at appropriate times. They praised children's achievements, made play suggestions and helped them find resources they needed. This contributed to children feeling valued and having the ability to lead their own learning by following their interests. Most staff interactions extended and developed children's individual learning. The manager advised further training and monitoring was planned to support this.

Children had access to a range of opportunities that supported the development of their language, literacy and numeracy skills. Storytelling and singing were offered both individually and in small groups throughout the day. A variety of mark making materials promoted children's early writing skills. Environmental print, including signs and menus, helped children to recognise and become familiar with letters. Children were also exposed to mathematical language through games and counting within daily routines. As a result, children were supported to develop key early language, literacy and numeracy skills through meaningful play experiences.

National guidance including Realising the Ambition, Curriculum for Excellence, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), was reflected in practice. Children's rights were respected, and staff used guidance to shape learning experiences. For example, staff promoted children's rights learning through a teddy bear project, which children voted to name. This supported children to feel valued and respected, as their views and opinions were listened to.

Children's learning was beginning to be supported by the process of planning. This system was relatively new and yet to be fully embedded for all staff. Regular team meetings supported consistency, while sharing learning through newsletters and virtual platforms enabled families to extend learning at home. Observations of children's experiences were recorded and shared with parents using an online app. However, next steps were not yet consistently logged to progress children's learning. This was an area the service had already identified and plans were in place to address this.

Play and learning experiences were enriched through links with the school and wider community. Children regularly visited spaces, such as the school library, gym hall, and local shop to purchase baking ingredients. These experiences strengthened children's connection to their community, promoted confidence, and deepened their understanding of the wider world.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, trusting relationships with staff who knew them well. Children were greeted warmly on arrival and those needing extra support were sensitively helped to settle through discussion and activities they enjoyed. This contributed to positive attachments and children feeling safe and secure. A parent commented: "Staff are always very approachable and friendly." Another parent shared: "They always have time to talk, listen and discuss what is best for my child."

Staff demonstrated effective communication to support children's needs. They passed on information and checked any changes with each other. For example, staff worked together when children moved from one area to another. This helped ensure children's individual needs were met.

Personal care was sensitively supported and promoted children's independence, privacy and dignity. Staff were respectful of children's wishes throughout these experiences.

Children were provided with appetising and nutritious meals and snacks. Overall, mealtimes were well organised, unhurried and supportive of children's needs. Staff sat with children as they ate, promoting some conversation and providing effective supervision to keep them safe. Children were encouraged to be independent and benefited from opportunities to prepare snacks, set the table, pour drinks, self-serve and clear away dishes. Children's allergies and food preferences were well catered for through staff awareness of any allergies or dietary requirements. This supported children's health.

Staff were knowledgeable about children's health needs and knew the signs, symptoms and actions to take where a child may require medication. Medication was stored appropriately and forms were in place that gathered important information from families prior to administration. This helped keep children safe and well.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning approaches. All children had personal care plans which set out how the nursery staff would meet their individual health, wellbeing and safety needs. Staff were able to confidently discuss the care and support needs of the individual children in their care. This included joint working with other agencies such as speech and language to ensure children were being supported in a way that was right for them. Such as, using symbols and social stories to aid communication. This meant children were well supported to reach their potential.

Family engagement was actively encouraged. The service provided opportunities for families to get involved, such as stay-and-play sessions, Bookbug activities, invitations to themed events and community walks. These experiences helped families feel included, valued and connected to their child's learning.

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	4 - Good
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	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.