

Nairn Gaelic Playgroup Day Care of Children

Community Centre
King Street
Nairn
IV12 4BQ

Telephone: 07766 396 605

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 January 2026

Service provided by:
CALA Direct Management Services

Service provider number:
SP2010011106

Service no:
CS2010278781

About the service

Nairn Gaelic Playgroup operates from a dedicated nursery space within Nairn Community Centre. The service is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 16 children at any one time aged three to those not yet of primary school age.

Facilities include an indoor playroom space, toilet and kitchen facilities as well as direct access to an enclosed outdoor space. The service is provided by the Care and Learning Alliance and operates Monday to Friday during term time.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 21 and 22 January 2026. 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

- Spent time with children using the service;
- Spoke to four parents/carers ;
- Spoke with staff and management;
- Assessed core assurances, including the physical environment;
- 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.

Key messages

- Children benefited from warm and nurturing care from the staff team.
- Staff knew children well and had developed positive relationships with them.
- Children enjoyed a lovely calming mealtime experience.
- There were opportunities for children to develop skills in Gaelic language, literacy and numeracy through their play experiences.
- Self-evaluation processes could be further developed to reflect the improvements that had been made to improve outcomes for children and their families.
- The staff and management team engaged well with the inspection process and demonstrated a keenness to develop and improve practice.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	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 quality indicator 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 management team demonstrated a clear and well-established commitment to continuous improvement, reflected in their increasingly reflective and evidence-informed approach. Staff reported feeling valued, consulted, and meaningfully involved in improvement planning. Staff fully engaged with the inspection process and demonstrated a positive attitude towards change and improvement.

The service had clear vision, values and aims outlined on the nursery wall and shared with new families. These focused on providing a high quality early learning experiences with opportunities for children to expand their experiences of Gaelic language and culture. The service also aimed to create a friendly and nurturing environment which is safe, fun and friendly for children. During the inspection, these aims were evident through play-based learning and the focus on fun, which contributed to a happy ethos and positive relationships

Quality assurance processes, such as regular monitoring and self-evaluation ensured any issues were identified and plans for this were on the management QA calendar. The service had demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement through self-evaluation and planning. Staff reported that they had felt involved and valued, fostering a collaborative culture. The management team worked alongside staff to role-model good practice and reflect on the environment, children's experiences, and staff practice. Staff had started to use the quality framework to evaluate some aspects of the learning environment and had identified some actions for change. However, more time is needed to allow self-evaluation processes to fully embed and support positive change to children's outcomes.

The management team and staff demonstrated a strong commitment to listening to and valuing the views of children and their families. Feedback was actively sought, respected, and used to inform improvements, highlighting a clear culture of responsiveness within the service. Partnership working with families was clearly identified as a priority. Staff recognised the importance of developing trusting, collaborative relationships and created meaningful opportunities for parents to engage in their child's care and learning. The open door policy further supported this, ensuring families felt welcome and able to participate in nursery life at any time.

Recruitment and induction followed clear, safe practices, in line with safer recruitment guidance. The importance of building and retaining a stable and skilled team was recognised as essential. Managers gave careful consideration to who they recruited, prioritising candidates with strong values and knowledge of how children learn, as well as how to keep them safe from harm.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

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.

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

The playroom clean, bright, and furnished with natural furniture which helped create calm and relaxing environments. There was a range of resources available indoors which included natural and open-ended resources. Children were enabled to rest and relax in a cosy and nurturing area which were well accessed by the children. This resulted in children seeking out a quiet space where they could have some individual time when needed and contributed to them feeling safe.

Staff worked to ensure that children had free-flow access to the outdoor space for the majority of the day. This supported children to be active and health. Children told us that they enjoyed playing outside which promoted physical energetic play to keep them active and healthy. We saw nice interactions between staff and children, with staff responsive to the individual needs of each child. For example, children were playing games with staff and also enjoying some time in the sand tray. This experience provided opportunities to promote literacy, imagination and creativity. Playing in the natural environment, promoted their well-being as they benefitted from fresh air and exercise. The garden provided a range of spaces for development of physical skills and exploration. The children had access to a variety of engaging and challenging resources and activities, for example, open-ended and natural resources, climbing, runny and trikes. This supported children to develop their problem-solving skills and spark curiosity in their play experiences

Children were helped to stay safe as the indoors and outdoors were secured. Staff worked well together to identify and address risk within the setting, during activities, as well as out on trips so that children enjoyed and benefited from learning about safety and challenge . Children were also able to manage risk and know their own limits, that helped them to build resilience.

Effective infection prevention and control measures were in place. Staff understood the importance of keeping the setting clean and staff and children washed their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. For example, during food preparation and serving, staff followed best practice guidance and carried out effective cleaning of tables before and after snack. This contributed to minimising risks of infection for both the staff team and children.

Although no children currently required nappy changing, the setting maintained a designated nappy changing area that fully met current best practice guidance. This proactive approach demonstrated the staff's strong commitment to infection control and readiness to meet children's care needs at any time. By ensuring that appropriate facilities were consistently available and compliant, the setting effectively minimised the risk of cross infection and upheld high standards of hygiene and safety.

Children's privacy was protected by the safe storage of their information, including electronic and paper files.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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.

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

Children had fun and experienced a variety of play opportunities which promoted learning and development. Children enjoyed activities both indoors and out. Some favourite activities across the nursery was the home corner, and small world figures/cars. Children had benefitted from the introduction of open-ended materials both indoors and outdoors.

Children demonstrated a level of confidence and engagement throughout the session. They took ownership of their learning in a range of play experiences that effectively promoted creativity, problem solving, and social development. Interactions between children and staff were warm and joyful, with laughter and relaxed conversation indicating that children felt secure and content in their environment. During one activity, children confidently sang and counted down numbers in Gaelic alongside a member of staff, showing both enjoyment and developing language skills. In the book corner, children were observed sharing stories with staff seated at their level, creating nurturing opportunities for rich conversations that further supported language and communication development.

Interactions between staff and children were consistently warm, respectful, and purposeful. Staff listened attentively and responded thoughtfully to children's ideas, using conversation and shared experiences to effectively extend their thinking. For example, during lunchtime when children were trying the soup, staff encouraged them to describe the taste, texture, and their preferences, prompting rich language use and reflective thinking. Staff judged their level of involvement well, offering guidance when it enhanced learning while still enabling children to lead their own decision making. This approach supported children's language development, confidence, and independence, demonstrating the positive impact of quality interactions on children's learning and wellbeing.

Personal learning journals were in place for all children which captured some of their achievements and progress. These contained observations and photographs demonstrating children's breadth of learning experiences. Most observations relating to individual development and learning were recorded in these journals and shared with families. Observations highlighted some of the children's learning through the early level curriculum and included some next steps for development. The service had identified the need to build staff confidence in this area to ensure children are sufficiently challenged at an appropriate level.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to their own and wider communities. These included trips to the local beach, library, local park, local care home and natural spaces. This supported children to feel part of their community. The manager and staff team recognised the benefits of fostering links with the local community and were exploring ways of developing this further.

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

Children had fun and were happy and relaxed during their time in the service. We saw that they were confident around staff, and had formed trusting relationships with them. Effective use of personal planning meant that children's current needs were identified and supported. This was carried out in collaboration with families and partners to promote consistency and continuity in care. As a result, staff knew children very well and contributed to effective partnership working between families and the service. Parents were overall very happy with the service, one parent commented "My child loves the nursery, my child and I has a great relationship with the staff".

Snack and lunch times were positive, relaxing and sociable times for children. Children were encouraged to be independent, taking part in preparing meals, pouring drinks, and clearing plates, all within a homely setting enhanced by thoughtful touches such as tablecloths and relaxing music. At snack and lunchtimes, staff sat with children, which provided opportunities to promote close attachments and develop their social skills. Food choices were healthy and very nutritious, family requests for specific food items at lunchtime were accommodated and children had access to fresh water throughout the day to support hydration. This supported children to be nurtured through their daily experiences.

All staff knew the children and families very well. Families had regular opportunities to discuss their child's care and development, both informally and formally. Staff were proactive in identifying meaningful opportunities to strengthen family engagement, using tools such as floorbooks and family-focused stay-and-play sessions to gather rich insights. Communication was regular and two-way, through online platform and daily discussions at pick-up and drop-off. Information shared by families was used effectively to personalise care, including adapting routines around children's dietary needs, and specific health requirements. As a result, children experienced care that closely reflected their home lives, promoting a high level of continuity and emotional security.

Medication was stored safely and securely and was easily accessible in case of an emergency. Medication consent forms were in place and were detailed to ensure staff had all the required information to maintain children's health and wellbeing.

Staff understood their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe and protected from harm. They could confidently tell us how they would respond if they had any child protection concerns. This contributed to keeping children safe.

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 ensure children experience nappy and toilet facilities which support their health, safety and welfare needs, the provider and manager should, as a minimum ensure:

- a) The nappy changing unit is a suitable size and strength and conforms to relevant safety standards; and
- b) Robust infection and prevention control procedures are in place for shared toilet facilities.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Care Inspectorate document Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed.' (HSCS 5.4).

This area for improvement was made on 10 October 2024.

Action taken since then

The setting maintained a designated nappy changing area that fully met current best practice guidance. This proactive approach demonstrated the staff's strong commitment to infection control and readiness to meet children's care needs at any time.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To improve outcomes for children, the provider should further develop and implement an effective system of quality assurance to monitor and improve practice. At a minimum, the provider should:

- a) Implement clear and effective plans to develop and improve the service; and
- b) Ensure effective systems are in place to monitor and improve the quality of children's experiences and the service as a whole.

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 area for improvement was made on 10 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Effective self-evaluation and quality assurances were in the early stages of development. Plans were in place to develop and improve the service. The manager and staff valued the views of the children attending her service, and their families, encouraging both formal and informal feedback through regular conversation and consultation through floorbooks and stay and play sessions. Staff had started to use the quality framework to evaluate some aspects of the learning environment and had identified some actions for change.

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.

Detailed evaluations

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Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
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Children experience high quality spaces	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

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