

Bower Busy Bees ELC (Early Learning Centre) Day Care of Children

The Stables
Bower Community Centre
Bower
Wick
KW1 4TT

Telephone: 01955 661 269

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 January 2026

Service provided by:
Bower Busy Bees ELC

Service provider number:
SP2003001744

Service no:
CS2003008548

About the service

Bower Busy Bees ELC (Early Learning Centre) is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 12 children aged from two years to not yet attending primary school.

The service operates within converted farm steadings in the community of Bower, Caithness. The accommodation has two main rooms and an upstairs room. Across the courtyard, the children can access a large outside natural play space with extensive resources which supports curiosity and creativity.

The nursery is committee led and works in partnership with The Highland Council to provide funded early learning and childcare. At the time of the inspection, there were eight children in attendance.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced follow up inspection which took place on Thursday 22 and Friday 23 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, 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

- Staffing levels had improved, with a sufficient number of staff available to consistently meet children's needs.
- The service had reviewed and updated sleep arrangements to improve children's safety.
- The service had made some progress in developing play and learning experiences.
- Staff interactions were becoming more meaningful and responsive, supported by recent training.
- Further development was needed to ensure planning consistently supports individual developmental progress.
- Quality assurance systems had been strengthened, leading to more consistent auditing and monitoring of practice.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 26 September 2025, the provider must ensure children are safe and receive high quality experiences at all times.

To do this the provider must, at a minimum: ensure that at all times suitably qualified and competent staff are working in the nursery in such numbers as are appropriate for the health, welfare, and safety of children.

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

This requirement was made on 3 June 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

Staffing levels had improved, with a sufficient number of staff consistently present throughout the day. This supported a safer and more nurturing environment, where children's wellbeing was prioritised. Staff were deployed purposefully and maintained clear communication with each other, promoting safe practices, consistent routines, and smooth transitions. As a result, children experienced more attentive supervision and were better supported to engage positively in their play and daily routines.

Met - within 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 ensure children's safety, the provider should review and make appropriate changes to the sleep arrangements within the service.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: '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 31 October 2025.

Action taken since then

To ensure children's safety, the service had reviewed and made appropriate changes to the sleep arrangements. At the time of the inspection, no children required a sleep. However, the area was observed and appeared cluttered. The manager advised that the service was in the process of reorganising the space to ensure it was tidy, welcoming, and suitable for children's rest, should it be required.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

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

This should include but is not limited to:

- a) how to complete meaningful high quality observations
- b) using best practice guidance to support high quality interactions and play experiences.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: '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 31 October 2025.

Action taken since then

The service had made some progress in developing play and learning experiences. Staff interactions were becoming more meaningful and responsive to children's interests and recent training had supported greater confidence and consistency.

Staff had made some improvements in how they observed and recorded children's learning. Some observations were beginning to capture children's developing skills more clearly. However, this was not yet consistent across the staff team.

Developmental overviews had been introduced to support more consistent tracking of progress. Staff were beginning to use this information to identify next steps and build a clearer picture of each child's learning journey. However, next steps were not always meaningful or well matched to individual needs and further work was required to ensure planning consistently supports individual developmental needs.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 3

To improve outcomes for children and families, the manager should ensure that a strong ethos of continuous improvement is established.

This should include but not limited to:

- a) developing robust quality assurance systems
- b) implementing effective audits
- c) developing monitoring processes to support a cycle of improvement.

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 31 October 2025.

Action taken since then

The service had strengthened its quality assurance systems, resulting in more consistent auditing and monitoring. Key audits and routine checks were being used effectively to identify and address issues, contributing to clearer and more reliable improvements. A structured quality assurance calendar supported regular reviews and team reflection, leading to more consistent communication, planning, and supervision. These developments were helping to embed a cycle of continuous improvement across the service.

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.

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