

Tiny Tots Nursery (Inverness) Day Care of Children

Gowanbrae
45 Culloden Road
Balloch
Inverness
IV2 7HQ

Telephone: 01463 791313

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 February 2026

Service provided by:
Hann, Carole

Service provider number:
SP2006008736

Service no:
CS2003008707

About the service

Tiny Tots Nursery (Inverness) is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 35 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. Of those 35 no more than 9 are aged under 2 years; no more than 10 are aged 2 years to under 3 years and no more than 16 are aged 3 years to not yet attending primary school.

Care is provided from a detached property located in Balloch, a residential area on the outskirts of Inverness. The service is close to local amenities, public transport links and community facilities. Children are cared for across the two-storey building within three playrooms and have access to a variety of secure gardens surrounding the premises.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 2 February 2026 between 13:30 and 16:50 and 3 February 2026 between 09:15 and 17:00. This 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 nine completed questionnaires from parents/carers
- 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within the heading Children play and learn.

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

- Management and staff were committed to the continued development of the service to improve outcomes for children.
- The manager should continue to monitor children's opportunities for outdoor learning and effective staff deployment to ensure consistently positive experiences.
- Management and staff should continue to develop and embed self-evaluation and quality assurance systems which inform the service improvement plan.
- Children experienced kind, supportive and caring approaches from staff which supported their overall wellbeing.
- Positive relationships had been established with children and families. This promoted a welcoming and inclusive ethos.

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

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Leadership | 4 - Good |
| Children play and learn | 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate |
| Children are supported to achieve | 4 - Good |

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

Leadership 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The service's vision, values and aims were in the process of being reviewed and updated. 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.

Families were invited to share their views during discussions, open events and surveys. Most parents felt listened to and included in helping the service to develop. One parent commented: "We are encouraged to provide feedback and it's always well received." Another parent shared: "The nursery are always asking for feedback and recently did two stars and a wish exercise to engage us in helping them improve the nursery." We discussed with management that increasing feedback to families and children would further strengthen their sense of involvement in ongoing improvements.

Management and staff were committed and motivated to make improvements for children. Staff reported feeling well-supported in their roles, which contributed to a positive environment for children. Staff were gaining confidence in leading and sharing improvements, such as the arrangement of the play environment. They were being given opportunities to reflect together, and were beginning to use the reflections to bring about positive change. National guidance documents such as A quality framework for the early learning and childcare sectors and Realising the Ambition were being used to inform improvements. Self-evaluation floorbooks provided a visual and accessible way of showing the improvements that had been made to improve outcomes for children.

Positive experiences for children were supported by a realistic and achievable improvement plan. This included a focus on developing garden areas to enhance outdoor play experiences. Previous improvement priorities had led to improved mealtime experiences and transitions between playrooms. Staff told us how the addition of more natural, sensory and open-ended materials had led to increased engagement and sustained play for children. These developments demonstrated the service's capacity to implement meaningful change that benefits children's daily experiences.

Audits of practice were completed and these helped to identify what was working well and areas for development to support improvement of the service. While quality assurance processes were leading to some improvements, the management team should revisit processes to ensure they are as effective as possible. For example, further monitoring was needed in relation to the consistent quality of staff interactions and learning environments.

Management ensured new staff were safely recruited and understood their responsibilities within the team. Induction processes were in place using the National Induction Resource. Staff agreed that they felt supported by colleagues during their induction, promoting confidence in their role.

Staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), supporting the maintenance of professional standards and a commitment to continuous improvement. Support and supervision meetings for staff were in the early stages and had started to result in positive outcomes. We discussed the importance of maintaining detailed and reflective records of professional development discussions with all staff. This would support more effective monitoring of staff development and help ensure professional learning directly informs practice.

Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Most children were engaged and busy at play. Most play spaces were well-resourced, and children could self-select toys and materials to support their play. Older children participated in experiences including searching for insects, building ramps for cars, painting and board games. There were opportunities for babies' sensory development such as through water play and a sensory wall. However, there were no sensory resources available to the children in the toddler playroom during the inspection. Exciting and inviting sensory areas using materials such as water, sand, paint and playdough should be available every day to support children's learning and creativity. We discussed this with management who agreed to make the necessary changes.

Older children were supported with regular free flow play to outdoors. This supported their physical development and wellbeing. The outdoor environment supported their choice and interests. Older children enjoyed digging and hunting for insects. Younger children enjoyed playing games with staff and exploring the mud kitchen. On the second day of inspection, children in one playroom were not given access to outdoor play. Outdoor time was also limited for children in another playroom and supervision of children was not always effective. For example, when children drank from the outdoor water tray this was not noticed by staff and could have resulted in children becoming unwell. The manager should continue to monitor children's opportunities for outdoor learning and effective staff deployment to ensure consistently positive experiences (see area for improvement 1).

Children's play and learning were not always well-supported by the organisation of the day. There were occasions when the routine interrupted their engagement. For example, due to staff deployment, children from two playrooms were sometimes brought together. This reduced children's access to age-appropriate play experiences. We discussed this with management, who agreed to review the current arrangements.

Most staff interactions were supportive and helped create a warm, positive atmosphere where children felt comfortable. Some staff built effectively on children's ideas, which helped deepen their play and learning. However, other staff directed children's play rather than following their lead. This limited children's opportunities to explore, experiment and develop their own thinking. To support children to experience high quality play and learning, staff would benefit from further training and development in how to effectively facilitate and extend children's play experiences.

Opportunities for children to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy were available within some of the play experiences on offer. For example, some children enjoyed using the art and craft area to explore mark making and joined in with playing musical instruments and dancing. Staff supported early communication and language skills by singing songs and reading stories. The use of some environmental print such as packaging, posters and name cards provided opportunities for children to recognise and become familiar with letters.

Planning systems were in place and staff were developing confidence in using the approaches within their playroom. Floorbooks were used to record children's experiences, and online journals kept parents and carers informed about their child's learning and development. Some observations were beginning to show children's developing skills and progress; however, this was not yet consistent. Recorded next steps did not always reflect significant learning or clearly show how children would be supported to make further progress. As a result, not all children experienced sufficient challenge or a range of high quality learning experiences suited to their stage of development. Management had recognised further support was needed to improve the quality and consistency of observations and were taking steps to address this.

Areas for improvement

1. To meet the care and learning needs of all children, the provider and manager should ensure effective deployment of staff to provide high quality engagement and supervision of children across the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "My care and support is consistent and stable because people work well together (HSCS 3.19)."

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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

Children experienced kind, supportive and caring approaches from staff, which supported their overall wellbeing. Children were given praise, reassurance and physical comfort when needed. This supported them to feel settled and secure.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning approaches. All children had personal care plans that set out how staff would meet their individual health, wellbeing and safety needs. Staff were able to confidently discuss the care and support needs of the children in their playroom. This included working with other agencies, such as speech and language services, to ensure children received the right support. For example, using simple sign language to help children communicate.

Children's individual sleep cues and preferences were recognised and responded to. Sleep routines were calm, relaxed and safe, with children resting on mats or cots, with regular checks carried out to support their safety and wellbeing. This helped ensure children were able to rest and recharge as needed.

Overall, medication management was safe and organised. Information outlined children's needs and how staff should respond. Staff were knowledgeable about children's medical and dietary needs. This promoted children's safety.

Children experienced relaxed and positive mealtimes where they were encouraged to be independent. Mealtimes provided opportunities for children to socialise with their peers and engage in conversation with staff which supported their language development. Children showed confidence as they self-served food, helping to develop their fine motor skills and independence.

Older children were given unhurried time to get changed with staff encouraging independence and offering support when needed. Nappy changing for some children was nurturing and respectful, helping them feel safe and cared for. However, this was not consistent across the setting. At times, staff did not always involve children in the process or communicate with them in a respectful way. This task focused approach meant valuable opportunities to promote children's dignity, independence and relationships were missed. We discussed this with management who agreed to review staff professional development needs to improve consistency in practice.

Children and their families were warmly welcomed into the service. A range of communication methods, including daily conversations, newsletters, online updates and noticeboard information, helped build trust and connection. Parents spoke positively about the care their child received. One parent commented: "I am very happy with the care provided; the staff and management go above and beyond to make the children feel welcome and will give support to parents whenever required." Another shared: "Lovely staff who work hard for the children. My child is happy going to Tiny Tots." While a few parents felt that updates and communication could improve, overall, the service had established positive relationships with families, helping them feel included and valued.

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 | 4 - Good |
| Leadership and management of staff and resources | 4 - Good |
| Children play and learn | 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate |
| Playing, learning and developing | 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate |
| Children are supported to achieve | 4 - Good |
| Nurturing care and support | 4 - Good |

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