

Lilliesleaf Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Lilliesleaf
Melrose
TD6 9HX

Telephone: 01835 870 251

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 March 2026

Service provided by:
Scottish Borders Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001976

Service no:
CS2003017373

About the service

Lilliesleaf Primary School Nursery operates from a classroom within Lilliesleaf Primary School in Lilliesleaf, a village located in the Scottish Borders. The premises consist of a playroom with direct access to toilets, nappy changing areas, and kitchen facilities. The service has free-flow access from the playroom to an outdoor space.

Lilliesleaf Primary School Nursery provides a care service to a maximum of 12 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 12 children are aged three years to those not yet attending primary school full time.

There was up to 12 children present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 09 March 2026 between 08:40 and 16:15 and 10 March 2026 between 08:30 and 12:30. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with two of their parents/carers
- received five responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff and management
- 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.

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 very happy, confident and settled.
- Children were leaders of their own play and learning and could transport resources to meet their interests.
- The staff team worked very well together to meet children's needs.
- Staff used their skills and knowledge to ensure high quality outcomes for children.
- The setting should now formalise its staff monitoring arrangements to ensure a consistent, structured approach, which will further strengthen staff practice and enhance outcomes for children.

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	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very 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 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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**.

The school's vision, values and aims apply across the whole school, including the nursery. These were established through a collaborative process involving children, families and staff, ensuring shared ownership and relevance. The vision was displayed clearly in the cloakroom, making it visible and accessible to families. Staff told us they felt the vision and values supported the nursery very well, and during inspection we observed children engaged, creative and confident within their learning experiences. Practitioners discussed the vision and values with children in ways that mirrored how they explore children's rights, helping to build familiarity and understanding. The manager identified that children's awareness could be strengthened further and embedded more consistently across the whole school, including nursery.

Families' views were actively sought and valued. Regular online questionnaires were used to gather feedback to inform improvements. A recent questionnaire on digital learning showed that some parents were unsure how digital tools supported learning and expressed concerns about online safety. In response, staff created a "You said, we did" board in the cloakroom, addressing the points raised. This supported parents' understanding of how digital learning was implemented safely and purposefully. Parents also engaged regularly through Showbie, a digital classroom App, which provided another meaningful way to share feedback and suggestions. Practitioners maintained a warm and consistent presence at the nursery door each day, offering informal opportunities to talk. Twice yearly parent consultations provided more formal opportunities for discussion. Parents told us they felt genuinely involved in shaping and developing the service. The nursery demonstrated strong approaches to parental engagement, ensuring families felt listened to, informed and included.

Self evaluation processes supported developments across the setting. A self evaluation calendar guided the team's engagement with the new Quality Improvement Framework. Staff used reflective questions, illustrations and challenge questions during weekly team meetings to identify areas for improvement. This had a positive impact on children and staff. For example, staff identified workload pressures and introduced a key worker system, resulting in responsibilities being shared more evenly. Self evaluation was clearly driving meaningful improvement and enabling the team to identify priorities that enhanced children's experiences and staff practice.

An improvement plan was displayed clearly and aligned with whole school priorities. The development of outdoor learning and planning approaches had been key focuses. Planning now helped staff identify gaps and provide appropriate challenge; ensuring support was tailored to children's needs. We discussed systems to record recent improvements more systematically, similar to the outdoor improvement journey created using Book Creator. Improvement work demonstrated clear positive impact on children's outcomes.

A structured quality assurance calendar supported ongoing development. Monthly processes and audits provided a consistent overview, with findings shared at staff meetings and action plans created where necessary. Support and supervision sessions helped allocate tasks effectively and identified areas requiring development, such as strengthening challenge for children. Long term staff absence meant the manager had spent considerable time in the nursery, gaining a valuable insight but reduced opportunities for formal monitoring. Staff now plan to formalise monitoring going forward. Informal peer review took place regularly due to the small team, and staff were exploring how this could be recorded. Regular support from the early years teacher contributed positively, including strengthening care plans and monitoring children's outcomes. Quality assurance processes were driving improvements and supporting very good outcomes for children.

Staff told us they felt well supported by the new manager and worked effectively as a team. Staff took on leadership roles linked to their skills, such as supporting signing across the school. This benefited staff and children, with signing used meaningfully in daily practice. Staff also valued training opportunities, such as anti racism in early years, which helped reinforce inclusive approaches. Staff felt valued, confident and empowered, contributing to a positive team culture that enhanced children's experiences.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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**.

Relevant theory was used effectively within the setting to support children's development and high quality practice. Staff described a range of literature that had shaped recent improvements, particularly in planning and responsive pedagogy. For example, 'Planning in the Moment' by Anna Ephgrave strengthened staff understanding of child led learning and helped them tune into children's interests to extend learning as it emerged. Likewise, 'The Muddy Puddle Teacher' by Sarah Seaman informed the development of outdoor learning, enriching opportunities for storytelling, exploration and imaginative play during Woodland Wednesday sessions. These theories were clearly embedded in daily routines and contributed to purposeful, responsive and developmentally appropriate experiences.

Children were consistently happy, engaged and confident. They chose where to play and accessed resources independently. For instance, children used shiny stones as loose parts to 'cook' in the house corner, demonstrating imagination and creativity. Others used the cloakroom space for magnetic sticks and books, showing flexible use of the environment. Staff had carefully considered the layout and purpose of learning areas, adapting them regularly to reflect emerging interests. Free flow access to outdoors supported continuous exploration and choice. As a result, children demonstrated strong engagement and independence throughout the day.

Children benefited from rich experiences that supported curiosity, creativity and early language, literacy and numeracy. Outdoors, they played together as princesses, knights and dinosaurs, using trowels as swords and developing imaginative narratives. Indoors, they explored rainbow pencils with excitement, drawing together and encouraging peers with prompts such as "copy me drawing presents." Water play supported experimentation with funnels, containers, boats and the water wall. Snack time offered particularly meaningful learning through a booking system that used money and numerals, promoting counting, turn taking and conversations about family life. Children experienced a wide range of high quality learning opportunities that supported early development across the curriculum.

Staff supported and extended children's play naturally and responsively. They used skilled observation, modelling and open-ended questions to deepen thinking. For example, during water play an adult placed a boat on a funnel and asked if it could be made to move, prompting children to apply earlier learning about friction and motion. Children also invited staff into imaginative scenarios, such as asking an adult to become a dinosaur during a knights' game. Staff joined sensitively, strengthening relationships and extending play. Interactions effectively supported deeper thinking, imagination and social emotional development.

Digital technology was used confidently and meaningfully. Children progressed from paper based systems to booking restaurant tables using an online calendar, and digital mark making was supported through iPads and styluses. These tools were embedded across daily experiences and enhanced children's learning by developing valuable lifelong skills.

Family learning continued to develop well. Showbie supported communication by helping families understand children's learning, and parents confirmed this strengthened engagement. Families took part in a digital learning session provided by Inspire, and future plans included Peep TALK training and informal sessions with the health visitor. Family learning was developing positively, with increasing opportunities for parents to engage in nursery life.

Planning, previously identified for development, had improved. The team used Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes to support intentional planning, clearly identifying resources, the adult role and learning opportunities. Responsive planning reflected children's interests, such as extending a child's road drawing into constructing buildings using blocks and paper. Digital tools such as Book Creator and Showbie supported assessment and family engagement, with observations linked to CfE. Children revisited their learning using the smart board, strengthening understanding and memory, while trackers and monthly spreadsheets provided a clear overview of progress. This ensured planning was purposeful, coherent and clearly informed by children's needs.

Strong partnerships with families and other professionals, including Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy, ensured well coordinated support. Families valued this collaborative approach, which helped children achieve their potential.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good**Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support**

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**.

Staff were very warm and nurturing in their interactions with children. Children were comfortable, relaxed and confident within the setting, approaching adults naturally when they needed support, which demonstrated that they felt safe and secure seeking reassurance. Staff were highly attuned to children's cues and responded promptly, such as supporting a child who appeared cold after returning from the lunch hall or encouraging a child with wet clothing to change. Children used staff members' names confidently and enjoyed close, nurturing interactions when sharing stories or playing together. Strong bonds were clearly evident across the setting, contributing to a caring and emotionally secure environment.

Children were very familiar with daily routines, which contributed to them being settled, relaxed and confident. They independently prepared for outdoor play by putting on their wellies and demonstrated confidence during transitions, such as going to the lunch hall or brushing their teeth. These predictable routines helped children feel secure and supported. Hand washing routines were mostly well supported, particularly at lunchtime when staff supervised and modelled good hygiene. We discussed ensuring this consistency is strengthened during snack time.

Transitions occurred naturally throughout the day and were supported sensitively by staff. Children received verbal cues such as, "We'll get ready for lunch in five minutes," which helped them anticipate what would happen next. This contributed to a calm and predictable flow to the day. Consistent staffing further strengthened transitions; because the team was small, children were familiar with all adults, which helped ensure continuity and emotional security even during periods of staff absence. Overall, routines and transitions were well managed and contributed to children's confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Robust practices were in place to keep children safe. Staff used the Care Inspectorates SIMOA resource to strengthen children's understanding of safety in developmentally appropriate ways. Risk assessments were detailed, identifying hazards and mitigation strategies. Children participated in daily morning checks, which promoted shared responsibility for example, when a child found a small piece of glass, they immediately brought it to an adult using a trowel. Allergy procedures were thorough, with clear overviews, flowcharts and up to date lists used during mealtimes. Child protection processes were strong, with confident staff, clear procedures, and well maintained chronologies. Medication procedures were well organised, with regular audits taking place. Safety systems ensured strong protection and wellbeing for children.

Mealtimes were relaxed, unhurried and nurturing. At snack time, children were supported to be independent, acting as snack helpers. This included chopping fruit as well as helping to set up the table. They used tongs to self serve, practised spreading butter and poured their own drinks. During mealtimes, staff sat with children for most of the time, supporting conversations and modelling positive interactions. We discussed ensuring that staff consistently supervised and supported children who are still seated towards the end of snack time to maintain safety and engagement. Mealtimes also provided valuable social opportunities. Children engaged in meaningful conversations about their weekends, family life and interests, promoting language development and confidence. Children were asked to help plan future snacks, creating lists together and developing ownership. Overall, mealtimes effectively promoted independence, social interaction and healthy habits.

Personal plans were in place for every child and provided a strong holistic overview using wellbeing indicators. Plans were created in partnership with parents and reviewed regularly to ensure they reflected children's current needs, routines and interests. Care Plan Plus documents clearly outlined joint home nursery strategies and were used effectively in practice. Overall, personal planning was well structured and ensured children received individualised, consistent support.

Staff promoted inclusion and diversity meaningfully. Celebrations were carefully planned with children and families, such as marking Sinterklaas, a tradition in the Netherlands, with guidance from a child familiar with this. Staff also used inclusive resources, such as books showing diverse families, to support discussion and understanding. Overall, diversity was celebrated sensitively which helped all families feel valued and included.

Relationships with families were very strong. Staff knew families well, offered supportive daily handovers and created a welcoming foyer environment. Parents confirmed they felt welcome and involved, with opportunities for stay and play or sharing skills. Overall, strong, trusting relationships created a highly inclusive and supportive environment for families.

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 support children's individual needs staff should ensure that personal plans are used more effectively. They should include strategies and next steps for each child in accordance with their individual needs.

National care standards for early education and childcare up to the age of 16:

Standard 3: Health and wellbeing

Standard 13: improving the service

Standard 14: well-managed service.

This area for improvement was made on 7 March 2017.

Action taken since then

Plans were created in partnership with parents and reviewed regularly to ensure they reflected children's current needs, routines and interests. vCare Plan Plus documents clearly outlined joint home nursery strategies and were used effectively in practice. Overall, personal planning was well structured and ensured children received individualised, consistent support.

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	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very 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 iarrrtas.

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.