

# Iona Primary Pre Five Unit Day Care of Children

Iona Primary School  
Isle of Iona  
PA76 6SJ

Telephone: 01681 700 348

**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
26 February 2026

**Service provided by:**  
Argyll and Bute Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003373

**Service no:**  
CS2010278760

## About the service

This service registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011. The service provider is Argyll and Bute Council.

The service operates from a single-story school building on the isle of Iona, within walking distance to the local amenities. The conditions of registration include providing a care service to a maximum of 10 children two years and over.

At the time of the inspection, there were four children registered, all of whom were present during the inspection.

## About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection, carried out by one early learning and childcare inspector, which took place on 25 and 26 February 2026. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and any intelligence gathered. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Observed practice and daily life.
- Spoke with children using the service.
- Reviewed documents.
- Collected survey feedback from parents.
- Assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.
- Spoke with the staff and management.

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.

As part of this inspection, we undertook a focus area. We have 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 enjoyed a wide range of learning experiences, both indoor, outdoors and across the wider community.
- Staff were registered, trained, and engaging in regular professional development to maintain and enhance their skills, ensuring they met the needs of the children effectively.
- A robust process of self evaluation and improvement was in place and quality assurance systems were being further developed to support ongoing improvement.
- Families were actively involved in many aspects of the service and invited into the setting regularly, creating a strong partnership.
- Children benefitted from a relaxed and social lunch time experience alongside the staff team.

## 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	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 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 setting demonstrated a clearly defined and collaboratively developed vision, values, and aims. These centred on Nurture, Achievement, and Choice, shaped in partnership with staff, children, families, and the wider community. The value of nurture was evident in the environment and practice. Children were kept safe and respected, with their voices meaningfully influencing planning and service evaluations. Safeguarding processes were robust, and recent updates to secure entry and exit systems further strengthened children's safety. Achievement and choice were embedded across the curriculum through a wide range of rich, high quality learning experiences. A wide range of resources and play spaces offered curiosity, challenge, and opportunities for children to reach their full potential. Staff had thoughtfully shared these values with children in developmentally appropriate and meaningful ways. This was supporting children to have a sense of belonging and responsibility over their setting.

Staff were appropriately qualified and registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). They demonstrated confidence in their roles and a clear understanding of their expectations. Core training was effectively tracked through an online system, ensuring compliance with essential requirements. Professional Review and Development (PRD) meetings took place regularly, focusing on recognising strengths and identifying areas for continued growth. Staff engaged in collective professional reading and reflective discussion to enhance their practice. We suggested documenting the impact of this professional learning against individual PRD plans would further strengthen the cycle of improvement.

Team meetings occurred regularly and included evaluation against a range of quality indicators. Staff reflected on actions and considered their impact on practice. We suggested that providing more explicit follow up notes on agreed actions would support continuous improvement. During inspection, staff engaged confidently, communicated effectively, and maintained a nurturing atmosphere. They reported feeling very well supported by leadership, both in their wellbeing and their professional development, allowing staff to be responsive, and attuned to children's needs.

There was clear evidence of ongoing self evaluation using the new joint quality improvement framework. Staff reflected on best practice guidance, including "Me, My Family and My Childcare Setting", and used a consultation plan to ensure meaningful involvement of children and families in the ongoing improvement goals of the service.

The improvement plan was collaboratively developed and clearly outlined priorities across wellbeing indicators, literacy, and numeracy. Displaying key developments and timelines in the foyer enhanced transparency and strengthened parental engagement. Previously received feedback had been acted upon. For example, parents were now welcomed into the setting during routines, demonstrating the setting's capacity and commitment to ongoing improvement. The small team structure supported organic, day to day quality assurance. We suggested formalising audits of areas such as planning and supervision to strengthen evidence of oversight and provide a more systematic process that can be revisited over time.

**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.

During the inspection, children were highly engaged across a wide range of play experiences. They explored the sand and water trays, participated in outdoor balance games, and experimented in the mud kitchen. Many children chose to play in the mud or listen to stories, and they moved confidently between activities. Children appeared content and relaxed, chatting openly with staff and with one another. Their enthusiasm and sustained engagement demonstrated that the environment and experiences were meeting their developmental needs and sparked their interest and sense of wonder.

Staff interactions with children were consistently responsive and attuned. They engaged in ways that supported children's autonomy, confidence, and decision making ability. Staff provided help when children sought equipment or requested a play partner, encouraging opportunities for higher order thinking and depth in learning, while also recognising moments where stepping back allowed for uninterrupted, self directed play. This reflected a strong understanding of play pedagogy.

Floor books clearly captured children's voices, highlighting their interests and choices. The "hot air balloons" displayed in the room showed how children's ideas informed planning and provision on offer, and evidencing respect for children's individuality. Staff reinforced positive language and good manners and demonstrated consistency and reflection in how they supported children to engage with resources and each other. The high-quality interaction contributed positively to children's social, emotional, and cognitive development.

The environment was bright, well ventilated, and benefitted from a view of historic building and island scenery. Facilities had been recently upgraded to include a toilet and changing area that promoted children's privacy and dignity. We discussed opportunities to further enhance the space using the "Space to Grow and Thrive" guidance. Potential developments included adding further cosy elements, reducing echo within the room, and introducing plants, soft lighting, and more sensory or homely resources. These enhancements would help to further create a calmer, more nurturing atmosphere that supports children's wellbeing.

Indoor and outdoor spaces encouraged free movement and supported children to follow their interests. Continuous access to the garden enabled rich outdoor learning, exploration, independence, and choice. Across the setting, the learning environment offered meaningful opportunities for emergent literacy, language, and numeracy development. Practitioners further strengthened this through skilled interactions that promoted depth and challenge to the play and learning opportunities. For example, when staff identified gaps in children's understanding of real world numeracy, they extended learning through a meaningful trip to the local shop. Floor books effectively documented this learning and aligned with curriculum expectations and previously identified possible lines of development.

Staff clearly described their planning and assessment processes and demonstrated an understanding of where each child was in their learning journey. We discussed streamlining documentation so that children's starting points, current progress, and next steps were explicitly linked through to planning. Although this already occurred organically due to the small number of children, formalising the documentation would strengthen clarity and continuity.

Learning journals and parental diaries were detailed and effectively shared children's achievements with families. Children also benefited from a wide range of learning experiences beyond the setting. For example, visiting the lambs at the local farm, connecting with Bunessan Primary School for shared learning and wider play opportunities, trips to the fire station and local beaches. These experiences fostered a sense of adventure and strengthened children's belonging within their local and wider community.

## 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.

Relationships with families were strong and being further strengthened through regular, collaborative communication and meaningful consultation. Parents were invited into the setting for events and were welcomed at drop off and pick up times, which helped build a sense of ownership and belonging to the setting. Staff spoke confidently about parents as partners and consistently demonstrated this partnership approach in their daily interactions. This supported the development of positive, trusting relationships and ensured families were fully included in their children's experiences.

Transitions were managed very effectively. Staff adopted a personalised, child centred approach and worked closely with parents to ensure children received the support they needed for a smooth and reassuring transition.

We observed strong, nurturing attachments between staff and children. Children sought comfort and reassurance when needed, and staff responded warmly and sensitively to children's needs. Staff knew the children and their families very well, which contributed to a secure and emotionally attuned environment, supporting children's wellbeing.

Personal care routines were carried out with respect, privacy, and dignity. Staff promoted children's autonomy by asking whether they wished to use the toilet and encouraged handwashing afterwards. This supported independence while reinforcing good hygiene habits, contributing to positive health and wellbeing.

Children's plans were clear, regularly reviewed, and closely aligned with the wellbeing indicators. Parents were provided with regular opportunities to comment on and contribute to their child's plan, supporting meaningful partnership working. Children were also involved in shaping their plans and learning journeys, giving them ownership of their learning and ensuring their views were central to decision making. We suggested that clearly identifying review dates would further strengthen the planning cycle.

Mealtimes were inclusive, relaxed, and homely. Practitioners sat alongside children at the table, creating a warm, family style dining experience. The unhurried atmosphere encouraged social interaction, conversation, and a sense of belonging. Although the service did not provide hot meals, staff actively promoted healthy eating choices within children's packed lunches and had creatively created a system to encourage self serving, responsibility and independence. For example, self serving water, clearing up and collecting their lunch items. This approach supported children's independence, wellbeing, and understanding of healthy habits.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - 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

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