

Puddleduck Nursery Day Care of Children

Kirkfield
Dunkeld
PH8 OAE

Telephone: 01350 727117

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 March 2026

Service provided by:
Jill Rogers

Service provider number:
SP2024000110

Service no:
CS2024000246

About the service

Puddleduck Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children at any one time, with no more than four children under the age of two years and with no more than 16 children from two years to not yet attending primary school. A maximum of five children can be aged between two to three years old.

The service is provided from a converted property in Dunkeld, Perthshire. A main playroom is used to provide care for children aged two to five years and a separate playroom for children from birth to two years. Both playrooms have nappy changing facilities that are directly accessible, with toilet facilities located off the main playroom. Enclosed outdoor spaces are available at the front and rear of the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 04 March 2026 between 09:30 and 17:15. The 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 since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received feedback from six families
- reviewed feedback from two staff members employed in the service
- spoke with management and staff
- observed practice and staff interactions with children
- 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 Leadership and Children thrive and develop in quality spaces.

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

- Self-evaluation processes were developing well and helping staff to plan meaningful improvements.
- Some quality assurance processes should be further developed to ensure children consistently receive high-quality experiences.
- Recruitment procedures should be strengthened to ensure appropriate and robust assessments are carried out, prior to individuals commencing employment.
- Recent developments to play spaces and resources had improved the quality of children's experiences and their engagement in play.
- Procedures for carrying out effective assessment and maintenance of the setting needed to be further developed to ensure children consistently experience a safe environment.
- Children experienced caring and responsive relationships with staff who knew them well. Positive attachments supported children's wellbeing and helped them feel safe and secure.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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

The service had a clear vision centred on creating a warm, inclusive, home from home environment where relationships and family partnerships were highly valued. This was developed collaboratively with families to reflect shared aspirations between the service and home.

Self-evaluation processes were developing positively, allowing staff to identify what was working well and plan meaningful improvements. Plans demonstrated that improvement priorities had been well considered and were progressing to secure positive outcomes for children. To build on self-evaluation the service could consider how they monitor and assess progress. Strengthening approaches to tracking impact would support a continuous cycle of reflection, improvement, and sustained positive outcomes for children.

Children's and families' views were regularly sought, supporting meaningful involvement in planning improvements. This strengthened partnership working. Their input was valued within the service's ongoing development and enabled them to influence decision making in a purposeful way.

Quality assurance processes should be strengthened to ensure children consistently experience positive outcomes. Staffing changes had led to key elements of quality assurance, including observing and monitoring staff practice, being paused. The planning of staffing for the service and deployment of staff needed further consideration around both staffing levels and the skillset within the team. Improving these processes would support continuity of care for children and ensure staff have the right skills to meet children's needs (see area for improvement one).

Safer recruitment practices were not being followed consistently. Although some key aspects, such as fit person checks, were completed, the overall recruitment process did not demonstrate sufficient robustness. Recruitment procedures should be strengthened in line with best practice guidance. This would ensure that suitable individuals are employed, protecting children and promoting their wellbeing (see area for improvement two).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children experience consistently positive outcomes and staff have the right skills to meet their needs, the provider should strengthen the approach to quality assurance.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- reinstating and carrying out regular observation and monitoring of staff practice
- reviewing staffing levels to ensure they consistently meet the needs of children
- assessing the skill mix within the team to ensure staff are equipped to meet children's individual needs.

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).

2. To protect children and promote their wellbeing, the provider should ensure that recruitment procedures are aligned with best practice guidance, so that only suitably skilled and appropriate individuals are employed 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 am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces **3 - Satisfactory / Adequate**

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

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

Children experienced an environment that was welcoming, comfortable and provided a calm and nurturing ethos. Children's artwork, photographs and dedicated spaces to store their personal belongings promoted a sense of ownership. This helped children to feel valued and respected.

Developments within play spaces were focused on enhancing children's learning and wellbeing. Since the previous inspection, staff had reflected on the layout, the quality of resources, and how well these met children's needs. This led to improvements being made. This included the addition of a dedicated room for the birth to two provision, offering a nurturing and quiet environment for younger children. Within the main playroom cosy areas, quiet nooks, and well defined learning areas created welcoming spaces. Improvements were progressing positively and supported children's engagement in their play.

Play spaces had been adapted in consultation with children and families, creating an inclusive environment. The layout of resources allowed children to move easily around the space, with accessible materials that promoted choice and independence. Children appeared confident and comfortable, freely moving between indoor areas. This meant that spaces were enabling and supported children's independence.

Some resources showed signs of wear and tear, such as the book rack, and several paint dispensers were not functioning. This limited children's ability to fully engage in creative activities. Addressing these issues would ensure resources remain inviting, well maintained, and support high quality play and learning.

Outdoor provision could be better facilitated to support children's choice and to further enhance the overall learning environment. Children had opportunities to engage in outings and walks within the local and wider community. These provided valuable experiences and helped broaden their understanding of the world around them. Plans for developments aimed at improving the quality of the outdoor environment were in place. As these improvements progress, regular and independent access to outdoor areas should be considered.

Measures such as secure entry systems, boundary fencing, and procedures for monitoring visitors helped maintain a safe and secure environment for children. Risk assessments were undertaken, however they did not identify significant concerns that could affect children's health and wellbeing. For example, mould on the windows in the playrooms had the potential to place children and staff at risk. The provider was proactive following the inspection and had put plans in place to address the issue of mould within the playrooms.

To strengthen safety, regular and thorough assessments of all areas should be completed and clearly understood by staff. This would support the early identification of risks and ensure prompt action, including essential maintenance to sustain a safe and healthy setting for children (see area for improvement one).

Areas for improvement

1. To promote children's wellbeing and to maintain a safe environment, the provider should ensure that regular and comprehensive assessments of all areas of the environment are carried out. This would support to identify potential risks and enable prompt action to be taken, including essential maintenance.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'My environment is safe and secure' (HSCS 5.17).

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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 led most of their experiences, choosing play that interested them and was fun and engaging. Time and space to participate in uninterrupted play supported sustained engagement and allowed children time to investigate their ideas.

Resources enabled children to engage in a range of experiences that reflected their interests and encouraged exploration. Open-ended materials supported children to problem solve, use their imagination, and be creative. For example, some children used craft materials to create accessories before engaging in role play scenarios. This encouraged children to experiment with ideas, develop early problem solving skills, and express themselves through imaginative play. Staff recognised that the use of loose parts could be further developed to enhance opportunities for children to be creative. This would strengthen the quality of play experiences.

Literacy and numeracy were naturally woven into children's play. Real life resources including measuring equipment, calendars and reference books helped children to develop skills in meaningful ways. Staff supported storytelling and shared in children's reading experiences. Children enjoyed the closeness and nurturing interactions during these moments, listening to stories and engaging in conversations about the characters and events within the tales.

Staff interactions were consistently warm, nurturing and encouraging. Staff mostly understood when to interact to support children's play and when to step back and observe. At times, children would have benefitted from adult interaction to further their participation. Recognising children's cues would enable staff to sensitively support them to join in with play. This would help to build children's confidence, sense of belonging and social development.

Children's friendships had a positive impact on their social development and wellbeing. The mix of ages within the nursery contributed to this, with older children naturally welcoming and guiding younger or newer children as they settled in. Children laughed together and spent time talking, playing and exploring alongside one another. These interactions helped to build confidence, cooperation skills, and a strong sense of belonging within the nursery community.

Planning and assessment processes were effective. Staff used a range of tools to plan children's experiences in a responsive way, accounting for each child's individual needs and interests. Assessment tools helped to monitor progress and identify next steps in children's learning. Staff had identified gaps in planning processes for children aged under two. Plans were in place to engage in professional development to strengthen the quality of support for this age group.

Floor books supported children to record and share their views on their experiences. Children were given ownership through mark making, drawing and sharing their comments. This allowed them to meaningfully contribute to planning. To strengthen this approach, it would be beneficial for staff to evaluate the experiences recorded in the floor books. This would help them assess the impact on children's learning and use this information to inform future planning.

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 caring and responsive relationships with staff who knew them and their families well. Interactions were gentle and nurturing, supporting children's emotional wellbeing and sense of security. Children appeared happy and settled within the setting. There was laughter, warm exchanges, and genuine enjoyment evident throughout the day. One child shared, 'I have lots of friends. I am happy'. This contributed to a positive and reassuring atmosphere for children.

Mealtimes were positive social experiences where children enjoyed eating and chatting with friends. Staff joined children to eat, helping to promote social interaction and positive eating habits. Dietary needs and preferences were well catered for, ensuring children were safe and enjoyed their meals. Children had some opportunities to develop self help skills through tasks such as self serving. Staff could consider ways to increase children's involvement further, for example by supporting them to help set up for meal times and prepare snack foods. Staff should also be mindful of the length of time children sit at the table. Older children could return to play easily, while younger children, due to seating design, were less able to get up or communicate when they were finished. Developing smoother transitions between mealtimes would support children to experience consistent routines.

Sensitive and respectful approaches to sleep and rest helped children feel secure and comforted. Staff's use of soothing touch, soft music, and gentle lighting supported children to settle well. The availability of cosy, comfortable spaces enabled children to rest or have a break from busy play when needed. This supported their ability to regulate their emotions. This promoted children's wellbeing and social development, allowing them to spend time alone or with peers according to their needs.

Effective personal planning supported children's wellbeing by recognising each child as an individual and ensuring their needs were well understood by staff. Strong partnerships with families, other agencies, and additional settings attended by children further enhanced continuity of care. This promoted a shared understanding of children's needs. Identifying clear strategies and setting specific goals within plans would help to ensure support is purposeful and tailored to achieving positive outcomes.

Safeguarding procedures were effective. Staff had completed child protection training and demonstrated confidence in recognising safeguarding risks and responding appropriately to any concerns. They understood that significant events or changes in a child's life could affect their wellbeing. Supportive strategies were planned to help children through these times. This ensured children's needs were identified sensitively and that they received timely support to promote their safety and emotional wellbeing.

Relationships with families were positive. Staff warmly welcomed families into the service, dedicating time to support their engagement. Regular opportunities were provided to discuss children's care and support family involvement in children's experiences. Families we spoke to during our visit spoke positively about the experiences their child had and their relationships with the staff team. This helped to build strong partnerships and a shared understanding of each child's needs.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children experience high quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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