

Malory House Nursery Day Care of Children

20 Catherine Street
Dumfries
DG1 1JF

Telephone: 01387 269 839

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
8 April 2026

Service provided by:
Malory Nurseries

Service provider number:
SP2003003191

Service no:
CS2003013479

About the service

The service is based within the Malory House Nursery and out-of-school care, and children are accommodated in playrooms on different levels. Out-of-school care is up the stairs, the nursery is on the ground floor, and in the basement children have access to an enclosed outdoor garden. Malory House Nursery and out-of-school care is located in a residential area in the town of Dumfries. The service has sole use of the premises and the outdoor play area. Children can freely move between indoors and a secure outdoor area. The centre is within walking distance of local amenities.

The service is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 26 children from two-years-old to under 12 years old. Of these 26 children, no more than 10 are under three years old. At the time of our inspection, 89 children were registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday, 7 April and Wednesday, 8 April 2026, between the hours of 09:15 and 16:30 on day one, and 10:00 to 14:30 on day two. 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
- received completed electronic questionnaires from three families and five members of staff
- spoke with the staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

As part of this inspection, we assessed 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.

Key messages

- A nurturing, child-centred service where strong leadership and caring staff help children thrive.
- Children experienced rich, child-led learning supported by skilled, nurturing staff who created meaningful, engaging play opportunities.
- Regular community experiences and high-quality interactions helped children build confidence, curiosity, and key early skills.
- Children experienced warm, nurturing care supported by strong relationships, effective planning, and positive communication with families.
- Staff promoted children's wellbeing confidently, creating a safe, calm environment where individual needs were well understood and met.

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.

Leadership within the service was supportive, approachable, and clearly focused on children's wellbeing. Leaders had established a strong vision, values, and aims that were well understood by staff, children, and families. These values were reflected in daily practice, creating a consistent and nurturing environment. Staff described leaders as visible and available, and children were confident in seeking reassurance from them. This contributed to a positive culture where everyone felt respected and included. A parent shared with us, "We have been involved in online forms for evaluation on stay and play session, we voted on the visions values and aims when the manager was reviewing these."

Leaders encouraged staff to take responsibility for improvement and to contribute ideas. This helped build a reflective team that was willing to adapt practice based on children's needs. Communication was effective, with regular opportunities for staff to share views and discuss changes.

The improvement plans clearly guide day-to-day developments and support positive changes in practice. Quality assurance processes were also effective, and leaders used them to monitor key areas of the service and identify what was working well.

Staff interactions with children were warm, nurturing, and responsive. Observations showed that staff knew children well and used this knowledge to support their emotional security and learning. Children were relaxed and confident, and staff responded sensitively to their cues, contributing to a calm and inclusive atmosphere.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of national guidance, including 'Realising the Ambition' and the new national framework. They could explain how these documents influenced their practice, particularly in relation to child-led learning and responsive planning. This had a positive impact on children's experiences, with staff increasingly using observations to shape activities.

Recruitment processes followed safer recruitment guidance, and staff files showed that all required checks were completed before start dates. Induction was well structured, with new staff receiving protected time to complete the national induction resource, shadowing opportunities, and regular check-ins. This supported confidence and ensured new staff understood children's needs.

Key worker allocations were thoughtful and based on relationships rather than convenience. Children were gradually introduced to new staff, and families were kept informed through daily routines and planned introductions, supporting continuity and emotional security.

The environment was clean, welcoming, and well-maintained, providing children with a safe and stimulating place to play and learn. A wide range of resources supported creativity, exploration, and outdoor learning, and children benefited from engaging, high-quality experiences across the day.

The service was well-staffed, with enough adults available to consistently meet children's needs. This

allowed staff to build warm relationships, offer unhurried interactions, and respond sensitively to children's cues. Leaders monitored staffing effectively to maintain this strong position.

Some areas of the building and equipment were beginning to show signs of wear. Although this did not affect children's safety or enjoyment, clearer, more proactive planning for repairs and replacements would have helped maintain the high standard of the environment.

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.

Children experienced a rich and engaging learning environment where play was valued as central to their development. Throughout the visit, children demonstrated high levels of engagement, moving confidently between spontaneous and planned experiences. They were deeply involved in activities that reflected their interests, such as creating their own menus, building obstacle courses, and experimenting with mixtures in the mud kitchen. These experiences helped children develop curiosity, problem-solving skills, and independence.

Staff created an environment that encouraged children to make choices and lead their own play. Planning approaches were child-centred and responsive, drawing on observations of children's interests and developmental needs. There was a balanced mix of child-led and adult-led experiences, which supported children in exploring freely while also providing intentional teaching moments. For example, children enjoyed building towers, engaging in pretend reading, and exploring books within play spaces. Staff celebrated children's achievements and tracked progress in a meaningful way, helping ensure learning was visible and valued.

Children also benefited from regular opportunities to explore the wider community. Trips to the forest allowed them to explore nature, take calculated risks, and build confidence in outdoor environments. These experiences supported physical development, teamwork, and problem-solving. Children also accessed local restaurants, which helped them learn about their community, practise social skills, and experience real-life situations such as ordering food and interacting with others. Parents told us, "Trips out to local forests, the nursery garden and old bridge garden at Troqueer, or the local parks and libraries are often places that my child enjoys telling us about;" and "As my child is there in the holiday there's always a wide range of activities on offer with trips out to local places in the community, planned activities and time for the children choices."

Children had access to a wide range of opportunities that supported the development of language, literacy, and numeracy. Staff provided varied and stimulating resources, and children used these confidently during play. Examples included matching numbers to items on the table, exploring shapes in the environment, and participating in songs and storytelling. These experiences supported early mathematical thinking, vocabulary development, and communication skills, aligning well with national practice guidance such as 'Realising the Ambition'.

The quality of interactions observed was consistently positive. Staff were skilled in using effective questioning, modelling language, and offering gentle prompts that extended children's thinking.

Interactions were warm, respectful, and purposeful, helping children feel secure and confident to explore. Staff used observations well to identify when to step in to support learning and when to step back to allow children to lead. This approach reflected a strong understanding of child development and contributed to high-quality play and learning experiences.

Staff demonstrated confidence in their roles and worked well as a team to create a nurturing and stimulating environment. Their practice reflected current national guidance, and they were able to explain how frameworks such as 'Realising the Ambition' informed their approach to play, planning, and assessment. This supported consistency across the setting and ensured children benefited from developmentally appropriate experiences.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support.

Children experienced warm, nurturing care from staff who understood their individual needs well. Throughout the visit, children appeared safe, settled, and emotionally secure. Staff used sensitive approaches to support children's wellbeing, and their interactions reflected genuine care and respect. For example, staff supported a child using visual aids and signing, demonstrating a strong bond and a clear understanding of how to meet their needs. Staff in out-of-school care also described using calm, supportive strategies to help a child regulate when they were struggling, demonstrating confidence in promoting children's emotional wellbeing.

Relationships and communication with families were positive and well established. Staff built strong bonds with children and maintained consistent communication with parents and carers. Key workers were thoughtfully allocated based on the relationships children naturally formed, helping ensure continuity and emotional security. Staff shared information with families about what children were learning and how they could support this at home, strengthening the connection between the setting and the family environment. A grandparent commented positively on the quality of communication and the welcoming atmosphere, reflecting the service's commitment to partnership working.

Entry procedures and parental involvement were well managed. Parents had access to playrooms, and the open-door approach helped maintain trust and transparency. This supported families to feel included and reassured about their child's experiences. One parent shared with us, "At pick up, we are invited into the nursery to pick up. It is lovely to be brought into the room where my child is playing and see how settled and relaxed, they are. Feedback is given daily when my child is in, what my child has been doing and playing with, as well as if my child has tried new foods."

Procedures for medication, accidents, and incidents were robust. Medication paperwork and storage were well organised, and accident and incident logs were completed accurately. Leaders maintained an overview of where incidents occurred, allowing them to identify patterns and take preventative action. Staff demonstrated strong knowledge of child protection procedures and acted confidently to safeguard children. Training records confirmed that staff had completed relevant safeguarding training, which supported them in keeping children safe.

Personal plans were in place for all children and were completed within the required 28-day timescale. Plans were developed with parents, signed and dated, and included clear targets and strategies to support children's development. Staff used observations effectively to link children's targets with planning and daily experiences, and children's progress was visible through their plans.

Mealtimes were calm, relaxed, and unhurried. Children were encouraged to be independent, serving their own food, pouring their own drinks, and clearing their own dishes. They were also involved in preparing snacks and choosing lunch options. Children ate well and enjoyed the social aspect of mealtimes, which supported their confidence and self-help skills.

Overall, children experienced nurturing, respectful, and well-planned care, supported by strong relationships, effective personal planning, and meaningful connections with families.

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

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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