

# Closeburn Nursery Day Care of Children

Closeburn Primary School  
Closeburn  
Thornhill  
DG3 5HP

Telephone: 01848 331 240

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
5 March 2026

**Service provided by:**  
Dumfries & Galloway Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003501

**Service no:**  
CS2003015477

## About the service

Closeburn Nursery is a daycare service for children provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council. The Head Teacher of Closeburn Primary School oversees the operation of the work of the nursery. The nursery is located in the rural village of Closeburn.

The nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 30 children aged two-years to those not yet attending primary school.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 3 March and Wednesday 4 March 2026, with feedback being given on Thursday 5 March 2026. 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
- received six completed questionnaires from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with staff and parents
- 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.

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.

**Key messages**

Children were cared for in a nurturing, safe and welcoming environment, where they were encouraged and supported to develop new skills and interests through enjoyable and meaningful experiences.

Staff knew children well and responded positively to their ideas and preferences, helping children feel secure, valued and supported in their learning.

Children arrived happily and engaged confidently in play, forming positive friendships and developing social skills such as sharing, turn-taking and kindness.

Positive steps were being taken to strengthen family engagement, with focused stay and play sessions supporting meaningful connections between home and the setting. Parents felt confident sharing information, and staff were approachable and available at key points in the day.

There was a strong culture of openness and continuous improvement. Staff and management actively welcomed feedback in a variety of ways, including coffee and chat events with parents. An evidence-based improvement plan was in place setting out how management and staff planned to improve experiences for children.

Children's health and safety were prioritised. Medication and allergy procedures were managed appropriately and all staff had completed child protection training and understood their safeguarding responsibilities.

The service had taken positive steps to improve the physical environment since the last inspection, including refreshed décor, with further planned improvements to windows and blinds to enhance children's comfort.

Children were actively supported to develop an early understanding of safety, taking shared responsibility for caring for their environment, which helped to build confidence, independence and a sense of belonging.

**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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	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

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 were being cared for in a nurturing, safe environment, where they were supported to develop new skills and interests within a fun, welcoming space. This aim was set out in a clear, vision, values and aims statement, which management and staff were developing in collaboration with parents and children. Consultation had taken place through surveys and group discussions, and staff were considering how this could be displayed meaningfully for children. Once complete, we would encourage staff to use the statement as part of ongoing self-evaluation to ensure their practice consistently reflects their shared values.

Quality assurance processes were becoming more established. A monitoring calendar had been introduced to support regular tasks such as personal plan reviews. Formal observation of staff practice had not yet been embedded, and the manager was exploring formats to support this. A focus on children's experiences was suggested as a beneficial approach.

The service demonstrated a positive culture of openness to suggestions and improvement. Staff and management actively sought feedback through stay and play sessions, coffee and chat events and informal conversations. Parents had begun contributing ideas more confidently, supporting collaborative improvement.

Self-evaluation was now a standing item at team meetings, alongside safeguarding. Staff described increasing confidence in using self-evaluation processes and were considering ways to involve children in evaluating the impact of changes. Staff reported feeling valued, supported and listened to, and were optimistic about further development under the new management team. They spoke openly about the importance of respectful, collaborative discussion, recognising that changes should be agreed collectively.

A range of tools, including national practice guidance such as Setting the Table, supported improvements to the environment and mealtime experiences. An improvement plan had been developed using evidence from self-evaluation, observations and national priorities. Progress was reviewed at staff meetings. Staff and management discussed making improvement work more visible to families through displays and interactive approaches, for example during parent events.

Staff wellbeing was monitored through regular wellbeing checks, enabling success to be recognised and challenges to be addressed. Action points sometimes included training opportunities, and staff felt well supported in accessing learning. A training calendar enabled management to monitor essential training, and staff took responsibility for reflecting on the impact of their learning on their practice.

New staff were supported through the national induction resource. Management acknowledged that a mentor system had not been in place for the most recently appointed staff but planned to implement this for future recruitment. Staff confirmed they worked collaboratively to support one another.

Parents told us "Nothing is too much trouble for the staff. They are always very welcoming and keen to engage with parents. Feedback is always welcomed".

**Children thrive and develop in quality spaces** 4 - Good

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 were cared for in a spacious, well-lit and well-ventilated environment. The setting was welcoming, safe and secure with effective procedures in place to manage access to the building, including visitor checks and sign-in arrangements.

We recognised that the building is older and requires ongoing maintenance. Since the last inspection, improvements had been made, including refreshed paintwork. Plans were in place for new windows and blinds, which staff advised were due to be installed over the Easter break. These improvements should further support comfort and temperature regulation, however this is an area which needs continued monitoring to minimise disruption to children's experiences. Parents told us, "the building needs work done to it that keeps getting postponed, it's a beautiful old building that needs the attention to repair it and keep it safe and usable".

Staff demonstrated a clear awareness of children's safety, remaining vigilant and supervising numbers within the setting. Risk assessments were being reviewed and updated, with all areas of the nursery considered. Discussions highlighted the importance of ensuring these remain current and meaningful, particularly for outings and visits.

Staff supported children to develop an early understanding of safety, with staff encouraging shared responsibility for keeping the environment safe, for example with the use of SIMOA the elephant and tidying up. This helped children feel confident and involved in caring for the nursery. Staff should continue to strengthen a balanced risk and benefit approach, ensuring that safety routines do not interrupt children's play. This will support children to enjoy their play whilst still being appropriately supported to manage risks.

Children had access to a wide range of materials and resources, both indoors and outside. Recent changes to staff deployment meant children could choose where to play. Staff offered a variety of activities, which children could choose to take part in, such as physical movement sessions. The layout of furnishings and resources had been reviewed and adapted to meet children's needs, enabling them to move confidently and purposefully through the environment and engage in complex play experiences.

The environment was being systematically reviewed using recognised rating scales, which led to improvements in layout, organisation and resourcing. Displays and signs were generally positioned at children's height and children were actively involved in creating these, supporting a sense of ownership and belonging.

The setting was clean, tidy and well-organised. Resources, including aprons and toys, were cleaned regularly. Children and staff demonstrated a good understanding of effective hand hygiene, with children confidently reminding one another of handwashing routines.

**Children play and learn** 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.

Children experienced a fun, nurturing and engaging environment where they moved around confidently, made friends and followed their interests through a wide range of play opportunities. Staff knew children

very well and used this knowledge to support their learning by responding positively to their ideas and preferences, although there were occasions where practice could be strengthened to deepen children's experiences and ensure greater consistency in planning, observation and recording.

Children had rich opportunities to develop language and literacy. Books were widely used, and children created and shared their own stories. Staff supported vocabulary development through conversation; however, at times interactions were directed by staff, limiting children's opportunities to express and extend their own thinking. Staff were developing confidence in using higher-order questioning, with scope for further use of open-ended questions to deepen learning.

Early numeracy experiences were developing, with children exploring counting, shapes and money within play, and this is an area which would benefit from further development. Whilst there were some opportunities for digital learning available these tended to be adult-led. Increasing child-led access to digital and STEM resources, supported by a champion role, would enhance problem-solving and investigative learning.

Children were creative and curious. They explored the outdoor area with interest, using natural materials, bikes, the mud kitchen and quieter spaces for activities like Bookbug. Children regularly explored their community, including visits to the orchard, and developed their knowledge of the natural world.

Children were learning important life and social skills. They played board games, practised turn-taking and were supported to talk about emotions. Staff encouraged empathy and supported discussions about similarities and differences. Resources such as the ThinkEqual programme would enhance this further.

Children involved staff in their play, and enjoyed imaginative activities like setting up a cinema, creating music and taking part in yoga. Staff responded promptly to children's needs and provided additional resources when required. Some children had great imaginations, and staff could help them develop their ideas even further by encouraging them to tell their stories.

Planning approaches were evolving. Staff were encouraged to slow the pace of learning to allow children to explore ideas in greater depth, as some activities moved on too quickly and were led by staff rather than children. Planning tools such as floor books and evaluation sheets were not used consistently and linking these, alongside mind maps, would better support continuity and progression. Learning stories captured children's experiences but varied in quality, although staff were able to describe children's development very well. Some observations lacked evaluative content, making it difficult to identify clear next steps. One-page profiles were not consistently informing planning, and links to personal care plans could be more explicit. Enhancing opportunities for children's and parents' voices within documentation would strengthen the stories.

Family engagement had been identified as an area for improvement by the setting. Stay and play sessions with a clear focus, like breadmaking and maths activities had been successful. Families were welcomed to share stories and skills, and these opportunities supported stronger connections between home and the setting. Parents told us, "We get the chance to interact with staff and we are very involved in the care and development of the children. I've been in to see my child in the nursery environment and my child is very comfortable with staff. My child is always keen to attend nursery and is full of enthusiasm when picked up".

**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.

Children were cared for by a friendly and attentive staff team who valued strong relationships with families. Staff understood the importance of partnership working from the earliest stages and recognised that positive relationships enabled them to support each child's needs. Children were comforted appropriately, approached staff with confidence and enjoyed affection, stories and reassurance.

Children arrived at nursery happily and were excited to play. They were forming friendships and developing social skills like sharing, turn-taking and kindness. Staff supported children to take responsibility for small tasks, such as helping with snack and tidying, which promoted their sense of belonging.

Independence was encouraged throughout daily routines. Children were supported to dress themselves, zip coats, use cutlery and develop skills like cutting fruit. Staff remained close by to offer help when needed. Staff were responsive to children's wellbeing, recognising when children were tired, unwell or in need of more active engagement and adapted routines accordingly.

Children were encouraged to communicate using words, and staff supported speech and language development through small group approaches. For some children, greater use of visual supports or signing would further enhance communication. Parents felt confident sharing information with staff who were available at drop-off and pick-up. Communication systems such as home diary links, care plan meetings and shared documentation were in place, although exploring more digital formats could strengthen continuity. Staff communicated effectively with external professionals, including health visitors, when this was required.

All children had personal plans containing required information. Staff were asked to ensure start dates were always included, reflecting legal requirements. Wellbeing indicators were used to identify support strategies, which should be clearly recorded within one-page profiles and updated following reviews. Staff understood children's needs well and could describe them confidently, though this information was not always consistently recorded. Stronger documentation would support continuity across the team.

Transitions into and out of the nursery were well managed and adapted to individual children. A buddy system supported transitions to school, and staff recognised the value of improved communication when children attended more than one setting.

Mealtimes were generally calm and sociable, with staffing sitting with children to support conversation, manners and dining skills. Food choices were healthy and some staff role-modelled good eating habits. However, staff could at times become task-focused, which meant interactions were interrupted and opportunities missed. Recent changes to lunchtime arrangements required further flexibility to ensure children did not feel rushed or limited in their choice to participate.

Medication procedures were appropriate, and staff ensured that allergies and dietary needs were managed safely. All staff had completed child protection training and understood their responsibilities in keeping children safe.

Parents told us, "I am so delighted with the care and support my child has received at Closeburn nursery. All of the staff are very approachable and supportive and work well together to support the needs of my child. Feedback is always listened to. My child is happy and safe"

## 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

The provider should ensure that information recorded about children is meaningful, used to support their wellbeing, learning and development, and is communicated effectively with parents and caregivers.

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

'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23)

and

'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27)

**This area for improvement was made on 14 March 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

The setting had developed their formats for gathering information about children so that it was meaningful and used by staff to support children's wellbeing, learning and development.

They now need to ensure that the different formats all link together so that recorded information is pulled together and supports staff more effectively e.g. information in care plans and learning targets should be pulled together on the one page profile so that it's easily accessible for adults caring for children.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's play and learning, management and staff should look at creating an environment that inspires children's imagination, curiosity and creativity. Also providing children with more developmentally appropriate opportunities to discover, explore, experiment and problem solve.

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

'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27)

and

'As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open ended and natural materials' (HSCS 1.31).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 March 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

The layout and provision of resources had improved so that children were using their imagination, were curious about the world and had opportunities to be creative.

Children were choosing from a wide variety of experiences and resources which supported their all round development and were supported to problem solve, share and negotiate by staff.

A variety of loose parts materials were available indoors and outdoors. Children went on walks out into the community and were able to choose to play outdoors.

#### Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's health, wellbeing and choice, the manager should develop arrangements to ensure all children can choose when they access outdoors. This should include a focus on a safe area to play with more exciting and challenging outdoor play experiences.

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

'As a child. I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment' (HSCS 1.32).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 March 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

The way staff were deployed across the nursery had been developed so that staff had responsibility for areas like numeracy and life skills, as well as different resourced areas in the nursery. This meant that a member of staff was deployed to the outdoor area every day, this enabled them to plan for the area and also ensured that children could choose to be outside or stay indoors as they wished.

#### Previous area for improvement 4

To protect children's health, wellbeing and safety needs, the provider should ensure children are cared for in a safe and hygienic environment by carrying out appropriate maintenance, repairs and cleaning.

This should include, but not be limited to:

- window frames;
- window sills;
- blinds; and
- holes in the walls.

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

'My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells' (HSCS 5.18)

and

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 March 2024.**

### Action taken since then

Since the last inspection, the setting had also had some issues with a leaky roof.

We were advised of plans to carry out remedial work like replacing the windows and new blinds. Survey work was carried out on the roof during our visit.

### Previous area for improvement 5

To ensure the quality of children's experiences are improved, the provider should implement robust quality assurance processes, including self-evaluation covering key areas of practice. This should include, but not be limited to, children's personal plans, children's play and learning experiences, staff practice, and monitoring of medication.

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19)

and

'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 March 2024.**

### Action taken since then

Quality assurance processes had been implemented. These included a monitoring calendar which supported the monitoring of different aspects of the service including children's personal plans and staff wellbeing. Self-evaluation was a focus area for staff meetings and they were actively looking at how parents and children could be more meaningfully involved in planning for improvement.

### Previous area for improvement 6

To ensure positive outcomes for children, management should monitor and review the deployment and positioning of staff with a focus on staff responsibilities, engagement and effective supervision.

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

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15)

and

'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 14 March 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

A significant amount of work and change had taken place since the last inspection, including changes in key roles and functions. The way staff were deployed and positioned in the nursery had been developed so that staff had responsibilities for day to day activities, as well as champion roles.

Staff worked together as a team, they communicated with one another both verbally during the session, through a communications book and online app.

We saw that staff were vigilant and responsive to children's needs and ensured that they were appropriately positioned and attentive throughout our visit.

## 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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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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