

# Kelloholm Nursery Day Care of Children

Kelloholm Primary School  
Hyslop Street  
Kelloholm  
Sanquhar  
DG4 6QJ

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
12 March 2026

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

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003501

**Service no:**  
CS2003015490

## About the service

Kelloholm Nursery is a day care of children service situated in the small rural village of Kelloholm. The service is provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 60 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 60 are aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school full time, with no more than 10 aged 2 to under 3.

The service operates from within Kelloholm Primary School. Children were cared for in two playrooms and had access to nappy changing facilities and toilets, the school gym hall and an enclosed outdoor play space from the larger playroom.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 10 March 2026, 11 March 2026 and feedback was given on 12 March 2026. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- received 13 completed questionnaires from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with the staff
- 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

The nursery is on a positive improvement journey. Reflective leadership, effective monitoring systems and improving staff confidence are helping to improve outcomes for children. With a clearer nursery specific vision, stronger parental involvement, and increased stability, the setting is well placed to continue building on its strengths.

Children received warm, nurturing care from staff who knew them well and supported them to feel safe, happy and confident. Relationships, routines and daily experiences were largely positive and supported children's wellbeing and development. Strengthening personal planning, ensuring greater consistency, and improving the balance of the day will further enhance children's experiences and ensure high-quality care for all.

Children are happy, engaged and enjoying their time in nursery. They benefit from warm relationships, choice in play, and opportunities for creativity, storytelling and active learning. To further improve outcomes, staff should focus on creating calmer learning environments, strengthening child centred planning, and ensuring that play experiences consistently support children's next steps in learning. With these improvements, children's play and learning experiences will be further enhanced.

## 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	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 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.

The nursery was supported by a vision, values and aims statement which was shared with the wider school. Plans were in place to review this, so the nursery has its own identity. Management had already identified that a clear nursery-specific vision would help everyone understand expectations and support ongoing improvement. Once reviewed the nursery's vision, values and aims should involve staff, parents and children. This will help strengthen shared expectations for children and families.

A monitoring calendar was in place, which supported managers and staff to regularly check the quality of care and learning throughout the year. This included reviewing children's personal plans, accidents and incidents, and key procedures. Management used this information well to improve children's experiences, for example by identifying patterns in accidents and making changes to the environment or providing additional support for individual children.

Staff were becoming more confident in using self-evaluation and reflecting on their own practice. They were well motivated by opportunities to visit other settings and were using these opportunities to think about how they could improve their own environment, including creating calmer spaces and supporting children's play. Staff had also used inspection reports and other recognised quality improvement tools to help them evaluate their practice.

An improvement plan was in place and linked well to the school's wider improvement priorities. Staff understood the key actions for them and their role in taking these forward. Management had reviewed a range of procedures and updated risk assessments, including new areas such as absconding and the playroom, and should also now include the other areas of the school being used.

Staff described feeling well supported by each other and told us that they were developing well as a team. This was positive given the number of recent staff changes. New staff received a structured induction based on the national framework, and this included support from a mentor. Regular well-being check-ins allowed staff to talk about their wellbeing and professional learning, and staff felt confident that their development was valued and supported. While staff accessed a wide range of training, there was no central record of training completed. Having an overview would help management ensure essential training is kept up to date.

Parents were warmly welcomed into the setting and had many opportunities to be involved. Staff regularly gathered parents' views, though this tended to be an informal process and opportunities for more formal feedback would strengthen parental involvement even more.

The management team, who were new in post, had made a strong start. They had a clear understanding of the nursery's strengths and areas for development and had put effective systems in place to support improvement.

## Children play and learn 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 clearly enjoying their time in nursery and were happy, confident and engaged in their play. They were able to choose where and how they played, both indoors and outdoors, and whether they played alone or with their friends. This supported children's independence and choice.

Children had a range of opportunities to develop skills across literacy, numeracy and creativity. The arts and crafts area was especially popular. Children proudly shared their Stickman creations and the house they had made from cardboard boxes. This activity had grown from a child's own idea, showing that staff valued children's interests and ideas. The role-play area was well used. Improvements to the home corner had created an attractive, homely space which encouraged imaginative play. Children enjoyed dressing up and playing together, helping to develop their social skills and confidence.

Opportunities to strengthen learning through play were not always fully developed. Staff did not consistently use the language of numeracy during everyday play, for example counting during physical activity. Literacy, numeracy and other curriculum areas were not always clearly planned for across all play spaces. The writing area would benefit from improvement. Resources were limited and activities were not always appropriate for children's age and stage. Using more playful approaches, such as name cards with photos, magnetic letters and name folders, would help maintain children's interest and support early writing skills. More purposeful use of provocations across all areas of the nursery would further enhance learning.

Group times were positive and engaging. Children confidently took part in songs and stories and were keen to remind adults of the correct words and actions. We also observed children independently using books and reading stories to their peers, showing a developing interest in books and storytelling. Outdoor play was very popular, particularly riding bikes. Children were active and confident in choosing to spend time outdoors.

In the 2 - 3 room, staff used interactions well to extend children's learning. For example, during water play they introduced language like "full", "empty" and colour names. Staff also responded well to children's enthusiasm, such as supporting counting when children showed interest in an abacus. Sensory play was strong in the 2 - 3 room but more limited in the 3- 5 room. Both areas would benefit from further development of sensory experiences to support children's engagement and emotional regulation.

Staff worked hard to gather observations of children's learning, and learning journals contained many examples of children's experiences. Staff interactions were sometimes task-focused rather than responding to how children were using the space or resources. Questioning to extend thinking was not consistent, and staff would benefit from further development in using higher-order questions during play. Planning and observations tended to be descriptive, rather than evaluating children's learning. Targets were sometimes unclear, too broad or not personalised to individual children. Smaller, realistic next steps would better support children's progress.

Staff would benefit from an overview system to help track children's progress across all areas of learning and ensure continuity and progression. Previously used tracking tools had supported this well, and changes made this year will need further review to ensure children's progress remains clear.

## Children are supported to achieve 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 happy, confident and settled on arrival at nursery. Staff knew the children very well and had developed warm, trusting relationships with both children and their families. Parents spoke positively about this, telling us that "staff are welcoming and approachable". Staff were observed to be nurturing, attentive and responsive. Children who were upset or finding it difficult to manage their emotions were comforted sensitively, until they felt settled. Children regularly received praise and encouragement, helping them to feel valued and confident. Interactions were kind, calm and respectful.

All children had personal care plans which were contained information from parents and carers. These were reviewed regularly, and support strategies were in place for children who needed additional help. Staff clearly knew the children well and understood their routines, preferences and needs. Although personal plans were detailed, some information was missing or not always consistent, for example not all children's additional needs or support strategies were clearly recorded. A new format had been introduced and we have suggested that a balance between both formats would help ensure key prompts and essential information are not lost. While many parents felt involved in reviewing their child's learning, feedback about the consistency of this was mixed. Reviews of targets were happening, and staff should ensure that all parents are up to date with their child's current progress and next steps.

Children were supported to develop independence. They were involved in everyday tasks like tidying up, choosing their lunch options and helping to prepare snack. Mealtimes in the 2 - 3 room were calm, welcoming and well organised, with staff positioned effectively to support children while encouraging independence. Snack times in the 3 - 5 room were generally calm, with children able to make choices and help themselves.

Personal care routines were carried out respectfully and with dignity. Staff asked children's permission before changing nappies or clothes, using calm voices and supporting children gently. Sleep routines for younger children were well managed, with children settled comfortable and supported sensitively when waking. Staff should continue to review the balance and pace of the day. We saw that some older children became tired as the day went on, which led to increased accidents. More effective use of quiet, restful spaces would benefit children, particularly those who need time to relax. Parents also told us that there were limited calm areas away from busy play spaces.

We noted that noise levels could become quite high at certain times, particularly during transitions. Staff should monitor this more closely and consider strategies to reduce noise, including the use of music at tidy-up times. Room temperature should also be monitored more consistently, particularly during quieter times such as lunch, when outdoor doors may affect warmth.

Medication procedures were mostly well managed, with regular audits completed. We advised that medication records should consistently include parent signatures at review points and where medication is not brought in regularly, this should be clearly recorded to avoid confusion.

Children had good opportunities to learn about the wider world. They benefited from visitors to the nursery, like the fire service, and from outings to places of interest. Children also took part in talk, listening and questioning activities which support communication and language development.

Relationships with parents were very strong. Families had many opportunities to be involved in nursery life

through initiatives like stay and play, PEEP and other opportunities provided by the lifelong learning team. Staff were particularly proud of their relationships with parents which supported them to get to know both the children and their family circumstances very well.

## 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 ensure that quality assurance processes impact positively on outcomes for children, they should be strengthened to become more robust, helping to identify and prioritise improvements needed.

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).

**This area for improvement was made on 19 March 2025.**

#### Action taken since then

Quality assurance processes have continued to be developed with a greater focus on outcomes for children.

A monitoring calendar was introduced and strengthened which is intended to systematically review all areas of the provision as it becomes more embedded into the routines of the nursery.

Self-evaluation is a regular item at staff meetings and staff are developing confidence as reflective practitioners and are taking more ownership of improvements in the nursery. All staff have had the opportunity to visit other settings and reflect on how they could improve children's experiences at Kelloholm. They have also taken part in an exercise looking at the inspection reports from other settings and evaluating these to see if they can identify the grade. As well as helping staff identify what could be better, these activities have also motivated staff and are supporting them to take ownership and leadership.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To improve the quality of children's experiences, staff should ensure that children are meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences. Children's choices should be promoted, and their learning and development should be extended through skilful staff interactions, invitations, and provocations to spark children's interests.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors' (HSCS 1.25).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 March 2024.**

## Action taken since then

Staff have continued to develop planning formats and their understanding of intentional and responsive planning methods.

Staff respond well to children and there is more evidence of experiences being planned based on child's voice, for example the Stickman activity.

The way staff are deployed around the nursery has been developed with staff taking responsibility for identified areas on a 2-week rota and this has helped them to plan experiences for children better.

Planning documentation has continued to be developed with staff considering the reasons for planning an activity, provocations and the skills children will develop.

Floorbooks tell the story of the activity and what children have done however evaluations are not consistently identifying further lines of development/next steps.

Staff are developing the way they question children, however, higher order thinking is not fully embedded in practice and should continue to be developed as this will support staff to extend and deepen children's learning.

Management are aware of the need to continue to embed the use of children's voice, provocations and skilled staff interactions and have plans to support this.

Staff are more open and keen to improve, realizing the need for change and will be on board with plans.

## Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure that children receive responsive care and support, management should make appropriate notifications to the Care Inspectorate when certain events take place. Management should refer to good practice guidance, "Records that all registered children and young people's care services must keep and guidance on notification" to identify events that require them to notify the Care Inspectorate.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: 'I benefit from different organisations working together and sharing information about me promptly where appropriate, and I understand how my privacy and confidentiality are respected' (HSCS 4.18).

**This area for improvement was made on 15 March 2024.**

## Action taken since then

A number of notifications have been received by Care Inspectorate since the last inspection and the current management team are fully aware of their responsibilities for notifying the Care Inspectorate of relevant events.

## 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	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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