

Inshes Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Inshes Road
Inverness
IV2 3RF

Telephone: 01463 725 920

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 February 2026

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2007144853

About the service

Inshes Primary School Nursery is operated by The Highland Council and is based in the grounds of Inshes Primary School, Inverness. Inshes Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 76 children aged from three years to primary school age.

The accommodation provided is within two main rooms with direct access to a spacious outdoor play area. The outdoor play area contains a range of loose parts and open ended resources which extend and enrich the children's imaginative play and learning experiences.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 February 2026 with feedback on Friday 13th February 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, 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
- Spoke with parents
- Received completed questionnaires from parents and staff
- Spoke with staff and management
- Assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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.

Key messages

- Children were happy, confident and having fun.
- Staff were very nurturing and caring towards children, who they knew well.
- Children enjoyed a lovely calming mealtime experience.
- Robust quality assurance practices were in place which supported the continuous improvement of the service.
- The management team had identified time to fully support the nursery setting which had resulted in positive changes.

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	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 settings work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of resources

The manager and staff fully engaged in the inspection process. They demonstrated their commitment to the service and were motivated to make improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children. This was highlighted by the improvements which had been put in place since the previous inspection. Children benefitted from a management and staff team who were committed to providing a quality service.

The nursery and out of school provision were an integral part of Inshes Primary School and shared the same vision, values and aims. These were clearly on display in the reception area and were shared with all families. The vision, values and aims were routinely reviewed with all stakeholders involved, to ensure that they were ambitious and focussed on improvements and positive outcomes for all. The vision of the service included "Inshes @20 will be a safe, happy place where everyone felt they belong and are able to do their best", the values were "kindness, respect, inclusion and being my best" while the aims stated "to achieve this we will: promote and champion our rights, value our differences, celebrate our achievements, and be ambitious and willing to give it a go". We were able to evidence that the vision, values and aims were embedded within the service and informed practice.

Since the previous inspection, the management and staff had continued to embed systems for self evaluation which secured improvement and positive outcomes for children and their families. Self evaluation was planned and purposeful with a clear improvement plan in place with identified, achievable priorities, for example improvements to the environment. The management actively included children, parents and staff in the self evaluation process.

Staff demonstrated the awareness of the importance of self evaluation to support the delivery of high quality care and learning tailored towards the needs of children. Staff advised that they felt actively involved in the ongoing evaluation and development of the service. They explained that the management team were very regular visitors to the playrooms, as well as operating an open door policy to staff, children and their families. Staff could share any feedback and suggestions they might have. During team meetings the manager and staff reflected on practice, discussed the continuous improvement of the service and progress in meeting identified action points, and securing progression and positive outcomes for children.

Parental engagement was an ongoing priority for the manager and staff and they routinely invited parents to provide feedback. They recognised the value of parental feedback and welcomed any suggestions as to how the service could be improved. As well as daily informal contact during drop off and pick up times, parents were invited to spend time in the nursery and share in their child's care and learning. Parents confirmed that there were opportunities for them to be involved in the development of the service and felt listened to.

Recruitment and induction followed clear, safe practices, in line with safer recruitment guidance. New staff benefitted from a structured induction. The management demonstrated a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the management of staffing and resources. Newer staff spoke positively about their induction and feeling part of the existing team.

Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff were positive about the service and felt supported by the management team. Staff engaged with the inspection process, demonstrating a positive attitude towards change and improvement. They were responsive to suggestions made during the inspection to continue to improve outcomes for children and families. Overall, staff were warm, supportive, and committed to meeting children's care needs. Parents were all complimentary about how friendly, approachable and caring the staff were.

Staff had completed core professional training including first aid, food safety, health and safety and infection prevention and control training. This training helped to support children's wellbeing and enhance staff knowledge. Staff had completed child protection awareness training and ensured that they attended refresher training on a regular basis. Staff commented positively about the child protection training and how it made them more confident in understanding how to keep children safe.

Following the previous inspection, an area for improvement was made in relation to staff deployment. Deployment of staff across the setting and throughout the day supported children to lead their play and engage in free flow opportunities whilst remaining safe. There was good communication between staff and there were arrangements in place to ensure that there were sufficient staff during busier times of the day to ensure the safety of children, including mealtimes and home time.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the settings work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children experience high quality spaces

Children were welcomed into a bright, inviting and engaging setting. Good use of soft furnishings, rugs and natural resources created a calm and homely space. The layout of the playrooms allowed children to freely move around indoors. Their artwork and photographs were displayed and they had access to their own space to store their personal items. The setting was visibly clean and well organised, with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. These details let children know that they were loved, valued and provided them with a sense of belonging.

Children very much led their play and were able to independently select resources. Indoor spaces were well organised and promoted independence and confidence. There was a good range of open-ended, real life, natural resources and loose parts in each of the playrooms. Opportunities to support and develop children's early literacy, language and numeracy skills were in evidence. Children were able to freely access material, choosing where and with whom to play. The different play areas offered a balance of quiet and creative experiences which reflected the children's interests. The displays of children's artwork celebrated their achievements. We discussed with the management team how they could continue to develop the space and the range of resources available to extend children's play and learning. Children attending the out of school care service were also able to freely access resources and activities. The children told us about the different activities both indoors and outdoors which they could choose from.

The safety and security of the children was a priority for the management and staff. Secure entry systems and close monitoring of visitors by staff contributed to children remaining safe. There were appropriate risk assessments and daily checks were completed which enabled children to explore freely in a safe environment, promoting confidence and wellbeing. Tools such as updated registers and regular headcounts helped children to move safely around the setting.

All children and families' personal information was stored securely within each of the playrooms. There were locked cupboards available in each of the rooms and the office. This ensured confidentiality was maintained and complied with best practice guidance.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the settings work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Quality indicator: Play, learning, and developing

Children in each of the playrooms were busy and having fun as they played both indoors and outdoors. The environment and experiences sparked children's interests and enriched their play and learning across the day. Children were observed being engaged, happy and motivated as they confidently explored the various play experiences which were developmentally appropriate and reflected their current interests. The pace of the session was unhurried and we saw children confidently leading their own play and learning. For the majority of the time, children benefitted from uninterrupted play, allowing them to be engaged in their play in a purposeful and meaningful way.

Staff confidently used a range of effective language strategies for example, open-ended questions and conversations that encouraged children to think, predict and explore possibilities. They naturally got down to the children's level, showed interest and enthusiasm, gave praise and celebrated children's achievements. For example, staff engaged in the children's role play activities in the home corner, actively took part in a singing and musical activity, while others supported a messy play activity. This encouraged and extended imaginative play, creativity and emerging communication skills. However we identified some missed opportunities when skilled interactions and effective questioning could have further extended curiosity, problem-solving skills and promote development of imagination. This was evident during outdoor play when staff tended to be more task focussed and more supervisory.

Children had the opportunity to be curious, use their imaginations and develop literacy and numeracy skills. Literacy and numeracy were embedded across the service and evident across the day in each of the playrooms. The children were engaged in a range of activities and experiences including mark making, construction, role play, sand and water play. Children were engaged as staff read books of the children's choosing.

Staff had completed floor book training and discussed the positive impact this had had on supporting meaningful planning and how to involve the children. Floor books were being used effectively to capture children's voices, ideas, and spontaneous planning. Staff explained that they were currently reviewing and evaluating floor books as part of the ongoing self evaluation of the service.

Each child in the nursery had their own learning journey folder which was available to their parents to look at any time helping parents to stay connected to their child's experiences, learning and development. Parents were also encouraged to share achievements from home which were celebrated with the children. Children were eager to share their folders with us and proudly told us about what they had been doing in the photographs. Folders did not always contain written observations and evaluations of children's progression and achievements were not always clearly recorded. The management explained work was ongoing to improve how they monitor and track children's learning and progression which in turn would improve planning.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the settings work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

Children and their families all received a warm welcome when they arrived. Children were happy and settled in the setting. They received caring, nurturing and responsive care from staff which helped them to feel safe and secure. Staff knew the children well and recognised their cues and responded sensitively, providing comfort, cuddles and reassurance when needed. We observed positive interactions, and appropriate cuddles and comfort offered when needed. Parents we spoke with were complimentary of the staff team in both the nursery and the out of school care provision and described them as friendly, kind and caring. Comments made included: "Staff are absolutely amazing and know my son well. They show great care towards him" and "staff are all fantastic".

The management and staff recognised the importance of establishing strong and effective connections with families and the impact this had on outcomes for children. Positive working relationships with parents promoted and supported good communication and information sharing which in turn supported consistency and continuity of care for children. We observed parents being welcomed into the playrooms during drop off and pick ups and being provided with good levels of feedback about their child's day. The parents appreciated being able to go into their child's playroom and being able to see the range of activities their child could take part in. Parents of children attending breakfast and/or afterschool care were also met with welcoming and friendly staff who took time to provide feedback.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning approaches. As part of the inspection, we looked at a random selection of personal plans for children attending the nursery and the out of school provision. All children had personal care plans which set out how the staff would meet their individual health, wellbeing and safety needs. Staff were able to confidently discuss the care and support needs of the individual children in their care. This resulted in children receiving consistent care and being effectively supported to reach their full potential. Parents advised that they were involved in the development and review of their child's personal care plan.

Snacks and mealtimes were positive, social experiences. They were relaxed and unhurried, allowing children to enjoy eating and chatting with friends. Children were provided with home cooked lunches which took account of children's allergies and dietary requirements. Independence was promoted as children helped to prepare snack, collected their plates and self served their food, giving them a sense of responsibility and ownership of routines. Staff sat with the children which provided opportunities to form and maintain relationships, and support the development of language, communication and social skills. Fresh water was available to the children throughout the session and they were encouraged to keep hydrated.

Staff understood the importance of supporting transitions, whether starting nursery, moving to school or during daily routines. Transitions were child led, responsive and supportive. Staff worked with parents to understand preferences and needs. Settling in visits were flexible and informal. New children were provided with a timetable of settling in sessions which was specific to them and which went at a pace which was right for them.

Medication processes were in place that supported staff with the safe administration of medication. Forms were in place which gathered appropriate information with parent signatures and dates. Medication was stored in line with good practice guidance, ensuring it was secure but accessible. Regular audits and reviews were completed to ensure that records were up to date. This meant staff had the information they needed to promote children's health and safety.

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 support children's wellbeing and promote the continued development and improvement of the service, the manager should ensure robust quality assurance systems are in place.

This should include but is not limited to:

a) Auditing all children's information recorded, including medication information, accidents and incidents ensuring this corresponds between recording formats.

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 13 June 2024.

Action taken since then

As part of the inspection we looked at the systems in place in relation to quality assurance and self evaluation. There was an established system of quality assurance which included the monitoring and auditing of personal plans, auditing of medication, accident and incident records, the review of the environment and resources available to enhance and enrich children's playing, learning and development, and observations and monitoring of practice.

For more information, please refer to the recording under Quality Indicator - Leadership and management of staff and resources.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children are safe and receive high quality experiences at all times, the provider and manager should further review and make appropriate changes to staff deployment to improve experiences for children.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes'.
(HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 13 June 2024.

Action taken since then

The deployment of staff was well managed to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with the children throughout the day. Staffing levels allowed for children to make full use of the different areas across the setting whilst still being appropriately supervised. During busier times of the day, for example mealtimes and home time, routines had been established which promoted children's safety.

For more information, please refer to the recording under Quality Indicator - Leadership and management of staff and resources.

This area for improvement has been met.

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

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Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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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