

Rothestay Primary Pre Five Unit Day Care of Children

Rothestay Campus
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Type of inspection:
Announced

Completed on:
11 June 2026

Service provided by:
Argyll and Bute Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003373

Service no:
CS2007157142

About the service

Rothestay Primary Pre Five Unit is based within Rothestay Joint Campus. The service is situated within the rural community in Rothestay on the Isle of Bute and the provider is Argyll and Bute Council.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 98 children not yet attending primary school at any one time:

- no more than 6 are aged under 2 years
- no more than 20 are aged 2 years to under 3 years and;
- no more than 72 are aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school full time.

Adult: child ratios will be a minimum of:

- Under 2 years - 1:3
- 2 years to under 3 years - 1:5
- 3 years and over - 1:8 if the children attend more than 4 hours per day, or
- 1:10 if the children attend for less than 4 hours per day.

About the inspection

This was an announced inspection carried out on 9, 10, 11 June 2026, alongside our HMIE colleagues. Two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate conducted the inspection. In preparation, we reviewed a range of information about the service, including previous inspection findings, registration details, documentation submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the previous inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- gathered feedback from families through online questionnaires
- spoke with families
- spoke with staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

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, families and staff contributed meaningfully and there was a strong emphasis on relationships and community involvement.
- A rich balance of child-led and adult-led experiences supported early literacy, numeracy and language.
- Children experienced consistent, kind and responsive care.
- Detailed care plans supported children's health, wellbeing and safety.
- Mealtimes were calm, inclusive and promoted independence.
- Leadership and staff demonstrated increasing confidence and commitment, which improved outcomes for children and families.
- To sustain positive outcomes for children and families, the provider should ensure that management changes and improvements are consistently monitored and embedded to promote consistency in practice
- The under-three provision would benefit from more focused time for observation, planning and reflection.

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	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

Quality Indicator: leadership and management of staff and resources.

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.

Since the last inspection, the staff and management team have worked purposefully to develop a service that delivers improved outcomes for children, families, partners and the wider community. Following the appointment of the new head teacher, and the current management team, staff and families have collaborated to review and reflect on the vision, values and aims as part of a campus-wide initiative, with a strong focus on fostering positive relationships. We found that the core values of kindness, respect, resilience, creativity and ownership were now underpinning practice. This process ensured that the voices and aspirations of children, families and the wider staff team were represented.

We reflected on recent management changes, particularly over the previous year. We recognised that the nursery had not experienced consistent, high-quality leadership for some time; however, changes implemented following the last inspection have supported the service to progress, develop and improve outcomes for children and families. We also acknowledge the resilience and commitment demonstrated by the staff team and it was evident that self-evaluation has been a key focus.

The current management team has developed a range of policies and procedures to support high-quality practice and improved outcomes for children. These approaches, alongside strong leadership and robust monitoring, has supported the service to begin embedding a more consistent, high-quality practice across the setting.

Although we were unable to fully assess the leadership changes planned for August, we noted clear motivation, commitment and dedication within the team. Staff spoke positively about recent room changes, roles and expectations, and demonstrated pride in leadership responsibilities such as literacy, numeracy, community links, outdoor learning, health and wellbeing. While the support provided to staff has had a positive impact on practice, morale and outcomes for children, we discussed with management and the provider to remain mindful of the pace of change and how new expectations are introduced. The team demonstrated considerable resilience, and it remains important to consider their wellbeing as further developments progress.

While we identified clear progress, further development is required. A sustained period of stability across the management structure would help to ensure that improvements become fully embedded and consistently support positive outcomes for children, families and staff. (See area for improvement 1)

Staff accessed a range of training opportunities, which supported improvements in both staff practice and outcomes for children. This included floor book training, planning, Realising the Ambition training, first aid and child protection. We advised management to continue providing both formal and informal opportunities for staff to engage in self-evaluation discussions. This will strengthen staff understanding of the process, increase their contribution to decision-making and develop a stronger sense of ownership in driving continuous improvement.

The under-three department would benefit from further support, reflection and training, including opportunities to plan, observe and document children's learning, and support to provide appropriate experiences. Embedding these approaches would help foster a culture of reflection and collaboration, ultimately enhancing outcomes for children.

The staff team have been in post for some time and were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The service developed an in-house induction programme aligned with the National Induction Resource. Almost all staff reported that their wellbeing was supported through regular check-ins and professional reviews. This contributed to a positive staff culture, maintained morale and supported a confident and motivated team.

To further support the staff team, we asked management to identify a dedicated space for staff to store belongings and take breaks. Staff would benefit from a space they could call their own, with opportunities to display best practice materials, access notice boards of interest and rest, relax and refresh during breaks. This would support team cohesion and promote staff wellbeing.

Areas for improvement

1. To support improved outcomes for children, families and staff, the provider should ensure continued stability and consistency within the management structure to support the effective implementation and embedding of improvements across the service.

In addition, the management team should prioritise the development of the under three provisions by strengthening staff skills, knowledge and professional learning. This will support staff to deliver more consistent, high-quality experiences and better meet the individual learning and care needs of younger children, leading to more positive and sustained outcomes.

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

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Play 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.

Throughout the inspection, we observed that children were happy, confident and, in most cases, engaged well in their play. They played cooperatively with their peers and demonstrated their ability to lead their own play and learning. Children showed strong social skills as they formed friendships and worked effectively in small groups. Staff interactions had a positive impact on outcomes. Staff offered praise and encouragement, played alongside children when appropriate, and stepped back when children benefited from leading their own play.

Staff responded sensitively to children's cues using a range of approaches, including technology, visual aids, the picture exchange communication system (PECS) and objects of reference. They implemented tailored strategies to enhance children's communication skills and support regulation. For example, staff used mirrors during interactions to support children's awareness and engagement. These approaches emphasised the importance of natural interactions in children's daily experiences, making language and learning engaging and meaningful. As a result, children demonstrated increased responsibility, independence and confidence in their play.

Children benefited from a broad range of high-quality experiences and resources that supported their curiosity, creativity, sensory exploration and imaginative play. Staff provided a balanced mix of child-led and adult-led experiences that promoted early language, literacy and numeracy. Interest tables with natural and open-ended materials, messy play using shaving foam, block play, arts and crafts, water play and mark-making opportunities enabled children to develop their own ideas, skills and stories.

Children accessed a wide variety of storybooks, including fiction and non-fiction books, alongside newspapers. Staff regularly read with children and used props to strengthen language development, boost imagination and deepen engagement.

Outdoor play formed a key part of children's daily experiences and made a significant contribution to their physical, social and cognitive development. Staff planned the outdoor area to promote imagination, physical skills, literacy and numeracy. For example, children used bikes, engaged in mark-making at the bird area using twigs, explored the construction area with tyres, tubes and bricks, and played in the mud kitchen and with water. Staff provided appropriate supervision and encouragement, enabling children to challenge themselves safely, develop problem-solving skills and work collaboratively.

Children aged 3-5 years moved independently between indoor and outdoor spaces. They put on and removed their all-weather suits and boots with minimal support. Staff supported and encouraged children under three years of age to access outdoor play throughout the day. This autonomy supported children's physical wellbeing, confidence and decision-making skills.

A planning system was in place, and staff explained that it remained a working progress. At the time of inspection, staff had not yet fully embedded the approach in relation to progression, depth and tracking of children's learning. We encouraged staff to continue developing these processes to ensure planning clearly reflects individual children's interests and identified next steps.

The environment celebrated children's successes through a range of attractive wall displays throughout the setting. We observed that families shared achievements from home, which staff proudly displayed within the centre. These displays demonstrated that staff valued children's wider experiences and achievements, helping to build confidence, self-esteem and a sense of pride. They also reflected a strong partnership with families and supported children to feel recognised and celebrated within the setting.

The service maintained strong links with the wider community through weekly visits to Thomson Court. Children of all ages had opportunities to develop relationships with residents and participate in shared experiences, such as playing games and having lunch together. We found these interactions to be meaningful and enjoyable for both children and residents. Monthly nursery news broadcasts were creative and informative, enhancing children's skills in presenting, listening and talking, and enabling them to share their achievements with the wider community. The children's passion and dedication had been recognised and celebrated, including recognition from the broadcaster Anne McAlpine and The Hebridean Baker to acknowledge their success.

Staff undertook leadership roles, which supported them to progress their improvement journey, develop confidence in their roles and document children's progress in play, learning and development. Although some staff demonstrated greater confidence than others in recording processes, we identified very good evidence across mini floor books, floor books, and literacy and numeracy tracking tools. These strengths should now be shared across the team to support greater consistency in documenting, tracking and evaluating children's play and learning.

We identified that staff in the under-three department would benefit from dedicated time away from the floor to review, reflect, plan and document play and learning. This would support more effective observation and planning processes. We also found that the environment would benefit from enhancing cosy, comfortable areas where staff could sit with children for nurturing interactions and provide appropriate seating to support staff during mealtimes and when carrying out observations.

Children are supported to achieve **5 - Very Good**

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support.

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.

All children experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care from staff, which helped them feel welcomed and valued within the setting. Staff consistently demonstrated kindness, care and respect, creating an environment where children felt safe, secure and included.

Staff knew the children well and spoke confidently about their personalities, interests and individual needs. This strong understanding supported positive relationships and promoted a clear sense of belonging for children. We found that the leadership team, senior staff and wider staff group had worked effectively to create a warm and welcoming environment. This was evident in the well-considered spaces designed to engage and invite children to play and learn. We encouraged the team to continue developing these approaches.

We observed that staff warmly welcomed families during drop-off and collection times, providing valuable opportunities for communication and relationship-building. Families shared highly positive feedback about the service, reflecting the inclusive ethos and strong partnerships in place. One parent shared, "My child has recently moved here, and I feel she/he is accepted and included. This nursery is amazing, and I could talk about it all day." This feedback reflects the positive ethos within the setting, where families feel included and well-informed about their child's day. Staff communicated effectively with families through an online platform, sharing meaningful information about both care and learning.

In the baby room, staff provided detailed daily updates on children's routines, including personal care and sleep. Learning journals and online app 'Seesaw' offered families valuable insight into children's experiences and progress. This consistent sharing of information helped families feel informed and reassured and strengthened continuity of care between home and the setting.

Staff supported children in the under-three provision, but we identified that further reflection would strengthen staff confidence in planning and delivering age-appropriate experiences.

While staff engaged positively with children, we observed occasions where more sustained interactions would have further extended children's play and learning. Ongoing professional development and dedicated planning time would support staff to observe, respond to and build more effectively on children's interests.

Mealtimes across the service were calm, relaxed and enjoyable. The separate dining space provided a quieter environment for children to eat and socialise. Children experienced choice developed independence and received appropriate support from staff. Menus aligned with Setting the Table guidance and supported a balanced dining experience. We observed nurturing and meaningful interactions during mealtimes, including sensitive support for individual children which enhanced engagement and reassurance.

Staff carried out personal care routines, including nappy changing, with dignity and respect. They offered praise and reassurance, which helped children feel secure and cared for. Care plans were in place for all children, and staff gathered detailed information to support children's health, welfare and safety. We identified particularly strong practice in supporting children with additional needs, including the use of clear, individualised guidance such as 'I can't stand' statements. Risk assessments for individual children further demonstrated staff's commitment to meeting children's needs.

We recognised the significant work undertaken to develop detailed and informative care plans. These supported staff understanding and contributed to consistent, high-quality care across the service.

Staff supported children appropriately during rest and sleep times. Children slept in suitable environments with appropriate bedding and comfort items. Staff maintained effective supervision and implemented robust monitoring systems to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

Staff completed accident and incident records appropriately and shared this information with families. Documentation processes were clear, including guidance provided to parents following head injuries. Monthly audits were in place; however, these would have benefited from greater analysis. For example, staff could have strengthened oversight by using visual tools to identify patterns and trends, particularly in outdoor accidents. Developing this process would support more effective risk management and targeted improvements.

Transitions within the service were well planned and supported. Children moving between playrooms and into school experienced continuity of care due to effective communication between staff and families. Staff shared detailed information about children's routines, interests and additional support needs, which helped children feel secure in new environments. During the inspection, we observed children transitioning to school confidently and with enthusiasm. Strong partnership working supported children to feel prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Management and staff demonstrated a strong understanding of their families and actively encouraged their involvement. They offered a range of opportunities for engagement, including enrolment visits, stay-and-play sessions, parents' evenings and graduation events. Staff described an open-door approach and used families' skills and experiences to enhance children's learning. For example, families shared knowledge from their own experiences, which enriched children's learning through real-life contexts. This inclusive approach strengthened partnerships and supported children's sense of belonging.

We suggested that management consider extending opportunities for families to access the 3-5 room at collection times. This would further enhance communication and provide families with greater insight into their child's experiences and learning.

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 manager and staff should streamline information gathered to ensure individualised personal plans and all about me are sufficiently detailed and completed accurately. This should include but not be limited to identified next steps in learning with focused targets and strategies that are clear and concise for all staff to follow to support children's health, welfare, and safety needs as well as play and learning targets.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices'. (HSCS 1.15)

This area for improvement was made on 13 March 2025.

Action taken since then

Care plans were in place for all children, and staff gathered key information to support children's health, welfare and safety needs. There was additional documentation available for some children, particularly in relation to meeting the needs of those with additional support needs. Staff were able to identify and track children's next steps in play and learning; we would encourage the continuation of this monitoring to ensure it remains consistently appropriate to each child's age and stage of development.

Risk assessments were also in place for children who required additional support, further demonstrating the commitment of staff in meeting individual needs.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children to achieve their full potential the manager and staff should review the current planning cycle to include high quality observations and next steps, with a focus on children's developmental stages. This will ensure that children are supported to lead their own play and learning that is tailored to their individual abilities and needs. This should include, but not be limited to, high quality observations, meaningful next steps, and evidence of progression in learning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: '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 to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27) and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19)

This area for improvement was made on 13 March 2025.

Action taken since then

During inspection a planning system was in place, and staff explained that it remained a working progress. At the time of inspection, the approach was still being imbedded in terms of progression, depth, and tracking of children’s learning. We would encourage staff to continue developing these processes to ensure planning continues to clearly reflect individual children’s interests and identified next steps. Children benefited from a broad range of high-quality experiences and resources that supported their curiosity, creativity, sensory exploration, and imaginative play. Staff provided a balanced mix of child-led and adult-led experiences that promoted early language, literacy, and numeracy.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure the service continues to grow, develop and deliver best outcomes. The provider should have an active supportive role in supporting and effectively managing the leadership team to sustain and maximise the best outcomes for children, families and staff.

This is to ensure that management and leadership is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed (HSCS 4.23) and I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources. (HSCS 4.27).....

This area for improvement was made on 13 March 2025.

Action taken since then

We reflected on recent management changes, particularly over the past year. We recognised that the nursery had not experienced consistent, high-quality leadership for some time; however, the changes implemented following the last inspection supported the service to progress, develop and improve outcomes for children and families.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To ensure positive outcomes for children management should monitor and review the deployment and positioning of staff with a focus on staff responsibilities, engagement, staff practice including quality of experiences and resources.

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

This area for improvement was made on 13 March 2025.

Action taken since then

Management have supported and monitored the staff team, and we recognise the resilience and commitment demonstrated by the staff. It was evident that self-evaluation had been a key focus. Staff spoke positively about recent room changes, roles and expectations, and demonstrated pride in leadership responsibilities such as literacy, numeracy, community links, outdoor learning and health and wellbeing.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

To improve better outcomes for children. Management should develop and implement robust quality assurance systems with a focus on, monitoring children's personal plans, children's experiences, monitoring of staff practice and evaluating and improving the nursery.

This is to ensure that management and leadership is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards that state; '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 March 2025.

Action taken since then

The current management team had developed a range of policies and procedures to support high-quality practice and improved outcomes for children. These processes, alongside strong leadership and robust monitoring, has supported and beginning to imbed consistent high-quality practice across the setting.

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

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	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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