

Fair Isle Pre-School Day Care of Children

Fair Isle Primary School
Fair Isle
Shetland
ZE2 9JU

Telephone: 01595 760 254

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
27 November 2025

Service provided by:
Shetland Islands Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002063

Service no:
CS2003016124

About the service

Fair Isle Pre-School is a daycare of children service. It is registered to provide care to a maximum of six children from two years to those not yet attending primary school.

Care is provided in a designated pre-school room within Fair Isle primary school with shared use of the community hall and outside play area.

About the inspection

This was an announced virtual inspection which took place between 26 November 2025 between 15:30 and 16:30 and 27 November 2025 between 09:00 and 15:15. 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 throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received three 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.

During this inspection, we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- There was an ethos of continuous improvement within the setting, supporting positive outcomes and experiences for children.
- Quality assurance of the service was effective to support children's safety and care.
- Children were very well supported and cared for by kind, caring and attentive staff who were attuned to their needs.
- Children were happy, relaxed and confident in the setting.
- Children were learning and making progress through well planned experiences.
- Children's play and learning was enhanced through strong connections to the local community and wider world.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

The manager and practitioner worked together to ensure a positive culture within the setting. Children and families had been involved in creating a shared vision and values which included "providing a nurturing, supportive community where all children are encouraged to fulfil their potential". These were reflected in the caring ethos of staff and in the positive learning experiences for children.

The service recognised the importance of working with children and families to support positive change and improvement. Children's views were sought on aspects of the service through daily discussions and more formally through floorbooks and the children's committee, Fair Isle Voice Experts (FIVE). This provided the opportunity to meet with leaders and share their thoughts and ideas including the purchase of new resources. This demonstrated to children that their opinions mattered and provided a sense of ownership within the setting.

Feedback from parents indicated they felt valued and included which strengthened partnerships and promoted a shared approach to improvement. A parent commented: "We can express our views and we are always heard and have good open discussions on all topics" and "We are constantly asked our opinions and to be involved to make the service better for my child."

There was an ethos of continuous improvement within the setting, supporting positive outcomes and experiences for children. A clear and manageable improvement plan was in place. Recent improvements included changes to the environment, transitions and daily routines, and a new planning template had been developed. National guidance and good practice documents were used to inform the self-evaluation of the service. This helped staff to provide care which was based on most recent research and guidance.

Quality assurance of the service was effective to support children's safety and care. Regular meetings promoted effective communication and provided opportunities to talk about achievements and discuss children's needs or next steps. The manager and practitioner undertook regular training to ensure that their skills continued to develop. They reflected together on training undertaken and evaluated how it could be used to impact positively on outcomes for children.

Children's wellbeing was supported through safe recruitment and an effective staff induction which aligned with the Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare: National Induction Resource. Staff were registered with the appropriate regulatory bodies. They spoke positively about the manager's openness and accessibility. As a result, staff felt valued and confident in their roles which contributed to a strong, collaborative culture and consistent quality experiences for children.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children were having fun and were engaged in a range of play opportunities whilst leading their own learning. These included small world play, sensory play at the water tray and creating puppets. As a result, children were engaged in a variety of quality experiences for prolonged periods of time.

Children enjoyed a well-resourced playroom with a range of good quality toys and materials. Indoor spaces were designed to empower children to actively engage in play and learning, with opportunities for exploration and creativity. For example, small world and construction areas supported children's problem solving and imaginative play and were resourced with a range of items relevant to children's current interest in vehicles. Outdoor areas included a mud kitchen and climbing frame. These provided further opportunities for exploration and sensory experiences, as well as developing physical skills and managing risks. Parents contacted felt their children were always involved in a range of fun experiences that met their individual needs and development. A parent commented: "The nursery is amazing in the variety of opportunities and fun experiences the children can get up to. They have a huge range of ever changing activities and different role play scenarios. They get to be outdoors and with the other children in the school which my child loves."

Children were supported by skilful staff interactions during play which demonstrated strong language and communication skills to model vocabulary and extend their understanding through high quality learning experiences. Skilled approaches such as wondering, commenting, and explaining helped foster curiosity and enriched learning. Praise was used effectively to recognise success and build confidence, enabling children to take next steps. This promoted problem solving, communication and social development, contributing positively to children's progress.

Opportunities for developing language, literacy and numeracy were embedded throughout. Early literacy was promoted through singing and pre-writing experiences. Staff made stories engaging and fun, promoting a love of reading. Numeracy-rich conversations and experiences supported children's understanding of number recognition, quantities and sequences. As a result, children were supported to develop key language, literacy and numeracy skills through their play experiences.

Children's learning and development benefited from encouragement to engage with digital technology. For example, children used recordable pegs to capture their voice and describe work they had built or created. Weekly online sessions with another island setting also provided valuable opportunities for social interaction and collaborative learning.

Planning approaches supported a balance of spontaneous and planned learning. Children's learning, achievements and next steps to support further learning were recorded in learning story books with supporting photographs. We discussed ways in which the recording of learning observations could be improved. For example, to ensure skills and learning were consistently recorded. The manager agreed this was an area of ongoing development.

Play and learning were enriched through meaningful links with the local community and the wider world. Experiences included walking to the local shop to purchase snacks, gardening, caring for the environment, taking part in a charity fundraising walk and selling crafts to tourists visiting the island. These experiences supported children to build valuable connections and promoted their sense of belonging.

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.

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to support their wellbeing. Staff knew the needs of children well and were responsive to their cues and requests. Families commented positively on the relationships that their children had developed with staff. A child commented, "It's good, I like going to nursery". A parent commented, "I feel we have a very strong link with the staff". This contributed to children feeling secure and developing positive attachments.

Transitions between home and nursery were flexible and supportive. Staff worked with parents to understand children's preferences and needs. Settling in visits were flexible and tailored to children's individual needs. This helped children feel safe, secure and confident during any changes.

Children's wellbeing was supported through personal plans developed collaboratively with families and reviewed regularly. These plans contained information enabling staff to meet individual needs effectively.

Children experienced positive snack time routines that were relaxed, unhurried and sociable. Staff valued the opportunity to connect with children through conversations while sitting at the table. Children were supported to develop their independence and life skills by opportunities to prepare and self-serve their snacks. Water was available throughout the day to ensure children remained hydrated.

Children's dignity and privacy benefited from staff who supported children discreetly with personal care. Handwashing before eating was well supervised, promoting good hygiene. This helped keep children safe and well.

Strong family connections positively influenced children's experiences. Staff maintained strong connections with families through events, consultations and daily conversations. Initiatives such as Bookbug, stay and play and community activities fostered a welcoming and inclusive environment. A parent commented: "At the beginning and end of each session we feel welcome to openly discuss my child's care, play and learning. We have also had a stay and play session so we got to be around longer and see more of what they get up to."

Parents were kept well-informed by a social media page, in addition to the online blog. A parent shared, "The WhatsApp group makes us feel really involved in our child's learning. This helps when speaking with our child about nursery". These approaches supported families to feel valued and included and fostered strong, collaborative relationships with families.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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