

Thistle Grove Nursery Class

Day Care of Children

Collin Primary School
Collin
Dumfries
DG1 4JE

Telephone: 01387 750 227

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 June 2025

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2007158445

About the service

Thistle Grove Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 16 children aged from 2 years to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery is based in Collin Primary School, where they have a small playroom and an extensive and well-resourced outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th June 2025. Feedback was given on Thursday 5th June 2025. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate Early Learning and Childcare team.

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:

- spoke with children using the service and their families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents including children's personal records, improvement plans and planning documentation.

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

- Confident, happy children being cared for by a friendly and respectful staff team.
- A wide variety of play and learning opportunities which supported children to develop as confident individuals, learning new skills and interests.
- A well-resourced outdoor area where children could enjoy being active outdoors, digging and climbing trees as well as exploring their natural world.
- Dedicated management team who have a clear vision for the setting and are keen to develop an inclusive, supportive and interesting environment for children and their families.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children were cared for by a friendly, caring and kind staff team. Staff knew the children very well and supported them sensitively and with respect. Children were praised and their achievements were celebrated, both in the setting and from their wider world. Children were learning to be aware of their emotions and to self-regulate. They had formed friendships with one another and strong attachments to permanent members of the staff team. This meant that children were secure and confident in the setting, able to learn and have fun.

All children had personal plans and learning stories which were threaded together to tell the story of how each child was developing and show adults how to support them effectively. Comprehensive information was gathered from parents from the outset and this was updated as appropriate. Parents confirmed that "We have regular meetings where we discuss my child's learning and development. The nursery have an open door policy and are always available to talk to." Parents were able to take children's folders home to share with other family members and received information on an online app. Parents told us that "Since the introduction of the app I feel the communication with photos has been far better to see what the children have been up to".

Children, parents and family had opportunities to share in the life of the setting. Parents confirmed that "The nursery set up lots of set stay and play type sessions but also make it very clear that parents can come in any time to visit the setting." Children's folders contained a section confirming these opportunities. Currently parents met staff at the gate rather than coming in every day. Staff had identified this was an area for improvement and were actively looking at how they could enable children's carers to be in the setting each day.

Children enjoyed a variety of nutritious and tasty snacks and meals. Staff joined children at mealtimes, encouraging them in conversation and role modelling good habits. Children made choices and developed skills like independence and how to use cutlery. Children could have as much to eat as they needed and staff encouraged children to try new and different foods. We discussed the different areas for improvement which staff had identified and agreed that their plans would lead to an even more enjoyable experience for children.

There were no children on medication during this inspection. We found that appropriate procedures were in place and suggested that it would be helpful to review these using the most recently published guidance.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun as they developed new skills and interests. Staff engaged well with children and respected their right to play, clearly understanding that this is how children learn best. Children were curious about the world around them and we heard staff using the language of wonder to support and encourage them to explore and experiment within their environment.

All children had learning story folders and we saw that these had been developing so that they now effectively showed how children had progressed and what their next steps in learning were. Folders were accessible to the children, who shared their learning with us and confidently told us about what they had been doing at nursery. New planning processes had been introduced which were based on children's interests and next steps, observations and consultations with children. Observations were a good mix of whole group and individual child, and were evaluated so that they supported staff to plan for children's next steps meaningfully.

Generally, staff responded very well to children's interests and questions, and we observed skilful interactions which enabled children to solve problems and be creative in their thinking. However, there were some occasions when the focus was on instruction rather than enabling children to develop their thinking skills and take responsibility. The dependence on short term supply staff also meant that there were times when planning was responsive rather than about developing breadth and depth in learning and this risked some learning opportunities being missed. We discussed this with the management team and are confident that this will be addressed by the addition of permanent staff, who will support the current team to plan consistently for children's learning.

Children's emergent literacy was well supported, for example they were confident using books to find out about bugs and minibests in the outdoor area. Children were very interested in the map of the world, which they used to find out about the wider world. Children enjoyed "Polly Time", which was a group music and story time. Parents told us: "The nursery is welcoming, my child is excited to go and always has fun. The outdoor play space is fantastic, my child loves Polly Time and sings the songs for us at home". Numeracy was evident in the setting and good use had been made of natural resources. Children were learning about money in the role play area. Parents told us that there was "Lots of outdoor play incorporating outdoor resources to practice counting" and they also told us about the opportunity they had had to be involved in an outdoor maths workshop.

Children had a wide variety of opportunities to be creative and curious about their world. A variety of resources were provided to enable them to explore and satisfy their curiosity, for example magnifying glasses. Children enjoyed the variety of construction activities, which helped them to problem solve and work together. There were some creative opportunities like painting and modelling however the resources for the creative areas were not as well managed as those for other areas in the setting. We observed that the focus of creativity in the setting was science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and suggested that this would be improved by an additional focus on art.

Children were enabled to learn about their community and the wider world through a variety of visits and visitors including the police and wildlife and garden experts. Children were an integral part of the whole school community and had opportunities to participate in school activities, like Active Schools and become familiar with the building and the wider staff team.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children were being cared for in a safe, warm and welcoming environment which provided them with a wide

variety of play opportunities. The layout of furnishings and materials enabled children to make choices about their day. Most children chose to play outside for most of the day, where they had the space to play by themselves or with their friends.

Children were very active outdoors, where they could dig, play in water and climb trees. A wide variety of open ended materials were available which helped children to be creative and curious. A covered area provided children with a space to explore and experiment with different resources including painting and woodwork. Very good use had been made of the natural environment, although there were some concerns about visibility in different areas and we discussed different ways of managing this safely.

The setting was clean and resources were all accessible to children and were in good condition. The main room was small and at times felt very busy. Staff had recognised this and had created a breakout area where children could go to relax. As a result of the current staffing situation there were areas and resources in the room which could have been better resourced and managed and this should be monitored.

Children were learning how to keep themselves safe and were regularly involved in assessing risk, for example in the woodwork area and in the development of the outdoor area. This meant that they learned to take responsibility for themselves and their opinions were valued. A variety of risk assessments were in place and many had recently been reviewed.

Appropriate procedures for controlling infection were in place, and suitable handwashing facilities were available in the playroom. We observed children and staff following good handwashing practices. Children had had the opportunity to learn about the importance of good hand hygiene in a fun way, using science. An appropriate space was provided for nappy changing and toilets were accessible which meant that children could go independently.

Information was stored appropriately and securely within the setting. A policy had recently been implemented covering the use of personal mobile phones in the setting.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were cared for in a service with a vision, values and aims for how they would be supported to learn and develop. These were currently being reviewed with parents and children. There had been changes in the leadership of the setting in the last year and the whole staff team were open about their journey so far. We observed that a number of positive changes had been made and the new management team shared their vision for the future of the setting.

An improvement plan was being worked on at the time of the inspection and this was based on established quality assurance and monitoring procedures. For example, accidents and incidents were reviewed monthly and information was used to make changes in the environment. The current staffing arrangements, however, mean that monitoring of procedures like personal plan reviews are not independently done and this risks important details being overlooked.

Reflective practice is evident in the setting. The management team have made good use of self-evaluation to give structure to reflections and support the development of their plans for improvement. This means

that they have a good understanding of how the setting works and what needs to happen to support continuous improvement of outcomes for children. This practice will be enhanced when the permanent staff team are in place and fully involved in the process. Whilst there has been a reliance on supply staff recently, there have been opportunities for all to reflect on practice in the nursery with the use of online surveys and meetings.

Children's voice is evident and their opinions are regularly sought. Parents also have had different opportunities to have a say in developments in the setting, for example when folders go home, online surveys and a newly created parents forum. Parents told us "I am always asked how the nursery could improve" and "My views have always been listened to, the manager is very welcoming and takes onboard the views of parents".

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

4.3 Staff deployment

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were being cared for by warm, caring and professional staff. All staff engaged very well with the inspection process and worked with us openly and honestly.

Staff were deployed appropriately through the day and this meant that there were the right number of staff available to meet children's needs. Staff observed what was happening in the setting and moved around to ensure that they were in the right place to support children, for example by going outside, joining in with games and providing them with what they needed to follow through their own ideas.

At the time of the inspection, the setting was reliant on supply staff to ensure that there were sufficient adults available for when children needed them. The manager had worked hard to make sure that the same people were being used to ensure consistency for children. A helpful guide had been developed to inform supply staff about how the setting worked so that they knew where to find what they needed.

All staff were experienced and knowledgeable about child development and care, which meant that they responded well to children and followed their interests. However, daily changes in staffing had had an impact on processes within the setting for example recording children's learning and development, planning and self-evaluation and this meant that the manager was taking responsibility for all aspects of the setting, rather than being able to delegate. Management of the setting were keen to develop leadership within the settled staff group, and this will ensure there is a more inclusive team taking responsibility for different tasks and interests.

Parents told us that "There are always staff but unfortunately only a couple of permanent staff. Unfortunately this can't be helped but it would be nice for the children to have the same staff who get to know them and vice versa".

Whilst the current staff arrangements have been challenging, we are confident that this is a short term issue and that once the new members of staff are in the place, the management of the nursery will move forward with their plans for building their staff team and continuing to develop a variety of exciting opportunities for children.

Overall, parents told us that they were happy with their child's care and they also told that they liked "the nurturing environment, the opportunity to be creative and use their imagination. The setting isn't overwhelming, it's always very calm".

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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1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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