

# Small Isles Primary Pre Five Unit Day Care of Children

Small Isles Primary School  
Craighouse  
Isle of Jura  
PA60 7XG

Telephone: 01496 820 244

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
19 June 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Argyll and Bute Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003373

**Service no:**  
CS2003014664

## About the service

The service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 01 April 2011. Small Isles Primary Pre Five Unit is located on the isle of Jura, in the village of Craighouse. The service is provided by Argyll and Bute Council. The early learning and childcare service is currently registered to provide a care to a maximum of 15 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of those 15 no more than 3 can be aged 2 years to under 3 years. At the time of inspection, there were 3 children registered and 3 children present.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 18 June 2025. The inspection was carried out by two early learning and childcare 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:

- spoke with people using the service
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals

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

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

## Key messages

- Staff and children had developed strong, trusting attachments, fostering an environment where children felt safe.
- Children enjoyed a relaxed, social and healthy lunch time experience.
- Children enjoyed free flow access to the safe and engaging outdoor play area.
- Children engaged in a wide range of play experiences across various play types.
- Management was developing a process of quality assurance to monitor the effectiveness of practice across the setting and identify areas for continuous improvement.
- The staff team demonstrated a commitment to their continued professional development.

## 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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

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

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing, Care and Support

The setting was warm, welcoming, and nurturing. Children appeared happy, busy, and confident as they played in the setting and engaged with staff. Staff were supportive and friendly in their interactions with the children, helping children to feel secure and settled. The staff knew the children well and were able to discuss their likes, dislikes and needs in detail. We sampled all the children's personal plans. Each child's plan had helpful information about their needs, likes, and dislikes. These plans were reviewed regularly in partnership with parents, ensuring that information reflected each child's evolving interests and needs.

Children enjoyed a healthy lunch that met their individual dietary needs. Mealtimes were used to help children build independence and practise their fine motor skills. For example, by serving their own food, clearing their plates, and using serving utensils and cutlery. Children were supported to chop up their berries and grapes during snack and lunch times, giving them the opportunity to develop confidence and safe food handling skills in a supportive environment. Children were also involved in managing food intolerances within the setting. Thoughtfully placed pictures of unsuitable foods for certain children were displayed at child-friendly eye level in the kitchen. One child confidently explained which foods should not be given to specific peers, including by themselves, showing a strong sense of responsibility. This inclusive approach meant that all children could work together to help keep each other safe. Lunch was a calm, relaxed and social time where children chatted with staff and friends on a range of subjects. This helped to build strong relationships and support the children's social and language development.

Staff communicated with parents through an online digital application, which provided a valuable link between home and nursery. These digital profiles offered parents insights into their children's daily experiences and development. In addition, the service maintained strong communication through regular conversations at pick up and drop offs, end of year reports, letters, and stay and play sessions. This varied approach to communication helped build trusting relationships and kept parents well-informed.

Information on children's sleep requirements were gathered as part of the children's personal care plans. No children required sleep during the inspection, however, there was a carefully considered and cosy quiet area where children could rest and sleep if required.

No children required the storage or administration of medication during the inspection. Management said they would continue to review the policy and permission forms in line with national guidance 'Management of Medication in Daycare and Childminding Services.'

Accidents and incidents were recorded and shared with parents. We asked that management and staff ensure they clearly document how children are monitored following head bumps, to provide reassurance and maintain safety. Management conducted monthly audits of these records to identify any patterns and act where necessary. This helped reduce repeated accidents and contributed to a safer environment for all children.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had access to a variety of spaces and resources that encouraged rich and purposeful play. These included a cosy story area, a popular and inviting play rug that was used as a designated space for dancing, playing with cars, and building. Staff were engaged with the children, actively supporting language development and promoting inquiry-based learning. For example, one child was launching a rocket in the garden and the practitioner encouraged the use of describing words to predict what would happen and suggested ways to change the outcome. Staff demonstrated an understanding of when to step in to extend play and deepen the level of challenge, helping to enrich children's learning experiences.

We observed children engaged in a wide range of play experiences, including block building, arts, music, sensory play, and storytelling. Throughout these experiences, staff created meaningful opportunities for developing math, language, and literacy skills. For example, during an experiment using coloured sweets, children explored pattern making and colour sorting. Further examples observed included singing number songs and engaging with themed music such as a cowboy song with actions. Stories were shared both indoors and outdoors, with 'Tiddler' by Julia Donaldson being a particular favourite. We encourage staff to continue reflecting on how to further embed language, literacy, and math opportunities across the setting's resources.

Creative STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths) learning was evident in play experiences. For example, demonstrating the benefits of sunscreen on coloured paper in the sun and in activities exploring the human skeleton, supported broader health and wellbeing learning opportunities. A sense of discovery and wonder was fostered through troughs containing tadpoles and froglets, and outdoor small world setups, which invited curiosity and exploration.

Children were actively engaged in a wide range of learning experiences within their local community. These included visits to the beach, woodland areas, the island of Islay, and participation in community events such as beach cleans. These opportunities enriched children's learning beyond the nursery setting and fostered a strong sense of community, connection, and belonging.

Management and staff had identified planning as an area for development in the coming year. Staff were actively working on enhancing how they reflect children's developmental progression, with a focus on making planning more individualised to support each child's next steps, as identified through observation and evaluation. By streamlining this process, staff aim to establish clearly defined lines of development and progression pathways, enabling children to reach their full potential.

### How good is our setting?

**4 - Good**

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

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting is welcoming, clean, well lit, and well ventilated. Child sized furniture and appropriately designed facilities support children's personal care needs effectively. Additionally, a structured process and record of cleaning and maintenance were in place to uphold the ongoing quality of the facilities and resources. This included the use of water tight storage benches and a shed for outdoor resources including the replenished

loose parts play resources. This newly updated and carefully maintained environment communicates to children that their space is valued and that their wellbeing is important.

The nursery setting had a secure door entry system installed since the previous inspection, contributing to a safe and secure environment. A signing in and out procedure was consistently maintained at the front entrance, and a register in the playroom allowed children to sign themselves in, supporting their sense of safety, independence, and responsibility.

Since the last inspection, the outdoor area has undergone significant development and now supports free-flow access, allowing children to move easily between indoor and outdoor spaces. This has created a safe, inviting environment where children can engage in a wide range of play, exploration, and discovery. The outdoor space also encouraged risky play, offering opportunities for children to assess and manage their own risks through activities such as climbing and navigating walking stumps. These experiences supported children's resilience and physical development.

Staff discussed how they had carefully set up different play areas to support children's play and learning. We encouraged them to keep building on this process and suggested looking at best practice documents such as 'Space to Grow and Thrive'. This reflective approach should encourage continuous and sustainable improvement of the setting's environment.

Risk assessments were in place to support both the nursery setting and the various locations used for outings. These helped to identify and reduce potential hazards, supporting the creation of a safe and secure environment for staff and children.

Staff and children consistently followed effective infection control practices. For example, we observed well established handwashing routines being carried out before eating, after personal care, and upon returning indoors from outdoor play. These routines demonstrated a strong understanding of hygiene protocols and played a key role in minimising the risk of infection across the setting.

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are well led

Since the last inspection, the setting has continued a journey of improvement following a period of refurbishment and staff changes. We found the manager and staff team to be highly engaged throughout the inspection process, demonstrating openness to advice and support, and a clear commitment to ongoing improvement.

The service's aims and objectives set out a clear vision for the setting. While the school had an overall improvement plan, specific actions and areas for development relating to the nursery were not yet included. The staff team maintained an evaluation folder aligned with the framework 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare' (HGIOELC), which included action points from previous local authority early years team visits. Management and staff agreed that the setting would benefit from either a whole school improvement plan that includes the nursery specific actions or a dedicated nursery improvement plan. This should be created

in partnership with children, parents, staff, and management to ensure a shared vision and collective ownership of improvement priorities.

The manager has been developing a structured and proactive approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of service delivery through the implementation of a quality assurance calendar. This process is being developed to ensure that regular audits, reviews, and reflective practices are scheduled and carried out consistently, supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

Regular meetings and daily debriefs at the end of the session provided opportunities for ongoing communication and responsiveness to children's needs. Management and staff acknowledge that recording the findings from these meetings would enhance the value of this reflective practice and ensure that important insights are documented and acted upon.

Management and staff maintained regular and meaningful contact with parents through a variety of channels, including welcoming parents at drop-off and pick-up times, end of term reports, stay and play sessions, and whole community events. These approaches fostered positive partnerships with parents and provided opportunities for ongoing communication.

### How good is our staff team?

**4 - Good**

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

#### Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The staff team demonstrated a commitment to their continued professional development and were supported by management to undertake both essential and targeted training aligned with identified areas for improvement. Regular monitoring of staff training, alongside more frequent one-to-one meetings to reflect on learning and set professional development goals, will further support the growth of staff knowledge and skills. Staff told us that they felt well supported by the manager and they felt there was a positive atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. This contributed to a happy, secure, and nurturing environment for children and their families.

Staff engaged positively in the inspection process and were open and honest about their improvement journey. All staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and were aware of their responsibilities of registration. Management agreed that monitoring staff progress in meeting their registration requirements should form part of the wider staff monitoring and quality assurance processes.

We observed effective staff deployment across the setting, ensuring that children's needs were consistently met. For example, staff deployed themselves effectively during supervision outdoors, support with personal care, and facilitation of play and learning experiences.

Regular team meetings had been established, providing opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice, discuss children's learning and progress, and plan experiences that meet individual needs. However, due to limited staff numbers, we suggested exploring opportunities for professional dialogue with other settings to further embed reflective practice and foster a wider community of learning.

New staff were being supported by the manager with the national induction resource, helping them

transition into their roles and begin their Professional Review and Development (PRD) process. This structured approach not only promoted staff confidence, competence, and a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

## 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

Management and staff should continue to review the layout of the indoor and outdoor environment. Priority should be given to;

1. The storage and availability of resources enabling children to choose from and access a wide range of experiences.
2. Providing children with free flowing access to outdoor play throughout the day.
3. Continue to review the pace and balance of the day in order to meet children's individual needs and promote positive learning outcomes.
4. Outside resources are stored within an appropriate watertight storage facility.

**This area for improvement was made on 29 June 2021.**

#### Action taken since then

See evaluation under key question 'How good is out setting'. This area for improvement was evaluated as being met.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To improve the infection, prevention and control measures and to respect children's privacy and dignity the provider and manager should ensure appropriate space and personal care facilities are available at all times. In addition, cleaning materials, changing mat and toilet training aids should be stored in line with National guidance Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings).

**This area for improvement was made on 29 June 2021.**

#### Action taken since then

See evaluation under key question 'How good is out setting'. This area for improvement was evaluated as being met.



## 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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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