Stenness Community School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Stenness
Stromness
KW16 3LB

Telephone: 01856 850 212

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 September 2026

Service provided by:
Orkney Islands Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001951

Service no:
CS2003016049

About the service

Stenness Community School Nursery provides a care service to a maximum of 15 children at one time from age three years to an age to attend primary school. Adult:child ratios will be: three years and over. 1:8 if the children attend more than four hours per day or 1:10 if the children attend for less than four hours per day. The manager is also the manager of Orphir Community School Nursery, Orphir Primary School, Orphir, Orkney, KW17 2RB.

Stenness Nursery forms part of Stenness Community School, Orkney. The nursery classroom has direct access to toilets, kitchen facilities and an outdoor play area, as well as to the wider school grounds.

There were up to nine children present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 31 August 2026 between 09:00 and 17:25 and 01 September 2026 between and 12:50 and 15:10. 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 since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with three of their parents/carers
- received five responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff
- spoke with staff and management
- 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 very happy, confident and settled.
- Warm, nurturing relationships created a safe and supportive environment.
- Strong partnerships with families enhanced outcomes for children.
- High-quality play experiences promoted curiosity, creativity, independence, and learning.
- Staff worked effectively as a team and engaged in meaningful self-evaluation which contributed to continuous improvement.
- Quality assurance and safety systems were generally effective however, improvements were required to the toilet facilities to better support children's privacy, dignity and infection prevention and control.

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	4 - 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 nursery was included in the school's vision, values and aims. Staff, children, families and the wider community had contributed to developing these, ensuring they reflected the needs of the school and nursery. The values of kindness, fun, respect and teamwork were evident throughout the inspection and were reflected in daily interactions and experiences. Plans were in place to develop children's understanding of their rights through a whole-school approach. Nursery staff had begun considering rights that were meaningful for the children. This would contribute to promoting the values daily in meaningful ways for the children.

Staff spoke positively about the leadership within the nursery and described feeling well supported. They told us they worked effectively together and felt their ideas and opinions were listened to and valued. Staff felt included in developments and were encouraged to contribute to decision making. Regular staff meetings and monitoring activities supported communication, reflection and improvement. The positive culture within the team helped staff feel motivated and supported in their roles. More formal support and supervision arrangements could enhance this further.

The nursery gathered the views of parents and children and used this information to improve the service. Feedback from families was often gathered informally through children's learning journals and daily discussions. Parents shared positive comments about being able to understand and celebrate their child's learning and development. The school demonstrated that suggestions from children were acted upon through a "You Said, We Did" approach which involved nursery. Examples included purchasing robust iPad covers so children could take photographs independently and involving children in choosing resources for outdoor development. Parents told us they felt listened to and were able to contribute ideas at any time. There was an active parent council within the school that included nursery families. Staff had already identified ways to involve the views of families more meaningfully to support improvements with the nursery.

Self-evaluation was embedded within the nursery and involved the whole staff team. Staff used a range of improvement tools, including Care Inspectorate guidance, quality indicators and local authority resources. Improvement work had focused on enhancing routines, strengthening staff interactions and enriching learning opportunities through technologies such as sewing, woodwork, clay and junk modelling. Children's views, observations and photographs were used well to inform developments. Staff could clearly describe the positive impact of these changes, including improvements in children's fine motor skills, language development, confidence and engagement. Sharing more of this improvement journey with families would strengthen partnership working further.

Staff told us they had access to very good training opportunities and valued learning alongside colleagues from other settings. Training had positively influenced practice and improved experiences for children. Staff were beginning to take on leadership roles linked to their interests, including leading nature nurture training and Book bug sessions for families. Quality assurance systems were well established through audits, policy reviews and regular monitoring of practice. Induction arrangements were tailored to staff needs and ongoing support was readily available within the small team. Leaders had also reflected on using national induction resources to further support new staff. Overall, leadership, professional learning and quality assurance arrangements supported continuous improvement effectively.

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.**

Staff used relevant theories and guidance to support children's learning and development. For example, engaging with Realising the Ambition had influenced practice and helped staff develop their understanding of how children learn through play. Staff demonstrated a good awareness of schematic play and used this to inform planning, observations and interactions. Children's interests were recognised and used to shape experiences which promoted learning and wellbeing. Children benefited from practice that was informed by current guidance and a very good understanding of child development.

Children were very happy, engaged and confident throughout the inspection. They freely chose where to play and independently accessed a range of open-ended resources to support their ideas. Children benefited from sustained periods of free-flow access to the outdoors where many chose to spend their time. Recent changes, including a rolling snack, had reduced interruptions and supported longer periods of uninterrupted play. Children developed literacy, numeracy and communication skills naturally through resources, play and daily routines. Overall, the play environment supported children to lead their learning and develop a wide range of skills.

Children had many opportunities to be curious, creative and solve problems. Outdoors, they worked together transporting water, filling containers and experimenting with muddy and clean water while discussing concepts such as full and empty. Indoors, children explored creative materials and confidently added their own ideas to activities. Numeracy and literacy were embedded throughout the setting through books, mark-making materials and everyday experiences. Staff made good use of naturally occurring opportunities to extend learning, such as counting items for snack and discussing shapes during conversations. Children experienced meaningful learning through play across different areas of the curriculum.

Staff interactions were very responsive and effective. Staff observed children closely and intervened sensitively to extend learning when appropriate. They used comments, modelling and open-ended questions to encourage children to think, predict and solve problems independently. During water play, staff skilfully supported children to identify a problem, discuss possible solutions and evaluate their success. Children actively sought support from staff and appeared secure and confident within these positive relationships. Staff interactions contributed to children's learning and confidence.

Planning for learning was based on children's interests and involved a balance of intentional and responsive experiences. Staff used observations, discussions and children's ideas to extend learning. Examples included developing children's interest in frogspawn into further investigations and extending muddy vehicle play through additional resources and learning opportunities. Learning was effectively documented through floor books, learning walls with photographs and children's voices. Observations focused on significant learning and informed next steps. Progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing was monitored regularly, enabling staff to identify appropriate support and challenge. Families were kept informed through learning journals and the Seesaw App and valued these opportunities to engage with their child's learning. Overall, planning, assessment and tracking arrangements were effective and supported children to make good progress in their learning and development.

Children are supported to achieve — 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as **good**, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Staff were warm, caring and nurturing in their interactions with children. Children appeared happy, relaxed and secure within the setting and confidently approached adults for help, comfort and reassurance when needed. Strong relationships between staff and children were evident throughout the inspection. Staff showed genuine interest in children's lives and regularly engaged them in conversations about their families, interests and experiences. Flexible approaches to settling children were used effectively, with parents encouraged to stay longer when required. Children were familiar with daily routines and confidently carried out tasks such as preparing for outdoor play, tidying resources and participating in group routines. Transitions throughout the day were calm and natural, with children given time and choice to move between experiences. Consistent staffing further supported children to feel safe, secure and confident. Nurturing relationships and well-established routines created a positive environment where children felt valued and supported.

Appropriate procedures were in place to support children's safety and wellbeing. Registers were maintained and staff communicated effectively to ensure children were supervised appropriately both indoors and outdoors. Adult-to-child ratios enabled staff to provide responsive care and support throughout the day. Staff helped children develop an awareness of risk through discussions and modelling safe behaviours. For example, when using large construction materials, staff supported children to think about how to carry and use resources safely. Care plans were available for children who required additional health support and staff demonstrated a clear understanding of child protection procedures. Accident and incident records were completed appropriately, however, regular audits should be undertaken to identify and respond to any emerging trends. Medication systems were generally effective, although records would benefit from additional detail to further support safe administration. Arrangements to promote children's safety were effective, with a few areas identified for further development.

The nursery promoted children's health and wellbeing through positive daily experiences. Effective handwashing practices were well established, and children were encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. The environment was clean, organised and welcoming. However, there was no door separating the children's toilet area from the main room. The toilets were positioned directly beside the food preparation and dining area, with no physical barrier between these spaces. As a result, this arrangement did not fully support children's privacy and dignity and did not help to reduce potential Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) risks through effective separation of these areas. Until a permanent arrangement can be put in place, the manager should develop a risk assessment for the playroom taking account of potential risks **(see requirement one)**.

Mealtimes were relaxed, sociable and enjoyable for children. The rolling snack approach enabled children to access food when they were ready, helping to minimise disruptions to play and learning. Children were encouraged to make choices, serve themselves and develop their independence skills. Opportunities existed to promote this further by involving children in the preparation of snacks and spreading their own foods like crackers. Staff sat alongside children, supervising them well, and supporting meaningful conversations. Mealtimes provided a positive experience that supported children's wellbeing, independence and social development.

Personal plans were in place for all children and had been developed in partnership with parents. Plans reflected children's interests, strengths and needs, helping staff provide individualised support. Some information required updating and review dates could be recorded more clearly to demonstrate changes over time. Support plans were available where needed, although some reviews had not been completed consistently. Staff recognised the formats now being used would support a more consistent approach. Inclusive practice was evident throughout the nursery. Staff understood the needs of individual children and worked closely with families and partner agencies when required. Children also benefited from strong links with the school and wider community, helping them feel included and connected. Parents spoke positively about the service and described staff as warm, welcoming and approachable. They valued daily communication and felt involved in their child's care and learning. The nursery provided inclusive, person-centred care and support that promoted positive outcomes for children and families.

Requirements

1. By 05 October 2026, the provider must ensure that children's health, wellbeing, privacy and dignity are appropriately supported and promoted within the service. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

a) Ensure an effective risk assessment is in place for the playroom environment, identifying any potential hazards associated with access to the toilet area and detailing the control measures implemented to minimise risks to children.

b) Provide an appropriate plan detailing the timescales for installing a suitable door to separate the children's toilets from the playroom.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected' (HSCS 1.4) and 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19).

Complaints

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

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	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.scot

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.