

Nurseries give a taste of the great outdoors

OUTDOOR PLAY

CAROL MacRae is a fan of the great outdoors – so much so that she has made this a key aspect of her Ross-shire nursery service.

Ankerville Nurseries is a family-owned group of three nurseries based in Tain and Alness, catering for children from 0-8 years on a full, part-time and after-school basis.

Two of Ankerville's nurseries now boast improved outdoor areas, with planning under way to do the same at the third.

Ankerville began out of Carol's family home in Tain but, as the nursery grew, she

and her family had to move out.

"Our family garden area was extended into the nursery garden," she said.

Carol then purchased a second building for Ankerville, which had a much bigger garden space.

"A large corner of the garden has been made into a sensory garden with water features, crystals that catch the light, fruit trees growing, and a special area for story time," Carol said.

"The children can come and go freely into that area and it's a quieter place for those who don't want to go running around as much.

"We also have a grass area. Our local football team, Ross County, run a Little Dribblers programme for the children to teach them football skills, and use this space."

The garden is still being developed too. "A third area has been designed to have an

outdoor table and chairs and a big muddy patch for play," Carol said. "It also has a greenhouse.

"The third unit in the Ankerville portfolio is strictly for under-threes. We're looking at ways to cater for that age range in the small garden space there."

Carol believes this outdoor approach is perfect for the development of the children at Ankerville.

"We do all the things we do inside, of course, but the children all love to be outside," she said.

The Care Inspectorate's Jill MacDonald also pointed out the merits of Ankerville's outdoor areas.

She said: "The nursery garden area has been extensively developed and provides a very stimulating environment for children to explore."



There's a quiet place for children to sit in the sensory garden



There is plenty of space for children to run around and play



An eco greenhouse was made from plastic bottles