

Ballater School Nursery Day Care of Children

Ballater School
Monaltrie Crescent
Ballater
AB35 5RN

Telephone: 01339 755419

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
16 December 2020

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003016306

About the service

We carried out a virtual inspection of Ballater School Nursery beginning 4 November 2020. As part of the scrutiny process, we used Microsoft Teams (video calls), email and telephone calls to engage with the children, the manager, staff and parents. We also assessed relevant documents that we requested from the manager between 4 and 18 November 2020. Feedback was shared with the manager and head teacher on 16 December 2020.

This was a focused inspection to evaluate how well children were being supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. We evaluated the service based on key areas that are vital to the support and wellbeing of children experiencing care during the pandemic. We also evaluated the service response to previous recommendations and requirements. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

Ballater School Nursery registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011. This service is provided by Aberdeenshire council and is in the primary school building.

The service is currently registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children at any one time aged from two years to those not yet attending primary school, with a maximum of 10 children in the eligible two to three age range.

The service aims include:

- to provide a happy, safe, secure and stimulating environment
- to encourage children to learn as they play, working in partnership with parents and other professionals/agencies
- to regularly evaluate the quality of our provision in order to plan for improvement.

What people told us

We communicated with two parents by telephone. Both parents indicated that they were happy with the care provided by the service. They confirmed that staff knew their children well and supported them to explore a variety of activities, taking into account children's interests.

The parents confirmed that staff maintained good communication during the initial lockdown and this continued when children returned to nursery. Parents confirmed that the nursery staff took into account relevant COVID guidance when interacting with parents.

Parent comment included:

"Xxxxx loves nursery. Xxxxx enjoys the varied activities which take into account children's interests. Staff keep me informed about my child."

"Staff know xxxxxx really well. Xxxxxx has, on return to nursery this session, really grown in confidence, this has been recognised by nursery staff and her progress reported back. Staff are aware of Xxxxxx strengths and what she enjoys doing."

"I feel reassured by confirmation from nursery that routines are being adhered to and my child confirms this. Staff were very reassuring when welcoming my child back and quickly built back on previous relationship

they had with her."

"We were communicated with regularly and if any routines weren't working, staff have been quick to address this and re-communicate."

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 and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	4 - Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?

4 - Good

Quality indicator 5.1: Children's Health and Wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- Children are nurtured and supported throughout their changed experience in their early learning and childcare setting
- Effective communication with families enables responsive care to support children through changing circumstances.

The staff team fostered a warm, welcoming ethos and were caring and nurturing with children and families. Staff were proactive and responsive to the difficulties that arose for children and families during this changing early learning experience.

Staff recognised the challenges that existed due to physical distancing between adults and developed a variety of processes to ensure effective communication between families and staff that took account of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

During lockdown the head teacher and staff team remained in contact with parents and children using Seesaw - a digital messaging system, telephone calls and email. Parents confirmed good communication from staff throughout which supported children and families to be as relaxed as possible during lockdown and the return to nursery.

The staff team implemented sensitive settling in processes for children and families. This included comprehensive information for children and parents, with the opportunity to ask questions of staff before their children returned. Children were given the opportunity to visit with one parent when there were no children in nursery. Children and parents were supported to understand the need for the changes to their childcare experience.

Staff and parents regularly and effectively shared information about the service and children's experiences, which promoted continuity of care and support. Each child had a personal care plan in place and staff recorded any changes to children's care and support needs. Changes were shared appropriately with relevant staff which supported effective care and support of children.

Children had opportunities to influence their play and learning experiences which, with effective staff input, helped to develop their understanding of the current situation.

Staff had appropriate knowledge and practice in relation to Scottish Government guidance, Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and recognised the importance of early intervention in the effective support of children. Staff demonstrated good knowledge of how to keep children safe and the process should they have a child protection concern.

The service continued to have relevant dialogue with other professionals to ensure best support of children and families using the service.

A key worker system was introduced in October 2020. Having one member of staff as the key contact for a

family enhanced communication and also helped support staff's planning for children's learning.

During each session children enjoyed independent access to the outdoor play area and regular supervised access to the wooded area behind the school.

Quality indicator 5.2: Infection Prevention and Control Practices support a Safe Environment for Children and Staff.

- Children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Staff demonstrated good knowledge of current guidance and the need to ensure up to date knowledge and practice in relation to infection prevention and control during this COVID-19 pandemic.

The service had clear policies and procedures in place and staff discussed consistent approaches across the setting.

Children were protected as staff took necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Staff followed Scottish Government, Health Protection and Local Authority guidance and had undertaken appropriate risk assessment that addressed pertinent areas of risk within the service. The service risk assessment was updated in line with changing guidance and shared appropriately with staff.

Staff had undertaken infection prevention and control training in relation to COVID-19 and had good knowledge and practice in relation to the enhanced and increased hygiene procedures.

Staff confidently discussed their roles in the weekly cleaning rota, which included appropriate knowledge of the cleaning timetable, the different coloured mop heads and cloths to use in each area and which products were used for different purposes. Staff understood and implemented the new arrangements for cleaning within the service.

Children had independent access to resources, which staff effectively sanitised at appropriate intervals together with any high touch areas.

Staff practiced appropriate and effective use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and there were systems in place which ensured timely re-stocking.

In accordance with guidance children were happy to be outdoors for much of the session. The secure area immediately outside the nursery had a good selection of loose parts play and other resources which staff had introduced, taking into account children's interests and direction of learning.

Staff were aware of the importance of effective hand washing, for both children and staff, and this was regularly reinforced by staff. Staff supported children to wash their hands effectively and had used talcum powder on children's hands to show how the talcum easily spread to the areas the children touched. Staff then explained that this is what happens with the virus and this is why we must wash our hands 'properly'.

Staff applied anti-bacterial gel to children's hands before they entered the nursery following drop-off and again before they left the setting at pick-up time. This does not follow current Scottish Government and Health Protection Scotland guidance, *'Antibacterial hand gel is not recommended for children when soap and water is available. A Health Protection Scotland 2018 SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment,*

Recommendation) on hygiene requirements in outdoor nurseries in Scotland states that the use of alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs) and non-AHBRs should be discouraged in children under the age of five.'
(Area for improvement 1).

Staff had communicated effectively with families to ensure a clear understanding that children remained at home when unwell. In daily discussion with parents, staff encouraged the understanding of the guidance in respect of isolating when a family member has symptoms.

Both staff and parents followed current distancing guidance during drop off and pick up of children.

Quality indicator 5.3: Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19

- **Staffing arrangements meet the needs of children and families**
- **staff are well supported and confident.**

The service was always appropriately staffed to meet children's needs and the staff team worked well together which promoted a calm, welcoming ethos for both children and parents. A peripatetic manager joined the team in September 2020, and this had been of benefit to the service.

Management recognised the additional demands placed on staff in response to COVID-19 and had appropriately and effectively supported staff. This included undertaking staff risk assessments which then informed the implementation of any identified changes, improvements needed to support individual staff.

Staff found colleagues to be supportive and that regular team meetings provided personal and professional support. The meetings were also found to be helpful in underpinning best practice knowledge and practice in the setting which supported good outcomes for children.

Whilst staff described appropriate practice, we discussed with the manager the importance of regular monitoring of practice to ensure continuity and effectiveness of staff practice. This had also been identified by management. (Area for improvement 2).

The setting now had one consistent group of children each day which they found helpful when planning staff time. Staff minimised the impact of current additional routines on children's outcomes as much as possible. Staff were aware of the importance of ensuring a consistently good quality of care, play and learning experiences for children.

Staff were committed to the best support of children. Parents told us that staff were caring, nurturing and supportive of children and families, 'going above and beyond' when they felt it was beneficial for the child and/or family.

Staff practiced social distancing and sensitively supported parents to do the same. Staff regularly communicated with parents and where possible, staff explained any changes to parents before they were actioned. This allowed parents to understand why changes required to be made and obtain clarity should they have any questions.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's health and wellbeing the manager and staff to review the use of hand gel for children when soap and water is available, taking into account current relevant guidance.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that:

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11).

2. To promote children's health, safety and wellbeing, management to undertake effective, regular monitoring of staff practice. To include effective and timely implementation of identified improvements.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19).

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

To ensure children receive high quality early learning experiences, care and support the provider must ensure the service is effectively led and managed by 30 August 2019.

This is to ensure that care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, as a child 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.' (HSCS 4.23)

It is also necessary to comply with Regulation 3: Principles, of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland Regulations 2011.

This requirement was made on 4 June 2019.

Action taken on previous requirement

The head teacher (HT) had planned and effectively implemented a range of support and improvement measures by 30 August 2019. The HT was effectively leading the nursery and, with the staff, improved learning experiences for the children attending the service. Since September 2020, a peripatetic manager had been appointed and this was of further benefit to the service.

Met - within timescales

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

In order to ensure children are supported to achieve their potential staff should:

- Undertake meaningful observations that identify children's learning
- Identify suitable, challenging and appropriate possible next steps
- Plan experiences that follow children's interests and enhance their learning

This is to ensure that high quality care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state

that, as a child, 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me.' (HSCS 1.27).

This area for improvement was made on 4 June 2019.

Action taken since then

We noted that the service had taken action to improve their approach to observing children's experiences. As a result, planning was becoming more responsive taking account of and following children's ideas and interests. Floor books helped to explore children's ideas and enabled children themselves to become more involved in their own learning.

This recommendation had begun to be addressed and will be further reviewed at the next inspection.

Previous area for improvement 2

Play and learning opportunities should be developed further and evaluated to ensure they provided challenge for children.

This is to ensure that high quality care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, as a child, 'I can direct my own play and activities in a way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 4 June 2019.

Action taken since then

Staff had begun to more effectively plan children's play opportunities, taking into account children's interests. Children had independent access to a number of resources including a selection of loose part play which provided a degree of challenge for children.

This recommendation has been actioned.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure children are effectively supported to progress and achieve their potential staff should develop their skills and knowledge of:

- Observation, assessment and planning
- Effective interaction to support and extend learning

This is to ensure that high quality care is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, as a child, 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 4 June 2019.

Action taken since then

The head teacher had supported staff to undertake relevant training which improved their practice in observation, assessment and planning. Training had also been undertaken in relation to staff interaction with children which effectively supported and extended children's learning.

Staff were now more proficient in effectively supporting children to progress and achieve their potential.

This recommendation had begun to be addressed and will be further reviewed at the next inspection.

Previous area for improvement 4

In order to ensure children receive the right support to meet their care and learning needs and support them to reach their potential the head teacher and staff should develop and implement robust self-evaluation and quality assurance systems.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, as a child, 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 4 June 2019.

Action taken since then

A peripatetic manager began work with the service in September 2020. She had begun to implement quality assurance systems to evaluate and identify improvement in the service. This was in the early stages of implementation.

This recommendation had begun to be addressed and will be further reviewed at the next inspection.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	4 - Good
5.1 Children's health and well being are supported and safeguarded during COVID-19	4 - Good
5.2 Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff	4 - Good
5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19	4 - Good

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