

Park Early Learning and Childcare Suite Day Care of Children

Invergordon Academy
Academy Road
INVERGORDON
IV18 0LD

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 November 2022

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017254

About the service

Park Early Learning and Childcare Suite is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children aged three years to those attending primary. The service is operated by The Highland Council. The head teacher manages the nursery. The nursery operates term time only.

The service is based within the grounds of Invergordon Academy, Invergordon, Ross-shire. The premises consists of a playroom, cloakroom, kitchen and toilets. There is an enclosed outdoor play area which contains a range of loose parts and open ended resources which extend and enrich the children's imaginative play and learning experiences.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 and 29 November 2022. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. Feedback was given to the manager and representatives from the provider on 29 November 2022. 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
- reviewed email communication from parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Overall children were nurtured and supported throughout their experiences.
- Personal planning information was not used effectively to meet children's individual needs.
- Overall children were observed to be happy and enjoying their time with their friends.
- On occasions, children were unable to make choices around their own play and learning experiences.
- Planning approaches required improvement to ensure they are consistently child centred and responsive to children's interests and stage of development.
- The indoor environment required improvement to make it more homely and welcoming.
- The service should continue to embed the use of more natural and open ended resources.
- Staff deployment required significant improvement.
- Quality assurance processes required improvement to ensure they are meaningful and effective.

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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	2 - Weak
How good is our staff team?	2 - Weak

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this quality theme as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Overall children were nurtured and supported throughout their experiences. They benefitted from warm, caring relationships from staff. They offered comfort, cuddles and caring interactions when needed. This provided children with reassurance and supported their wellbeing, contributing to them feeling valued and respected. However, at certain times across the day, staff in the nursery were task driven which meant children did not always receive the right support at the right time. A parent told us "The staff are good their job, but they are under staffed"

Children's holistic wellbeing needs were not always being met. Personal plan information developed with parents, identified individual development, health and wellbeing needs. This supported staff to understand children's individual needs. However, staff in the nursery, did not always use the information effectively to ensure the individual needs of all children were met. For example, activities were not always differentiated to support all children to succeed. Staff on occasions missed cues that children needed additional support, this was particularly evident during periods of transition. As a result, not all children experienced care, learning and development opportunities that were relevant, personalised, or appropriate. This was highlighted by a parent who told us "The staff are very approachable so I feel able to speak to the staff about my child's individual needs although I doubt the individual needs are taken into consideration."

Staff in the after school club knew children well and were aware of their individual needs. They spoke knowledgeably about the children, describing their individual characteristics and any sensitivities they may have had. We saw staff responding with kindness. This contributed positively to children's self-esteem and sense of wellbeing. As a result they were confident in approaching staff for help or reassurance.

Mealtimes were sociable and unhurried experiences. Children were encouraged to participate in these daily routines which provided them with a range of opportunities to be responsible and independent. For example, children took on the role of snack helper and prepared the food for snack. However during the morning snack, staff were task orientated. This resulted in missed opportunities to support and extend children's social and communication skills. There was scope to further develop children's independence skills at lunchtime. Staff sat with children during lunchtime which promoted close attachments and supported early language development.

1.3 Play and learning

Overall children in the nursery were happy and enjoying their time with their friends. We saw some examples of children leading their play and learning experiences both indoors and outdoors. During this time children were absorbed in their play and having fun. This increased children's engagement, wellbeing and happiness. However, during certain times of the day, children's play and learning opportunities were restricted and adult directed. On occasions, children were unable to make choices around their own play and learning experiences. For example, children were asked to move away from their chosen activity to sit for long periods of time. This negatively impacted on the quality of play experiences and did not reflect children's individual stage of development. This resulted in children becoming disengaged.

Staff in the out of school club were playful in their interactions with children and there was lots of chatter and laughter. They took time to listen to children and used careful questioning to promote children's curiosity and creativity. Staff valued children's interests and supported their play, learning and development through following children's line of enquiry at their own pace. Children's perspectives were listened to by staff and taken account of in staff observations and knowledge of individual children. This contributed to children feeling valued and respected.

We saw some skilled interactions from staff in the nursery that contributed to children being supported to develop their skills and learning but this was not consistent. There were examples of staff extending children's play through learning conversations. However, on occasions, staff did not respond to children's cues to extend their play experiences. This resulted in missed opportunities to support children to widen their skills and learning. Staff would benefit from being supported to develop their skills and understanding in child led play and effective observations. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Planning approaches required improvement to ensure they were consistently child centred and responsive to children's interests and stage of development. We saw some examples of responsive planning that was relevant and personalised. However, we also saw examples that were adult directed and did not provide differentiation to meet the needs of all children. The staff and manager should continue to develop their understanding of child led planning processes to ensure children are supported to consolidate their learning at an appropriate level.

Areas for improvement

1. To enable children to receive high quality play, learning and development opportunities, the manager should ensure staff are responsive to children's individual interests and needs.

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

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this quality theme as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Play spaces benefited from plenty of natural light. Consideration had been given to creating a quiet space for children to rest and relax. This enabled children to seek out a calm area where they could have some individual time which supported their emotional wellbeing. However this could be further developed to promote a more comfortable and welcoming environment, with more cosy areas and homely touches. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Children's happiness and engagement in play increased when they were outside. The outdoor environment was sensitively structured to take account of children's age and stage of development. The play space reflected children's current interests with appropriate resources and materials. Effective use of open-ended materials provided children with opportunities to be creative and challenge their thinking. Physical,

energetic play was well supported to keep children active and healthy. Children had access to materials for mark making outdoors which supported them to develop skills in early literacy.

Whilst we recognised the positive environment and play experiences children received in the outdoor area, we identified areas for development and improvement in relation to the indoor environment. There were some open ended, natural real life resources inside that supported children to develop their skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving. However, these were limited and did not fully support children to develop their curiosity and creativity. We also found that resources did not always reflect the age and stage of all children. The service were aware of this and were currently undertaking an audit of the indoor environment. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Following a serious incident the service had reviewed and updated their risk assessments to minimise risk and keep children safe. They had taken action to make the outdoor environment more secure. Staff were aware of the total number of children in attendance but not the number of children within each designated play area. This had potential for children to be unaccounted for. We directed the service to the Care Inspectorate's "SIMOA" (Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe and Act) campaign to support staff's understanding of their responsibility to keep children safe. We have also made a requirement in relation to staff deployment.

Areas for improvement

1. To enable all children to be cared for in an appropriate environment that meets their needs and supports them to reach their full potential, the manager and staff should review the environment. This should include but is not limited to ensuring:

- a) all children experience an environment that is welcoming, well furnished, comfortable, and homely.
- b) appropriate play spaces are available with suitable resources and materials to effectively challenge children and reflect their current interests and curiosities.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment and can use a comfortable area with soft furnishings to relax.' (HSCS 5.6)

How good is our leadership?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Quality assurance measures were at an early stage and needed to be formalised, extended and embedded to inform improvement. As a result we identified gaps in service delivery which impacted negatively on children's experiences and did not follow best practice guidance. For example the balance between organised and freely chosen play limited opportunities to support children's development, wellbeing and learning. In addition monitoring arrangements put in place following a serious incident were not robust. This meant improvements to practice were not sustained. For example staff deployment did not maximise children's safety and wellbeing. **(See requirement 1)**

Staff had undertaken some self-evaluation of practice. However we found that this was not meaningful and resulting in improved outcomes for children. Staff would benefit from further support to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes to drive forward identified areas for improvement. **(See requirement 1)**

The service improvement plan identified priority areas for development however it was not being used effectively to support continuous improvement. The plan did not include areas for improvement relating to the out of school club. This did not ensure everyone in the setting were aware of service priorities. Families told us that their views were not actively sought to inform the development service. This impacted negatively on the ability to deliver improved outcomes for children and their families. **(See requirement 1)**

Team meetings provided time for staff to come together and reflect. We found that these reflections were not always resulting in improved experiences for children as there was not a clear focus on quality of experiences and outcomes.

The management team supported staff to have opportunities for leadership roles within the day to day running of the service. For example, staff led on areas including outdoor learning. This contributed to staff feeling valued and having some ownership over the service.

Support and feedback was infrequent and not tailored to the needs of individual staff. This meant staff were not effectively supported to reflect on their practice and identify their strengths and learning needs. This had led to some staff not being supported to raise standards to meet the needs of all children within the service. **(See requirement 1)**

Requirements

1. By 17 March 2023, the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children and practice by implementing effective systems of quality assurance.

To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure :

- a) regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented
- b) staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service.
- c) clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service.
- d) the management team effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.

This is to comply with the - Regulation 3 Principles and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210). (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, SSI 2011/210.

How good is our staff team?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

4.3 Staff deployment

The manager strived to provide consistency of care within the staff team. Arrangements for unplanned absence were supported by effective systems. For example the manager used the same supply staff to minimise disruption to children's routines.

Staffing arrangements for busier times of the day were well considered. An additional member of staff joined the team to support children during the lunchtime experience. This ensured children received an appropriate level of interaction and support during this time.

Overall staff worked well together to benefit children in their care. However at times communication and team working between staff was limited. This resulted in gaps in interactions across the day. This meant children did not always receive the relevant support at the right time. **(See requirement 1)**

The manager told us they had recently reviewed staff deployment within the service to support children's safety and wellbeing. The impact of this review was evident within the out of school club. Staff worked well together to promote a safe environment for children. However staff deployment within the nursery did not always meet the needs of individual children. Consideration had not been given to the layout of the environment, the use of spaces and the skills, experiences and knowledge of staff working with individual children. This reduced opportunities for high quality engagement and interaction. As a result children were not being fully supported to reach their potential. **(See requirement 1)**

Children were not always effectively supervised, whilst they played outdoors. At times staff were task orientated and not alert to the needs of individual children. Staff did not always know how many children they were responsible for in the outdoor area. We raised this during the inspection. Staff addressed this to ensure they knew how many children were playing outside. An incident had previously occurred where a child had left the outdoor area unnoticed. Effective staffing arrangements to ensure adequate supervision within the nursery had not been implemented following this. As a result there was still a risk of children coming to harm. **(See requirement 1)**

Requirements

1. By 17 March 2023, the provider must ensure that children are effectively supported by staff who have the right skills and qualities. They must, as a minimum,

a) review the skill mix of staff across the setting and make changes

b) review and make appropriate changes to staff deployment to improve experiences for children

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of the Social Care and Social Work and Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: '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)

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

To support children's wellbeing and safety, the provider should ensure measures are put in place as and when children need additional support to safely access the club.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard 1.19: My care and support meets my needs and is right for me.

This area for improvement was made on 26 September 2022.

Action taken since then

To support children's wellbeing and safety, the manager has put in additional staffing to escort all children to the club on a daily basis. This ensured children were safe and accounted for.

Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website (www.careinspectorate.com) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	3 - Adequate
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	2 - Weak
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	2 - Weak
How good is our staff team?	2 - Weak
4.3 Staff deployment	2 - Weak

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