

Hill of Banchory School Nursery Day Care of Children

Hill of Banchory South
Banchory
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 January 2023

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

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SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2005113688

About the service

Hill of Banchory School Nursery is provided by Aberdeenshire Council. The service operates from purpose built premises within one of the local primary schools in Banchory, close to local amenities like shops.

The nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 60 children aged two to those not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 and 12 January 2023. The inspection was carried out by two 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:

- made contact with seven parents of children who attended
- spoke with the children, staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children.
- Staff knew the children well and supported their individual needs.
- Staff had developed good relationships with parents, they felt well informed and involved their child's experiences and learning.
- The setting were flexible in their approach, accommodating families and allowing children time to settle in.
- Staff were passionate about their role and were keen to extend their professional development to further improve outcomes for children.
- To support continuous improvement the service should ensure that staff are monitored effectively and staff deployment.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very 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?

5 - Very Good

1.1 Nurturing care and support

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Most staff were gentle, warm and caring in their approach. They were in tune with children and their needs, responding to children's requests and picking up on their cues. Comfort and reassurance was given when needed, contributing to positive attachments being formed.

Children appeared confident, happy and engaged in their play supported by staff who were observed to be taking a genuine interest, and chatting to the children about what they were doing. We observed that positive relationships had been formed between staff and the children who had fun together. There was lots of laughter, encouragement and celebrating success. We saw evidence of this outdoors when the staff and children were creating a road and pedestrian crossing together with chalk and the road signs.

When speaking to staff it was clear that they knew the children well, and were able to discuss personalities, sensitivities, likes/dislikes and anything they were supporting them with. This allowed experiences, care and support to be tailored to children's individual needs which supported them to feel safe and secure.

Parents said staff had bonded well with their children and felt there was a good understanding of their child's individual qualities and interests. This had been reflected in the activities they did and conversations that have had with staff about areas of development. Another parent said: "they couldn't praise the staff enough for helping support their child's needs but also helping support them as a family". Parents said: "their children had built up some close and brilliant relationships with the staff, and that their children were well supported and looked after in a loving and supportive environment and were happy that all their individual needs were met".

It was clear from our observations that the setting offered flexibility to families, taking into account preferences and wishes. We saw that children were given time to settle in and this was tailored to suit individuals. Children benefitted from this time as we observed new children being very happy and settled within the setting. Parents said: "children were quick to settle into nursery, which they felt was a great strength of the nursery itself as a facility, as well as the skills and approach of the staff".

Children were encouraged to help prepare snack and were able to have snack when they were ready, ensuring play wasn't interrupted. They were encouraged to be independent by serving their own food using tongs and pouring their own drinks. Labels with numbers were used to support independence and learning.

The children enjoyed lunch using both rooms. We recognised that the setting had been working on creating a relaxed, positive social experience for the children at the mealtimes. The staff team felt that using both rooms worked best to achieve this. We observed children being encouraged to be independent by serving their own vegetables using spoons and tongs. Some lovely manners were displayed as children passed serving dishes around the table. The children clearly enjoyed their lunch making comments such as: "10 out of 10 for lunch" and "my tummy is going to be all full".

In one room staff were sitting with children, and we heard lots of discussion about their day and interests. Staff offered support, and encouragement was given to develop self-help skills. In the other room staff were more task-focussed during lunch time which resulted in a less nurturing experience for the children. Following discussions with management we found that support had been put in place to ensure that there will be a more constant approach across both rooms. Children had access to fresh water throughout the day which ensured they stayed hydrated.

In the afternoon the 'Sunshine Room' was equipped with mats, and cosy spaces with the lights dimmed. This created a nice, calm, relaxed atmosphere for children who wanted a quieter area to play or relax. Staff shared with us that one child required a sleep as part of their daily routine, and were supported to do so in a safe, calm and nurturing environment.

Children's wellbeing and progress was supported through personal planning. Plans contained registration information, 'All about Me' information which captured children's likes/dislikes, routines and interests. Personal planning documents were individualised for each child and the wellbeing indicators captured individualised information and supported the children's progression. Ensuring this was followed up would provide a holistic approach to care and allow staff to effectively track progress in health and wellbeing.

Support plans were in place for children who required them. This ensured that all staff were clear on sensitivities and how these were being supported, outlining any triggers and strategies being used. Chronologies were being used to capture significant events in the children's lives. These highlighted that staff were aware of potential safeguarding and wellbeing issues and that appropriate actions had been carried out. We also saw welfare logs were used for more sensitive information. Plans showed a good level of agency working and that the team were proactive in reaching out to and seeking advice from agencies and professionals.

The setting's policy detailed how they would safely manage the administration of medication. Medication was stored safely in accordance with current best practice. The service should now ensure that all information required by the staff, including signs and symptoms is accessible with the medication. Appropriate training had been given to staff on conditions, with some staff having undertaken more specialised training. This would ensure the children's health and wellbeing.

We did not see any nappy changing, however, an appropriate policy was in place. We asked staff to talk us through the procedure which appeared to be a relaxed, nurturing experience for the children, with appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) and appropriate changing facilities being used.

1.3: Play and learning

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

Free flow between indoors and outside most of the time meant the children had the choice of where they wanted to play. Across the nursery children were engaged in play throughout their day with access to a range of age appropriate resources. Loose parts, real and open ended resources were available to children in both the indoor and outdoor environments.

A group of children created a large platform and walkway with the large blocks to protect them from the floor which was 'lava'. They were pretending to be 'lava monsters' and were using the loose parts available to support their play. One child said: "watch out, this is lava" holding a plastic box with corks. These resources promoted children's curiosity and encouraged them to be creative, problem solve and use their imagination.

Children were seen to be independent and given choice in where and what they played with, with a child-led approach to learning implemented. We didn't observe children using the play dough station but ingredients were provided along with cards to support them make play dough independently. Later in the day a staff member asked if anyone wanted to make play dough and a group of children were keen to be involved. Baking and cooking with the children offer them opportunities to develop life skills as well as independence.

During our observations we felt literacy and numeracy could have been more naturally embedded within the setting, for example: a clock, calendar and recipe book in the house corner, measuring tapes and clipboard with writing materials in the construction area. However, we did see staff using opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills with the children during play. Outdoors we heard mathematical language like "full" and "empty" being reinforced as children poured water during their play in the mud kitchen. Children had opportunities to share books with staff. Staff told us that they had recently undertaken 'Book Bug' training and now felt more confident and animated reading stories. Children had been enjoying rhyming stories, which were supporting the development of early literacy skills.

Staff used open ended questions during interactions promoting children's curiosity and encouraging them to be creative, problem solve and extend their thinking. In the craft area children were creating presents using a range of materials and one of the children was trying hard to wrap with card. Staff supported the child by asking: "it's quite thick, what could we do?" - "what will we need?" and this supported the children to think, problem solve and overcome the problem.

Management told us that the service was in the early stages of documenting planning and had been working hard, liaising with other services to share practice and find systems that would suit the setting. We could see during our visit that responsive planning was taking place and more experienced staff were able to talk about how they went with the children's interests and extended these. We saw mind maps that had been used to gather children's thoughts and ideas. Staff spoke about developing this further using floor books with the children. Going forward the setting have set aside protected time for planning meetings to give staff the opportunity to consider next steps, challenge and progression within their planning.

Learning journals documented observations and captured individual learning for children. These contained an overview of child development and observations under each of the curricular areas. Observations took into account what was seen and the children's voice. To allow staff to track children's achievements and progress it would be beneficial to capture next steps. This would support how to plan children's experiences, offer individualised support and provide children with challenge and depth to learning.

There was good engagement with the families. Parents commented on observations of their children's experiences within the learning journals. Parents told us they updated their children's learning journal with activities enjoyed as a family outside of the nursery setting. They had also taken part in 'Stay and Play' sessions to see first hand the activities their children engaged in and the facilities available to support their learning.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The environment was well maintained and secure with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Children were observed to move around the setting with confidence, while being able to choose where they played. Children had the opportunity to play indoors or out with a free flow system in place.

Indoors was set up thoughtfully using furniture to create enclosures for the children to explore. A variety of resources to support different play experiences were accessible to the children in both rooms. One room offered messy play, large construction, loose parts and a house corner. In this room we saw busy, motivated children crafting, getting involved in imaginative play with the construction and loose parts. Children were also exploring sensory resources such as rice and Weetabix.

The other room had been set up as a quieter, cosier space offering more focused activities such as table top games and puzzles. A cosy corner with a large comfy sofa, rug and shelter provided space for the children to relax and enjoy books. Resources such as hessian on the walls and lighting were added to soften the room. These all helped create a welcoming feel to the service.

Outdoors was set up to ensure children were given daily opportunities for outdoor learning experiences in all weathers. There was a wide range of resources to support learning including open ended resources such as wooden planks, reels and crates, a digging area, mud kitchen and shelters for the children. One child was experimenting with making a walkway and a bridge with a plank of wood. They were making it higher and lower, moving the plank up and down the bridge. They then extended this by balancing and as they became more confident were bouncing and jumping off. The child was very engaged for a period of time with lots of experimenting and problem solving taking place.

The outdoor area was predominately concrete with rubber and a small area with trees for digging. The children also had access to a wooded area across from the school. This ensured the children had the opportunity to explore and learn in different environments. Staff told us that they made use of facilities within the wider school. Children had access to the sensory room, library, gym hall and the adventure playground. As well as supporting needs this supported the children to become familiar with the whole school environment.

Staff told us about exploring the local community, taking the children to the shops for snack and visiting the library, which they did on our second visit. We also saw children go litter picking around the school. Parents told us their children loved being outdoors and had plenty of opportunities to explore their surroundings both inside and outside of nursery. They said the children also have access to plenty of walks around the local area.

Robust infection control measures ensured a clean, safe environment for children. We observed handwashing being carried out by both staff and children at appropriate times. PPE was worn when required in line with best practice guidance, for example: during personal care, nappy changing and food preparation.

Risk assessments were in place for indoor and outdoor environments which raised staff awareness of potential risks and measures in place to support a safe environment. This contributed to keeping children safe and well. Children were also encouraged to risk assess their environment, encouraging them to think about their own safety. Risk assessments were reviewed as changes occurred or as part of routine quality assurance. This ensured they were current and adapted as needed. Accidents and incidents were documented well, and information shared with parents. These were then audited and action taken if necessary.

The local authority was responsible for the upkeep of the building and carrying out repair work. Any work or repairs carried out by the janitor was noted in the maintenance log which was kept on the premises.

Children's personal information was stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the setting. This was easily accessible for staff.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

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

A shared vision, values and aims had been developed to include the views and ideas of staff, children and parents, promoting a shared vision and values for the service - capturing what was important to all using and working there. This had been developed using the wellbeing indicators which were displayed within the nursery. During our visit we were able to see this vision coming through in how well the staff knew the children as individuals, and how well they were supporting their needs. We could see how keen the setting was to support families, for example through flexibility within settling in.

Parents, staff and children had been given questionnaires to gain their views and ideas around the values, visions and aims. We discussed using this and other approaches to gather families views in other areas of the nursery, for example: encouraging the families to share their thoughts following stay and play sessions. Any ideas could then be acted upon to ensure the families felt included, their views valued and taken account of, thus contributing to making improvements to the setting and for outcomes for children.

Children's views were sought to gather their ideas on activities and resources through daily discussions. We saw evidence of this in mind maps around the nursery.

Staff appraisals were carried out regularly by management. This gave management an opportunity to discuss staff's health and wellbeing and talk about how they were feeling at work. This process also supported staff to plan next steps and discuss their professional development and opportunities around training.

Staff observations and monitoring had not taken place recently due to a number of new staff members having joined the team and being supported to settle into their role. Management recognised the importance of this with regards to improving practice and outcomes for children. We saw that plans were in place for implementing a staff monitoring system with all staff including new staff.

Staff reflected together daily, however, due to their working hours it had been difficult to set aside protected time for everyone to come together to formally reflect. The setting had used in service days and going forward have plans for more regular staff meetings. This time will be used for reflection, self-evaluation and team building.

We saw that management used best practice documents such as practice notes: 'Realising the Ambition', 'How Good is Our Early Learning & Childcare' (HGIOELC) and the Quality Framework to pose challenge questions for the staff. The outcome was used to inform the setting action plans where we saw evidence of action taken to improve outcomes for children around mealtimes. This system enabled the service to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The setting were using a local authority RAG (red, amber, green) document to support improvement and create action plans. The setting have been working on improvements around mealtimes and family engagement. It was clear to see there has been positive changes within the service. Within this document there lots of actions noted. The setting should now be sure to capture even the small tests of change and evaluate these, ongoing with dates to show improvement and the impact on outcomes for children.

Management had also created a staff floor book to document their improvement journey to success. This was aimed to encourage staff to be more focused and think about how they were doing and how they knew this. Staff were being encouraged to take ownership of this and document their thoughts and ideas going forward.

A quality assurance calendar was used to plan ahead and for updating procedures, audits and reviews within the setting each term. This was linked to the Quality Framework and HGIOELC and was aimed to ensure quality experiences are a key focus for everyone throughout the year.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

4.3 Staff deployment

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

Staff were warm and responsive in their approach. They joined in children's play and followed their interests. Staff all knew the individual needs and interests of the children which allowed them to offer individualised support and care. We found the staff team to be enthusiastic and motivated and our discussions highlighted that they were passionate about their role.

Staff communicated well, were flexible and moved with children depending on their interests and needs. They asked each other for support and also offered support to colleagues. Staffing levels throughout most of the day supported the wellbeing and safety of children using the service.

At busier times such as lunchtime, some staff were more task focussed resulting in them spending less time with the children to support their needs. For example: lunchtime in the 'Rainbow Room', staff weren't clear about their roles, and weren't available to effectively support the children. As a result children were not always benefiting from the relaxed, unhurried social experience that lunchtime should be. This was highlighted and we saw there were plans in place to support this.

Although ratios were met throughout the day at times staff appeared unsure where they were needed, particularly in the afternoon. A weekly rota to support deployment of staff taking account of shift work should support effective staff deployment.

The setting had a sizeable staff room which offered staff somewhere to relax and refresh at lunchtime. Supply staff regularly worked in the setting and clearly knew the children well and were familiar with the nursery routines.

Staff were qualified and had a good knowledge of child development. They were able to discuss how they had identified areas for development and how they were supporting children with things like social skills and toileting. Parents told us how staff had supported with toileting when their child was scared to go to the toilet. The child had been supported daily with a member of staff going to the toilet with the child, changing together when needed, enabling the child to now go to the toilet independently.

Staff have had the opportunity to gain professional qualifications and take part in a range of training and were enthusiastic to continue with their professional development. They were able to discuss the impact their learning had on their practice and outcomes for children. For example: training geared towards two year olds had given staff inspiration to adapt experiences for the younger children, and they spoke about introducing large canvas painting.

We discussed developing champion roles with the staff. Through identifying their skills and preferences, staff could be given the responsibility of developing an area within nursery. This would support their professional development and improve experiences for children.

All parents felt communication from the nursery was very good. They felt well informed about what their children did at nursery and felt the time given to them at pick up by a member of staff was valuable. Parents said: "they enjoyed receiving updates through the learning journal and got a daily account of activities from staff". They said: "communications were good and they knew they could approach the nursery staff for more information if they had concerns or questions". Parents also said: "they appreciated it when nursery upload weekly updates". They spoke about the relationships they had built with their child's keyworker, and were looking forward to the meetings to discuss how their children were getting on.

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

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