

# Plockton Primary School Nursery - GM Day Care of Children

Plockton Primary School  
Plockton  
IV52 8TW

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
27 April 2023

**Service provided by:**  
Highland Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001693

**Service no:**  
CS2004072981

## About the service

Plockton Primary School Nursery GM is situated in the small, rural village of Plockton within the Lochalsh area of the Highlands.

The nursery is located within Plockton Primary School and had its own separate entrance. Accommodation comprises of a reception space, small playroom with kitchen facilities, toilet provision and an enclosed, outdoor area. The nursery also has access to the larger school playground and a grassy outdoor space across the road from the main school building.

The service is provided by Highland Council and managed by the deputy head head teacher of the Plockton 3-18 campus. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 15 children aged 3 years to not yet attending primary school. From 7 November 2022 to 29 June 2023 the service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 16 children aged 3 years to not yet attending primary school.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 and 27 April 2023. 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:

- spoke with children using the service and four of their families;
- reviewed email feedback from one family;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and children's experiences; and
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Relationships between the staff and children were strong and children experienced nurturing and supportive care.
- Play experiences offered children some opportunities to develop and extend their language, literacy and numeracy skills.
- Staff interactions were positive and supported children to feel included and respected.
- The indoor and outdoors play spaces reflected children's interests and stages of development and learning.
- Effective self-evaluation processes were supporting improvement in some areas.
- Children's safety was significantly compromised as actions to address risks were not implemented effectively.

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

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

## How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

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

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, settled and had fun engaging with staff throughout the session. Relationships between the staff and children were strong and children experienced nurturing and supportive care. Staff were responsive to children's individual needs, offering reassurance, praise and physical comfort to children when needed. This supported children to feel safe, confident, and secure within the nursery environment.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. This was carried out in collaboration with families and partners to promote consistency and continuity in care. Parents commented "staff really accommodate my child and his needs" and "we update the care plan and make changes together". Staff spoke confidently and knowledgeably about the individual care needs of children and effectively implemented strategies to support their development and progress. As a result, children received well-planned care and support to meet their individual needs.

Snack and mealtimes were a positive, relaxing, and sociable time for children. Food choices were nutritious and children had access to fresh water throughout the day to support hydration. Children were fully involved in the preparation and delivery of snack. For example, children were supported to chop and prepare various fruits, set and arrange the table and collect and serve their own food and drinks. This promoted children's independence and skills for life. At lunchtimes, staff engaged in nurturing conversations with children which supported their sense of belonging as well as the development of their Gaelic language skills. We spoke with the staff and manager about developing further opportunities for children to be supported to make choices at lunchtimes. For example, by providing visual aids to support children's understanding of their choice of meal and offering children more opportunities to serve their own meal accompaniments.

Staff worked in partnership with outside professionals to improve outcomes for children when they needed additional help. Appropriate strategies had been identified and put in place to support children, for example with managing transitions and change. As a result, children were enabled to reach their potential.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children's play and learning was carefully supported during the inspection. Children were able to participate in planned and spontaneous play experiences that were interesting and offered opportunities for children to investigate and be creative. For example, the loose parts play available in the outdoor space was used by children to empty, fill and transport objects which successfully captured their imagination and enriched their play and learning. This enabled children to be empowered and lead their learning.

Play experiences offered children some opportunities to develop and extend their language, literacy and numeracy skills. For example, a range of mark making resources available across the playroom and outdoors supported children to engage in early writing through their play experiences. Some staff labelled and repeated new vocabulary for children to develop their mathematical language around number and counting as they played hopscotch outdoors and sorted objects indoors. This supported children to learn key skills through play. The service had identified the need to develop staff confidence around providing more quality play opportunities for numeracy indoors and outdoors.

Staff interactions were positive and supported children to feel included and respected. For example, staff modelled and used language to support children to be aware of ways to keep themselves safe when using larger loose parts outdoors. Staff also skilfully modelled and used language to support children to manage conflict and communicate and develop relationships with their peers. As a result, children were able to develop their social skills, confidence and sense of belonging within the service.

Planning approaches within the nursery were child centred and responsive to the children's interests. Children's words, pictures and ideas were captured within floor books which demonstrated their involvement in the planning process. The staff team were in the early stages of implementing and documenting a more child centred and responsive planning approach within the nursery. As a result, recording key learning and meaningful next steps for children was not consistent across all planning information.

Children's individual development and progress was recorded and shared with families via online learning profiles. One parent commented "We feel involved and 'see-saw' is a good way to see what our son has been up to. We have had one parents evening and staff are usually available to speak to if needed.". We noted that the quality and quantity of observations within children's profiles meant that there was only limited evidence of children's individual progress in learning. The service had identified the need to continue to develop consistency of observations. We discussed how they could improve the recording of observations with a clearer focus on learning for individual children.

## How good is our setting?

## 2 - Weak

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

### Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The nursery was clean, comfortable and welcoming for children and families. The layout and size of the indoor area provided some challenges in terms of available space and resources. For example, the small indoor playroom had limited space to be able to provide two tables for snack provision. However, as part of their ongoing improvement work, the staff team had used best practice guidance to carefully consider the experiences and spaces available within the learning environment indoors and outdoors. As a result, the playroom and outdoor space were set out in a manner which enabled children to access a good range of resources easily and lead their own play. This demonstrated the value of children's ownership and autonomy within the service.

The indoor playroom was structured to reflect children's interests and stages of development and learning. Consideration had been given to the continuous provision indoors to promote children's curiosity and imagination. We observed some children having fun emptying and filling containers and real objects in the sand tray. The construction area was a popular space for play and provided ample space for children to be creative, use their imagination and work together building pirate models. Some children commented "I play with my babies" and "I would change the cars so there's more of them". Children benefited from cosy spaces to rest and relax which supported their overall well-being. Indoors, a quiet space with soft furnishings, blankets and, sleeping mats were used by children to read books and rest. Outdoors, the 'Summer House' provided space for children to shelter and experience a quieter, nurturing area. This gave a strong sense to children that they mattered.

Staff recognised the benefits of outdoor play and provided children with daily opportunities for free flow access between the indoor and outdoor nursery areas. This enabled children to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. The outdoor environment was structured to take account of children's age and stage of development. Outdoors, children had access to a range of loose parts including, tyres, plastic pipes, crates and planks of wood. These open-ended materials provided children with opportunities to be creative and solve problems. Areas to climb, run and explore also provided opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills.

The current nappy changing facilities do not support effective infection prevention and control or children's dignity. At the time of the inspection, nappy changing took place on a mat on the floor of a small staff toilet. This potentially increases the risk of the spread of infection and does not currently meet best practice guidance reflected in 'Space to Grow' and 'Nappy changing facilities for early learning and childcare services: information to support improvement' (see area for improvement 1).

Children's safety was significantly compromised as actions to address risks were not implemented effectively. Following a serious incident where a child had left the service unattended, the service had taken some action to minimise risks and keep children safe. This included ensuring the main entrance gate was supervised at pick up and drop off times. The manager had identified further risks to the outdoor area and had liaised with the provider to address these. However, at the time of the inspection, the provider had failed to take appropriate action to minimise the risks to children's safety. Following discussions with the manager, further improvements were made during the inspection and assurances were given that further actions would be addressed by 2 May 2023. These included, ensuring the gates in the outside space are secure at all times, ensuring children are effectively supervised and reviewing the risk presented to children by the gap at the bottom of the vehicle gate in the outdoor nursery space (see requirement 1).

Furthermore, risks identified by the service, for example a gap in the higher-level fencing in the outdoor area, remain unresolved by the provider. We've asked the provider to resolve these by 21 June 2023. As a result, there was potential for children to leave the service unaccompanied which placed children at risk (see requirement 2).

## Requirements

1. By 2 May 2023, the provider must ensure that children are kept safe by implementing effective systems to prevent children leaving the service without a responsible adult. This should include but is not limited to:

- a) ensuring the gates in the outside space are secure at all times;
- b) reviewing the risk presented to children by the gap at the bottom of the vehicle gate in the outdoor nursery space; and
- c) ensuring areas where children could potentially leave the premises are effectively supervised at all times until such time as the required safety measures are in place.

This is in order 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:

'My environment is safe and secure'. (HSCS 5.17).

2. By 21 June 2023, the provider must ensure that the identified risks to children leaving the nursery unaccompanied are addressed.

This is in order 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: '

My environment is safe and secure'. (HSCS 5.17)

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children receiving personal care are effectively supported. The provider should at a minimum ensure:

- a) personal care routines promote children's dignity; and
- b) effective infection prevention and control practices are in place.

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)

This is also consistent with standards set out in the Care Inspectorate document 'Nappy changing facilities for early learning and childcare services: information to support improvement' (2018).

## How good is our leadership?

## 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

A collaborative approach towards quality assurance and improvement was a priority for the management team. Quality assurance processes were in place to ensure some aspects of the service were routinely monitored such as personal planning, children's play experiences and planning and assessment of learning. This resulted in the identification of areas for development which the service worked towards improving. For example, monitoring of the learning environment supported staff to improve the layout and availability of resources within the indoor and outdoor spaces. This resulted in children having more choice, independence and opportunities for creative play within the nursery.

Through quality assurance processes, the manager had identified risks to children's safety and taken some steps to address these. However, some of these were missed and some had not been addressed promptly by the provider. For example, works to improve the safety of the outdoor gates had been requested by the manager before the serious incident in March. However, works were not carried out until after the inspection. This put children's safety at risk (see requirement 1).

Regular staff meetings and visits to nursery from the manager and nursery support teacher supported effective self-evaluation. The service had used improvement methodology to carry out small tests of change around introducing a rolling snack and improving and developing literacy and numeracy opportunities through loose parts. They were currently in the process of reviewing the impact of these changes and planning next steps. The staff team worked well together, and staff welcomed feedback and suggestions for improvement. Staff were encouraged to be part of the service development and reflect on their practice together. This demonstrated the service were committed to improving outcomes for children.

The views of children and families were actively sought by the service to inform the development of the setting. For example, children and families had been given the opportunity to take part in the development of the outdoor space. They had helped to fundraise for resources through a 'welly walk' and had been invited to add ideas for the outdoor space during an open day. As well as this, families provided support with practical work to create some of the new outdoor play spaces and resources. Meaningfully involving families helped to promote a shared partnership in the delivery of high-quality care for children. Regular communication with families also took place through a variety of methods including email, telephone, through children's online profiles, questionnaires and face to face discussions. This supported families to feel included and respected.

### Requirements

1. By 21 June 2023, the provider must have effective systems in place to identify any safety issues and address these promptly.

This is in order 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:

'My environment is safe and secure.' (HSCS 5.17); and  
'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.' (HSCS 4.23).

## How good is our staff team?

## 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

### Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The staff were caring and nurturing and committed to providing a positive experience for all children. They were warm and friendly in their approach which promoted a happy and inclusive environment where children could play and have fun. Several parents commented that they received good handovers at drop off and pick up times. This supported continuity of care for children across the day and positive transitions. Parents said, "The nursery gives a general feeling of being nurtured and staff are flexible, relaxed and welcoming." and "...staff know our child well and care for him superbly".

The manager recognised that ensuring the service was appropriately staffed during the day was essential for the wellbeing of children. Staff worked well together as a team and brought a range of skills and experience to the service. During the inspection, a number of supply staff were working in the nursery and they integrated well within the existing staff team. There were clear processes in place for mentoring and supporting temporary staff using the existing knowledge of the staff team. For example, using Gaelic language during routines and play with children was modelled by the existing staff member for newer staff. This ensured children received good quality care and support from all adults.

The ethos between team members was positive and interactions between staff were kind and respectful. This helped to create a positive atmosphere for both staff and children to feel comfortable and secure in. At times, the staff team communicated well with each other when a task took them away from their designated area. For example, they would inform each other when leaving the room or when attending to a child's needs. However, this was not always consistent throughout the day and there were times where a lack of communication impacted on children's safety. For example, at playtime the low level internal nursery gate leading to the wider school playground and then beyond the school grounds was not supervised. This did not support children's safety (see area for improvement 1).

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children are safe and effectively supervised at all times, the manager should review and evaluate staff skills and deployment. This should include but is not limited to ensuring:

- a) sufficient numbers of staff are deployed within the nursery as is appropriate to effectively and consistently meet the health, wellbeing, welfare and safety of children; and
- b) staff are deployed effectively to ensure children are kept safe at all times.

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

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15); and  
'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19).

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	2 - Weak
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	2 - Weak
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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