

# Ardersier Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Ardersier Primary School  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
21 April 2023

**Service provided by:**  
Highland Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001693

**Service no:**  
CS2003017166

## About the service

Ardersier Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 30 children, from the age of three years to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery is operated by Highland Council. The nursery operates term time only.

The nursery is located within Ardersier Primary School, close to the town of Nairn. It has its own separate entrance. The nursery premises consists of a single playroom, kitchen area, reception area and cloakroom facilities. There is an enclosed play area which is freely accessed from the playroom. The main school grounds are also used for play and learning experiences.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 20 and 21 April 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:

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

## Key messages

- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff.
- Children benefited from high quality snack and lunchtime experiences which promoted opportunities to develop their independence and skills for life.
- Play experiences across the nursery supported the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy.
- The indoor and outdoor provision included a variety of loose parts and open ended resources, enabling children to explore, be curious and develop their creativity and imagination.
- Effective quality assurance and self-evaluation processes supported the ongoing development of the service.

## 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

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.

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff throughout the inspection. We observed staff sensitively listening and responding to children at appropriate times, offering comfort and reassurance when needed. This supported children to feel secure, valued and loved. Personalised transition arrangements for children joining the service ensured that they received the individualised support they needed at the right times. The views of families and children were included in this process which supported their ideas and wishes to be respected. One parent said "the transition process has been very relaxed and staff take time to talk to you".

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. One parent said "Every time I pick up \*\*\*\*\* I get a report about his day, I talk with staff about how I can help him at home and how they can help him in nursery, we work out how we can improve 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, all children received well-planned care and support to meet their individual needs.

Children benefited from high quality snack and lunchtime experiences which promoted opportunities to develop their independence and skills for life. For example, children were involved in setting tables and clearing away dishes. They poured their own water and milk, served their own snack and meal accompaniments and had choice around healthy and nutritious foods to eat. Staff had used best practice guidance to review their mealtime provision and implemented changes to improve experiences for children. This included, developing aspects of the lunchtime environment to make the experience more nurturing for children. The addition of tablecloths, flowers, real crockery and cutlery as well as individualised placemats supported a homely and relaxed atmosphere. Staff were focussed on the children, sitting with them during mealtimes. This ensured children received a positive social experience and supported opportunities to develop and nurture secure attachments between staff and children. The staff team had worked closely with families to promote more varied, healthy and nutritious packed lunch choices which supported children's overall health and wellbeing.

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 communication and language development. As a result, children were supported to reach their potential.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were able to participate in planned and spontaneous play experiences that were fun and interesting and offered opportunities for children to investigate and be creative. For example, the water play space outdoors was a popular area for children to play and we observed periods of sustained, purposeful play where children used loose parts to create a pipe system to successfully carry water from one area to another. This supported children to use their imagination, solve problems together and enriched their play and learning experiences.

Play experiences across the nursery supported the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy. Children were able to practice and develop their emerging writing skills through painting, cutting, glueing and mark making across the indoor and outdoor spaces. Examples of children's mark making were valued, displayed within the service and used to support aspects of the day to day routine such as planning learning. One child commented on their mark making "It's a rainbow unicorn with rainbow colours". Regularly sharing stories, songs and rhymes with their peers and adults ensured children had the opportunity to revisit familiar texts and consolidate their learning. This supported the development of their talking and listening skills. Staff and children were developing their knowledge of British Sign Language to support an inclusive environment and enhance communication between children and their peers.

Children's access to a range of loose parts supported opportunities to develop key numeracy skills. For example, the availability of water and sand afforded opportunities for children to explore capacity and weight. We also observed children developing counting and information handling skills through everyday routines. Children confidently shared information from a table they had created around how they travelled to school. They could count and share how many children had walked, cycled or travelled in a car. One child commented "I came to school on my bike". These experiences supported children to learn key numeracy skills through their everyday play and learning.

Most staff used skilled interactions to support children's learning and development. We observed staff using a range of communication techniques to support children at different developmental stages. These included using open questions to extend play and learning as well as timing interactions carefully and using visual prompts and sign language to support other children. This enabled children to feel valued and included within the nursery setting.

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 had recently implemented a new approach to planning and profiling children's learning. Staff commented this was working well and felt it was more responsive to the children's needs. Children's individual development and progress was recorded and shared with families through profile folders. Within these folders, staff gathered observations of children's development and learning and used best practice guidance to support planning for next steps. This ensured that children were progressing well and were happy and confident learners.

## How good is our setting?

## 5 - Very Good

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.

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

The indoor playroom was welcoming, comfortable and homely with plenty of natural light and ventilation. 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. As a result, the playroom and outdoor space were set out in a manner which enabled children to access resources easily and lead their own play. This demonstrated the value of children's ownership and autonomy within the service.

Within the indoor space, children had access to resources that were clean, well presented, and encouraged exploration, enquiry and fun. The continuous provision indoors had been well considered to include a wide variety of open ended and natural resources, enabling children to explore opportunities which promoted their curiosity and imagination. We observed children following their own interests in the role play space by using loose parts to empty and fill containers, make imaginary food and be creative. Children commented "I love playing in the home corner" and "I like to play outside, in the home corner, in the paint and the water trays. Everywhere!" Children's individual interests had also been considered within the environment with one child's interest in the solar system reflected in the resources and objects available for them to play with. This supported children to feel engaged and included in the nursery space.

There were cosy and quiet areas for children to rest and relax which supported their emotional needs. Staff and children also used these areas for reading stories and singing songs. We observed nurturing attachments between staff and children during these experiences. This supported children's language development as well as their sense of well-being within the nursery.

Children benefitted from free-flow play between the indoor and outdoor area. This enabled children to have choice, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Outdoors, there were opportunities for children to experience more physical play experiences, helping to extend their gross motor skills. We observed children having fun investigating and using loose parts to create areas for balancing as well as practising climbing and jumping skills on the cable drum and climbing frame. This contributed to children being confident when playing outdoors and creating imaginative play experiences for themselves.

Staff supported children's involvement in identifying and managing risks. For example, children were supported to complete a risk assessment of the outdoor play space at the beginning of the day. One child commented "We test everything.". They were also supported to identify risks indoors. We observed children being encouraged to think about keeping safe whilst sharing space in the cosy area and while using water in play. These experiences provided children with opportunities to assess and manage risk in their play and build self-confidence.

Infection control practices minimised the potential spread of infection, for example children were confident in their hand washing routines at snack and lunchtimes. We observed that accident and incident information was documented correctly and regularly audited to further reduce risks to children and staff.

**How good is our leadership?****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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well**

Since the last inspection, the management team had made significant progress in implementing clear and effective plans to improve the service through their self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. A robust and transparent quality assurance calendar had been introduced, enabling the principal teacher to undertake quality assurance of key areas such as observations of learning, planning, environment, medication and the snack and mealtime experiences. As a result children were experiencing a well-managed service with a strong focus on quality and continued improvement.

Effective self-evaluation processes supported the ongoing development of the service. An improvement plan with identified actions and timescales was in place. Staff were familiar with current improvements and could describe the positive difference they were making for children and families. Planned improvements were realistic, with a focus on promoting positive outcomes for children and supported by best practice guidance. These included implementing a refreshed approach to the snack and lunchtime experiences as well as reviewing and improving the continuous provision within the learning environment. The impact of these improvements was making a positive difference to children's experiences. Some parents commented on the service improvements. "The recent positive changes made within the nursery this past few months has made such a wonderful impact on my child. I feel she is learning so much more." and "They always have plenty of activities for the children. There has been a shift recently of new items and layout of the room and it has helped make it feel like the kids have areas to play in." The service are currently taking part in the Care Inspectorate Early Learning and Childcare improvement programme to further develop and support their professional knowledge and skills when implementing change.

The views of children and families were actively sought to inform the development of the service. For example, families had taken part in the review of the service vision, values and aims. Regular communication with families also took place through a variety of methods including email, telephone, through an online platform, newsletters and face to face discussions. Regular stay and play sessions have taken place, with some focussed on areas of the improvement such as early writing. This has enabled families to be actively involved in supporting their children's learning and development. One parent commented on the improvement with communication over the last session. "Communication has been better over the last few months ." Meaningfully involving families in the service developments helped to promote a shared partnership in the delivery of high quality care for children.

The service had undergone several staffing changes this session. Regular meetings provided time for staff to come together, reflect on practice and be involved in the identification of areas for improvement and review progress in meeting these. This contributed to the new staff team feeling supported and confident to implement positive changes.

The manager, principal teacher and the senior practitioner had a strong presence in the service and were committed to supporting, developing and modelling good practice. The responsibilities of managing and leading the service were shared in partnership between the management team, creating a culture of improvement with a dedicated focus on ensuring children and families experienced high quality care. Staff spoke positively regarding the impact of the level of support received by the management team. It is important, for the continued development of the service, that the provider ensures the positive impact of the partnership approach by the management team is continued. This will enable improvements to be sustained and fully embedded.

## How good is our staff team?

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 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. Parents said "Staff are really good at communicating with children", "Generally couldn't ask for a more positive nursery experience." and "I have spoken with staff in regards to my child's needs and I feel they have given us great support and advice."

The management team and staff worked well together and brought a range of skills and experience to the service. The newly recruited senior early practitioner was supporting staff members to develop practice and improve experiences for children. During the inspection, a number of support staff from the school were working in the service to cover absence and they integrated well within the existing staff team. This ensured children received high quality care and support from all adults.

The staff team communicated well with each other when a task took them away from a designated area. They informed each other when leaving an area or when attending to a child's needs. 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.

Developing a consistent staff team is a priority for the manager of the service. Over the last session, a number of unplanned absences had caused disruption to the nursery where a number of temporary staff had to cover vacant posts and absences. Some parents commented that they felt that staffing arrangements had been a concern but this had improved in the last few months. Parents said "I see an improvement in staffing now." and "they lack in staff sometimes and the nursery has closed because of this." We spoke with the management team about the importance of maintaining a consistent staff team to support children's play and learning and the ongoing development of the service.



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

### Requirements

#### Requirement 1

By 30 September 2022, to improve outcomes for children, the manager must develop and implement an effective system of quality assurance to monitor and improve all areas of practice. To achieve this, the manager must, at a minimum:

- a) put clear and effective plans in place for maintaining and improving the service including the use of effective self-evaluation processes; and
- b) develop an effective quality assurance and monitoring programme.

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

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

**This requirement was made on 31 May 2022.**

#### Action taken on previous requirement

The management team had continued to make good progress in implementing clear and effective plans to improve the service using self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. Self-evaluation systems have been developed with a clear focus on the priorities identified from the last inspection which included the development of the learning environment and children's experiences. For example, self-evaluation of observation, planning and assessment approaches has resulted in the service reviewing and improving their provision in this area. As a result, staff are planning and providing experiences which are responsive to children's needs and supporting them to make progress in their learning.

Effective quality assurance of the environment and resources had resulted in areas for improvement being identified and addressed. The management team and service staff used best practice guidance to audit and improve provision within the indoor and outdoor spaces. This has included restructuring the indoor playroom layout to provide more accessible and inviting spaces for children to play. As a result, children have more choice and independence in their learning and are more engaged in their play.

We discussed the importance of sustaining and building on this positive progress to ensure continued positive outcomes for children and families.

#### Met - outwith 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

To support and extend children's learning, the management team and staff should review and develop resources available. This should include, but is not limited to, real and natural resources, and loose parts.

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

'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the 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 31 May 2022.**

#### Action taken since then

The indoor and outdoor environments reflected children's interests and curiosities and were appropriately resourced with materials to support play and learning. The management and staff team used best practice guidance to audit provision and identify areas for improvement. For example, the availability of loose parts indoors had been developed and now included, block play, construction materials, sand and water provision, crafting materials as well as other open ended objects. This resulted in high levels of engagement from children and an improvement in the quality of their overall experiences. Monitoring and reviewing the learning environment provision is included in the service's quality assurance calendar to support further development work in this area. This area for improvement has been met.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure that children and families are meaningfully involved and influence change within the setting, the manager should further develop existing self-evaluation processes.

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

'I am actively encouraged to involved in improving the service I use, in a spirit of genuine partnership.' (HSCS 4.7).

**This area for improvement was made on 31 May 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Children and families' views were actively sought to inform the development of the service. Children had been involved in evaluating the new lunchtime experience and their views and comments were included within self-evaluation evidence. Some of their comments included "I like about lunch that you get to clean your own stuff", "The packed lunches get plates too" and "I just like the potatoes, they are delicious". This

demonstrated their involvement in reviewing their experiences, which supported them to feel included and valued.

Regular opportunities for families to visit the service, learn more about their children's progress and contribute to change have been established. For example, feedback from families has been actively sought during open days, stay and play sessions and more informally during daily handovers. One parent shared 'We did stay and play sessions and after these sessions parents were given a feedback form. On that form I suggested more sign language lessons as there are children with difficulty hearing in the group and it would help build communication between the children. They have since started doing a weekly sign and my daughter has been showing me the new sign every week.' This supported families to feel respected, included and involved in supporting meaningful change within the service.

We spoke with the management team about the importance of ensuring continued positive engagement with children and families to supporting the ongoing development of the service. This area for improvement has been met.

## 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?	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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