

Milton Primary and Early Learning Centre Day Care of Children

Mercat Centre
Milton Primary School
Munro Crescent, Milton
Invergordon
IV18 0PX

Telephone: 01862 842 537

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 September 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017247

About the service

Milton Primary and Early Learning Centre is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 30 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The service is operated by Highland Council.

The service is operated from a community centre, the Mercat Centre, attached to Milton Primary School. Accommodation consists of a large playroom, cloakroom, kitchen and toilets. Children also have direct access to a large, enclosed garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 September 2023, between 8.50am and 2.45pm. 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 four children using the service;
- reviewed feedback received from five parents;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced very nurturing care, which supported them to feel settled and secure.
- Children experienced high quality play and learning opportunities, which supported them to progress well and achieve their potential.
- The environment offered exciting and stimulating play spaces, contributing to children learning a wide variety of life-long skills.
- Strong leadership ensured a culture of continuous improvement.
- Staff used their skills and knowledge to ensure high quality outcomes for children.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very 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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff were kind, nurturing and compassionate, supporting children to feel secure, settle and build confidence. Staff spoke knowledgeably about children's individual needs, likes and preferences. They effectively met children's needs throughout the day as they were able to anticipate them in advance. When children needed support with personal care, this was carried out with respect and dignity.

Very effective use of personal planning information supported staff to provide consistency and continuity of care. Personal plans identified clear strategies of support for all children. Parents were central to this process, with parents commenting: "There's good communication between staff and parents" and "communication is fantastic". Parents were very welcome in the setting. They were invited in to join their children and spend time speaking to staff. These opportunities allowed staff to share children's progress and achievements and allowed parents to update staff on any changes in their child's needs.

Children benefited from high quality snack and lunchtime experiences which promoted opportunities to develop their independence and skills for life. During snack children were invited to sit together with staff, who recognised mealtimes as an opportunity to develop close attachments. The use of real crockery for snack, and flowers on the table at lunchtime, enhanced the family feel of mealtimes. Staff supported children with their developing language and communication skills, engaging them in conversation, whilst being vigilant to any risks of choking.

Effective procedures were in place to safeguard children. Staff were confident in discussing the processes and procedures they would follow should they have any concerns about a child's health and wellbeing. As a result, children were protected from possible harm.

Staff had developed strong working relationships with other professionals, such as health visitors and speech and language therapists. When children needed additional support, strategies were developed and put into practice, which supported them to progress and meet their full potential.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun as they experienced high quality play and learning opportunities. They were meaningfully leading their play, supported by staff who knew when to stand back and when to intervene. Children experienced long periods of uninterrupted play, allowing them to become fully engaged in their chosen activity. This resulted in children having full ownership of their play, while receiving an appropriate level of support.

Children benefited from creative approaches to play and learning which engaged their imagination and problem-solving skills. They spent regular time in woods beside the school grounds, often with children and staff from the school. We saw that children were very confident in their environment and were excited to play alongside their friends and older children. They were developing their understanding of managing risk, for example climbing trees. Staff supported children to safely climb up and down, explaining and demonstrating what children needed to do to keep themselves safe. As a result, children were developing confidence and risk management skills.

Play experiences supported children's developing language, literacy, and numeracy skills. Staff naturally introduced song and rhyme throughout the day. Such as, using rhyming songs alongside children making music with wood and loose parts. Children joined in with ease, matching the rhythm in their play which supported their developing language and communication skills. Opportunities to practice early literacy skills, such as mark making and books, were available throughout the setting and in the woods. Well considered resources, alongside natural materials, enable children to practice their developing fine motor skills. Staff supported children's numeracy skills through using mathematical language, such as position and movement, and supported children to recognise quantity and number in their play. As a result, children were being supported to develop a range of lifelong skills.

Staff had a very good understanding of child development, using this to skilfully support high quality play and learning experiences. For example, they actively encouraged children to move resources between areas and to experiment with resources. On the day of inspection, a group of children were playing with marbles, staff supported them to make marble runs using hollow blocks as well as showing them how to play a traditional game.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests and staff were skilled at recognising when children needed support or challenge. Floor books recorded the children's play and learning, which captured children's voices and parents' comments. Learning was also recorded within individual learning profiles. Parents were able to see the floor books and children's profiles and discuss their progress when they were in the setting. The management team and staff were keen to further develop their processes to evaluate children's progress, to ensure that any gaps were fully identified and planned for. Children celebrated their successes and achievements with their peers and staff, which supported their developing emotional resilience.

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children benefited from a setting that was well furnished, comfortable, and homely. Staff had worked hard to create an environment where children felt welcome and relaxed. Real life items, such as plants, lamps and side tables enhanced the homely feel of the playroom. This gave children a strong message that they mattered. Parents told us their children experienced a warm environment and were confident that children were safe and secure.

Children experienced an exciting and stimulating environment. Well considered resources, including natural items, loose parts and materials to support learning were accessible to children both inside and outside. Children could freely access a well-resourced, securely enclosed garden area. They had opportunities to develop their imagination and creativity, alongside opportunities to develop gross motor skills, through digging, running and balancing. Resources were displayed to interest and engage children, located at their height, which promoted ownership of their chosen play experiences.

The setting was well maintained, clean and tidy. Infection control practices minimised the potential spread of infection, for example children were confident in their hand washing routines at snack and lunchtimes.

The service had developed effective systems to keep children safe. Staff had good knowledge and understanding of our SIMOA (safety, inspect, monitor, observe, act) keeping children safe campaign, and how this supported them to ensure children were accounted for at all times. Staff communicated well with each other regarding numbers of children and which area they had chosen to play in. Thorough risk assessments were in place to support all staff to understand how to keep children safe. This created a safe and secure environment where children could enjoy a variety of play experiences, supported by effective staff practice.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

Strong leadership promoted a shared vision which reflected the aspirations of children and their families. Families were encouraged to be involved in the life of the setting, sharing time with children and staff. They were becoming more confident to offer feedback. Most parents agreed that they were meaningfully involved in the development of the setting.

Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes were effective in securing positive outcomes for children. The manager and staff responded well to feedback about the quality of the service provided. They took immediate action to make improvements where they could, and developed action plans to make medium, and long-term improvements. As a result, children benefited from a culture of continuous improvement.

Staff were supported to evaluate their practice by the manager. They evaluated against best practice guidance, such as "A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged children" and "How good is our early learning and childcare?", as well as reviewing inspection reports from similar settings. Staff were reflective of their current practice and were confident to make changes that would benefit the current children attending the setting. This led to high quality care and support tailored towards the needs of children and their families.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

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

Staff interactions were warm and caring. Staff and the manager had high aspirations for all children, and this was evident in the care and support they received. Parents commented "staff are very friendly and approachable" and "my child was very proud to introduce us to their teachers." Staff demonstrated an awareness of when and how to effectively intervene, picking up on cues which supported children's wellbeing and extended their play experiences.

The setting was effectively staffed, with a very good balance of skills, knowledge and experience, to meet the needs of children. The staff team worked closely together, ensuring that children's needs were not compromised when they were undertaking any tasks, such as personal care or preparation of activities. Staff recognised where gaps might exist and gave careful consideration to where to position themselves to ensure children's high-quality experiences were maintained.

There was a very positive ethos within the setting. Staff interactions with each other were respectful and they worked hard to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. The manager was very visible in the setting, supporting staff and interacting with children. This meant that any issues that arose could be dealt with swiftly and effectively, as lines of communication were clear and transparent.

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?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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