

Castletown Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Castletown Primary School
Castletown
Thurso
KW14 8UA

Telephone: 01847 821 256

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 September 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017186

About the service

Castletown Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children, from the age of three years to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery is operated by The Highland Council. The head teacher is the registered manager of the nursery. The nursery operates term time only.

The nursery is located within Castletown Primary School in Castletown, Caithness. It has its own separate entrance. The nursery premises consists of a playroom, with direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area. They also make use of the school playground, playing field and gym for active energetic play.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 6 and 7 September 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
- reviewed online questionnaires from four parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs.
- All parents agreed that overall they were happy with the care and support their children received.
- Mealtimes were sociable and unhurried experiences.
- Play experiences across the nursery supported the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy.
- The service had increased their range of open ended, natural child-centred resources, enabling children to explore their creativity, imagination and problem-solving skills.
- Some improvements had been made to the indoor playroom contributing to a more comfortable environment.
- Planning processes needed further development.
- Continuous improvement was supported by good quality assurance systems.

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?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, settled and enjoyed their time at nursery. They experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. Staff recognised children as individuals and responded effectively to their needs and wishes which provided them with responsive care throughout the day. They communicated with children at their level in a quiet and sensitive way. These supportive interactions developed close bonds between staff and children, contributing to them feeling safe and secure. Personalised transition arrangements for children joining the service ensured that they received the individualised support they needed at the right times.

Children's individual wellbeing was effectively supported through personal planning. Staff knew children very well and spoke knowledgeably about children's differing needs. Overall Information recorded in children's personal plans reflected the care and support staff provided which contributed to continuity and consistency in care.

Establishing good working relationship with parents was important to the staff. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time, as well as online updates. Most parents felt communication was effective. However, there was scope to enhance this. One parent told us that communication at pick up and drop off was often rushed. This limited opportunities to discuss care needs to support continuity and consistency in care.

Positive professional relationships had been developed with other agencies. This ensured the service had information on how to support children with identified additional support needs. As a result children were supported to progress and achieve their full potential.

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. Staff joined children at mealtimes, promoting meaningful conversations. This contributed to the sociable experience for children and provided opportunities for emerging language skills to be developed.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun as they experienced good quality play experiences. They had some opportunities to lead their own play and learning indoors which impacted positively on their development and wellbeing. We saw them playing and interacting with each other which supported them to develop social skills and become confident learners.

Play experiences supported the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy. Children were able to practice and develop their emerging writing skills through painting, cutting and mark making. We also observed children developing counting and information handling skills through everyday routines.

Children were offered good experiences to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning. For example, during water play we observed periods of sustained purposeful play where children used loose parts, supporting them to develop their problem solving skills. Staff used effective questioning, encouraging children to explore, test and develop ideas. This contributed to the development of specific language around pouring, measuring, volume and capacity.

Overall staff understood when to engage and when to stand back, to enable children to develop their play at their pace. Through skilful sensitive engagement staff were able to support, extend and challenge children's thinking. As a result most children were engaged in their play and learning. We did see some opportunities where children's interests or patterns of play were missed. This was also evident within individual profiles, where next steps were not always identified or relevant to children's play, learning and progression. The service had already identified this as an area for improvement and this was detailed in their improvement plan. The service should continue to develop this area of practice, to ensure staff are confident in capturing children's interests, learning and planning for meaningful next steps.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a stimulating environment. The staff team had worked hard to make improvements, with a focus on providing exciting and developmentally appropriate play spaces. They had increased their range of open ended, natural child-centred resources, enabling children to explore their creativity, imagination and problem-solving skills. For example, children played with everyday items which sustained their interest for prolonged periods of time, contributing to the fun they had while playing. Resources indoors were easily accessible and at child height, which promoted ownership of their chosen play experiences.

The indoor playroom had been painted in neutral colours which promoted a natural, calm environment. Carefully considered furnishings were being introduced, contributing to a more comfortable environment. However, these could be increased and further developed to make the environment more homely.

The building had direct access to an outdoor play area. However, we observed very limited opportunities for free flow access between the indoor and outdoor play area, at times outdoor play was adult directed. This should be reviewed and actioned to ensure children have choice around their play and learning experiences.

A well-resourced play area within the school grounds allowed children to explore a natural environment. This provided opportunities for children to experience more physical play experiences, helping to develop their co-ordination and extend their gross motor skills.

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. 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?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children benefitted from a culture of continuous improvement. Effective systems were in place to support the development and improvement of the service. The manager and staff were motivated and committed to the ongoing development of the service to secure positive outcomes for the children.

Good use of quality assurance processes, ensured aspects of the service were being reviewed and monitored in a focused and meaningful way. We saw these to be outcome focused and detailed the impact they had on children. This meant that areas for improvement had been identified, shared with staff and actions taken to make positive changes to children's experience. For example, improvements to the indoor environment. This resulted in improved play and learning for children.

Staff practice and professional development was supported through an effective support and supervision programme. Support and feedback was used constructively to build effective and professional relationships and address gaps in practice. Staff were supported to reflect on and improve their practice, which enabled learning needs to be identified that were centred on improving outcomes for children. This contributed to staff feeling supported and confident to implement positive changes with a shared responsibility.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children benefitted from a caring and nurturing staff team who knew them well. Leaders recognised that consistency of care was important for children. Well considered deployment of staff throughout the day provided continuity for children.

There was varying knowledge and skill across the team which had been taken into account when deploying staff, ensuring children's experience across the day was positive and that they were safe. Additionally routines and the use of the environment had been considered when deploying staff, to ensure high levels of interaction and support.

Most staff were proactive in recognising any gaps and ensuring effective supervision and quality engagement with children. Staff placed themselves thoughtfully to ensure all children's individual needs were well-considered.

Staff communicated well and in a respectful manner to ensure children's needs were met consistently across the day. This contributed to children being respected and created a positive ethos within the service.

Staff provided individualised support by effectively engaging with children throughout the day. Most staff demonstrated an awareness of when and how to effectively intervene, picking up on cues to support children's wellbeing and extend their play experiences. This resulted in positive engagement and interaction.

The management team recognised the need to promote staff wellbeing. However, effective arrangements had not been put in place by the provider, to ensure that staff received breaks to allow them to rest and be refreshed. This placed additional pressure on staff which had potential to compromise the quality of interactions.

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 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)

This area for improvement was made on 14 December 2023.

Action taken since then

The service had started to implement homely touches and created space for children to rest and relax in cosy areas. This enabled children to seek out a calm area where they could have some individual time if needed. The service had identified further scope to continue to embed more homely touches.

They had increased their range of open ended natural real life resources indoors. These reflected children's interests and curiosities and supported them to develop their skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving.

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.

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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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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