

Care service inspection report

Family Centre - Merkinch

Day Care of Children

Coronation Park

Inverness

IV3 8AD

Telephone: 01463 248345

Inspected by: Jenny Smith

Type of inspection: Unannounced

Inspection completed on: 27 February 2013



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Service provided by:

Highland Council

Service provider number:

SP2003001693

Care service number:

CS2006138622

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Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	5	Very Good
Quality of Environment	5	Very Good
Quality of Staffing	5	Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	5	Very Good

What the service does well

The service provides a welcoming and caring environment where children and their families are provided with support tailored to their specific needs. The children who attend the pre-school education session enjoy a calm, happy environment which provides a safe and stimulating area where they can learn through play. The service also provides parenting skills sessions and a family support service which ensures the parents and carers are included in their child's learning and development.

What the service could do better

The service plan to upgrade their outdoor area and build a willow dome with the children.

They also plan to continue with the high level of partnership working and work together with the parents and carers and the children.

What the service has done since the last inspection

Since the last visit the service have had visits from the project worker from "Safe, Strong and Free" and have worked with the children building confidence in dealing with bullying, strangers and learning how to stay safe around adults they know.

The service have also continued to look at ways of involving the children attending the pre-school sessions with all areas of their learning.

The service has introduced knitting classes and "Confidence to Cook" classes for parents and carers. The parents and carers have also been involved with preparing food for open days. The "Stay and Play" sessions have also continued with parents and carers telling us they have really enjoyed and learned a lot from attending these sessions with their child/ren.

Conclusion

Overall a very well organised service with highly committed manager and staff team who work very hard to provide a warm and caring environment where children and their families feel welcome.

The manager and staff are very encouraging and support the pre-school children to take part in the planning and decision making of learning themes and topics. The service provides a high level of care and education for the young children who attend whilst also supporting parents and carers through the many and varied parenting sessions.

The service also works closely with a range of other professionals in order to support the people who use their service.

Who did this inspection

Jenny Smith

1 About the service we inspected

The service operates from a detached building set in its own grounds in the Merkinch area of Inverness. The premises consists of a large open-plan main playroom with smaller rooms leading off from this area, a staff room, office, toilet areas, multi-purpose rooms and one used as a creche. The grounds around have been attractively laid out to provide a "secret garden" and an outdoor play area all with a selection of outdoor play equipment.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children between the ages of 0 to 16 years. The service provision includes a pre-school nursery and may include a breakfast and after school club, school holiday play-scheme and drop in sessions as required.

The care service operates between the times of 8.00am and 6.00pm, 52 weeks of the year (excluding public holidays), Monday to Friday with occasional weekend and evenings as required. Within these hours the service provides a pre-school service for up to 30 children (2 years 6 months to those not yet at school) at any one session, Monday to Friday, am and pm sessions.

The service had displayed their Mission Statement which stated:

- "The Family Centre Merkinch is a welcoming base for providing a friendly service to children and families in Inverness. It is a place where people are treated with respect and where trusting relationships are built between equal partners. Good communication is a high priority, with people investing in positive personal and professional development, underpinned by clear practice guidance and policy guidelines".

Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) - to be known as Care Inspectorate - is the new regulatory body for care services in Scotland. It will award grades for services based on the findings of inspections. The history of grades that services have previously been awarded by the Care Commission will also be available on the Care Inspectorate website - www.careinspectorate.com

This service was deemed registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

Requirements and recommendations

If we are concerned about some aspect of a service, or think it needs to do more to improve, we may make a recommendation or requirement.

A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions the care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service based on best practice or the National Care Standards.

A requirement is a statement which sets out what is required of a care service to comply with the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the Act") and secondary legislation made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Where there are breaches of Regulations, Orders or conditions, a requirement may be made.

Requirements are legally enforceable at the discretion of the Care Inspectorate.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Environment - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Staffing - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 5 - Very Good

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website www.careinspectorate.com or by calling us on 0845 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

What we did during the inspection

This report was written following an unannounced inspection. It was carried out by one inspector, Jenny Smith. The inspection took place on Wednesday 27 February 2013.

The service sent an annual return as requested by us. We issued 15 questionnaires to parents and carers of children using the service. We received seven completed questionnaires before the inspection and the results were overall very positive.

In this inspection we gathered evidence from various documents, including the service's policies, procedures, records and other sources as follows:

- evidence from the service's self assessment (most recent)
- health and safety records
- the planning folder
- discussions with the manager and the staff on duty on 27 February 2013
- brief interviews with ten parents and carers
- observing practice from both sessions
- viewing the environment and equipment
- viewing the outdoor area
- looking at the various questionnaires the service had sent
- the inspector also sat in with the Parent's Timeout Group with three of the parents

The inspector gave feedback to the manager and staff at the end of the visit.

Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

Fire safety issues

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at www.firelawscotland.org

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at our last inspection

There were no requirements or recommendations made in the previous inspection report.

The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

Annual Return Received: Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

This was completed and submitted on-line before the inspection date. This gave a description of the service provided. The service had identified some areas they planned to work on.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

During this visit the inspector observed the children who were attending the Family Centre Merkinch. The younger children were observed to be relaxed and happy and to be very busy with their chosen activities. The pre-school children were familiar with routines and happy during the session. All children were confident and approached the staff with ease. The older children who were asked said they had really good fun at the centre and described their favourite activities.

Taking carers' views into account

As part of the inspection the inspector took time to talk with parents and carers during this unannounced visit. The inspector joined three parents who were enjoying a knitting session in the multi-purpose room (Parents Timeout Group) whilst their children were at the creche and pre-school session. A total of ten parents and carers were spoken with during this visit. When asked if they were happy with the service

provided by the Family Centre Merkinch they said they were very happy, with several describing it as "wonderful".

They were very happy with the safety and security of the building. They all commented on the quality of the outdoor area. They told us that the staff took the children outdoors frequently and had their own outdoor suits, which were washed in the centre, which they liked. They all thought that the range of activities were wide and varied.

Parents and carers confirmed that they received regular information from the service and commented that there was always someone meeting and welcoming them into the service. They also told us the service was very good at keeping them informed of their child's time at the centre and how they were progressing. All said the manager and the staff were very helpful, friendly and easy to talk to.

The completed Care Standards Questionnaires received from parents and carers and the centre's own surveys were also considered. Comments from these have been included within the report. From these questionnaires we learned that people were very happy with the service overall.

There were comments within the Care Standards Questionnaires which were shared with staff during the feedback session.

3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Service strengths

Family Centre - Merkinch was performing to a very good standard in relation to ensuring that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Evidence was found after:

- talking with the manager
- talking with the staff from all areas
- the inspector joined 3 parents during a Parent's Timeout Group session
- brief with parents and carers from both sessions
- looking at service policies and procedures
- looking at records relating to health and safety
- observing practice.

The service had noted on the self-assessment document:

- "Parents have a number of opportunities to express their views e.g. Questionnaires, Response Sheets, Comments and suggestions box".

Parental Involvement

During the visit the inspector looked at how the service shared information with parents and carers. They used various methods which included:

- the children's Learning Journeys (folders)
- parenting groups
- newsletters
- open days and events
- notice boards

The manager told us that one of the most frequently used was the Nursery Blog Board (white-board), which she described as a Graffiti Wall they had introduced to encourage parental feedback. They posted a comment here and parents and carers could add their comments, views and opinions. She described this as a quick yet effective way of sharing information and gaining feedback.

The nursery had a secure entrance. There was a suggestions' box in the entrance area as well as a complaints policy displayed for parents and carers. The manager said they encouraged parents and carers to share any ideas or interests with the children. The waiting area outside the playroom contained information boards for parents and carers and also several information boards within the cloakroom area within the playroom. One such board was headed: "What we are learning" - which detailed what the children were learning and what the current theme/topic was.

The centre had a pre-school booklet containing lots of information for parents and carers about the service and the pre-school education provided at the family centre. This outlined how they delivered the curriculum for excellence, as well as how the parents and carers could be involved with the centre, for example via the children's Learning Journeys.

Parents and carers who were asked said they had found this information really good when they and their child had first started using the centre. The centre had an established settling-in regime. This included giving out the information booklets and asking the parents and carers to complete various information forms (All About Me), consent forms and a registration form. This was to make sure they had information about each child before that child started in order to be able to provide for their needs at that time.

Parents and carers who were asked said that they were really pleased with how the family centre kept them up to date. They were generally told what their child had been doing that day but if not could ask and staff always had time for them. Several parents and carers commented on the staff and how helpful they were. They all liked the fact that a member of staff was present at the door to welcome them and tell them about that day's session. They also told us this same staff member would be there at the end of the session to tell them how their child had been and to remind them about things they needed to remember or to bring the next day.

During the visit the inspector asked parents how they had found the settling-in regime. They confirmed that they had received information about the centre before their child started and that they had visited when their child had started. Several said the staff had been so helpful and this made leaving their child easier for both them and for the child. Several said it was good to have the centre and since their child had started they had joined various parenting sessions which had included learning how to knit and how to be a better cook.

The service has also noted on the self-assessment document:

- "Increased number of parent's groups used as a forum for discussions to inform improvement of service".

The centre has a Timeout Group for parents, where parents come together to undertake a number of different craft activities and discussions over a cup of tea or coffee, whilst their children are at Nursery or of an evening. The aim of the group is to build self-esteem, parental personal development and to reduce social isolation.

The staff were observed during the visit. It was noted that all staff took time to talk with parents and carers who arrived to pick up or drop off children, not just the member assigned to "meet and greet". They were respectful and friendly and seen to welcome both the adults and the children into the playroom. At the end of the session they were noted to send everyone home with a cheerful goodbye.

As part of the inspection process we looked at the returned Care Standards Questionnaires as well as the results of the service's own feedback they had gained. The results of the questionnaires were positive indicating that people were very happy with the service provided.

This was confirmed by several written comments, one of which stated:

- "They continue to keep me informed and my daughter is just so happy and content at the family centre".
- I feel this has been an excellent start for my child. As a parent I have also made use excellent use of service, doing parenting groups, confidence to cook etc., which has been great for myself to become a better parent".

The manager also described how they had supported individuals through difficult times and how the staff would work with the whole family at these times. One parent also told the inspector how the staff had helped her with childcare when she had appointments and no one to care for her child. There were several instances of this which demonstrated a high level of family support was given by Family Centre Merkinch to the people who used their service.

The centre had also given out questionnaires and surveys over the years and shared the results with the people who used the service. The manager stated that points raised from these were discussed as a staff team and action taken when needed.

Children's Involvement

During this visit the inspector looked at how the staff involved the children, which was generally done during "circle time" where the day's events were talked about as well as "together times" throughout the day. The children's views and opinions were valued and we saw the staff taking time to listen to children and by use of simple language and questioning gain their views on what they liked or wanted to do.

Each child had their own Learning Journey, which started from when they arrived. This was in the form of an A4 folder and stored on shelves in the playroom.

The children's ideas and suggestions were included within their planning regime (viewed). They also used simple voting systems for planning with the children, for example they had decided to add a willow dome to the outdoor area which was decided by majority vote.

During the visit the inspector observed all the staff as they worked with the toddlers and young children. The staff in both the creche and the pre-school playroom had built up very strong relationships with the children and were very aware of their individual needs. Staff were noted to chat informally with the children and asking for their opinions. It was nice to see staff actively listening and responding to their comments in a warm and caring manner.

Areas for improvement

During the visit the manager stated that they were always looking at ways to make sure people were involved with all areas of the service. They planned to continue to add to the children's learning journeys. We discussed how accessible these were and could people reach and access these easily. We also talked about making sure the entries were dated.

We talked about the planning and evaluation. It was noted some sheets did not have the next steps section completed and we discussed the need to make sure this was done regularly.

There were some comments made by parents and carers on some of the Care Standards Questionnaires we received before the visit. These were shared with the staff. The inspector telephoned one parent for further information and these comments were shared with the manager during the visit and discussed at length.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met.

Service strengths

Family Centre Merkinch was performing to an excellent standard in relation to ensuring the health and wellbeing needs were met.

Evidence was found after:

- talking with the manager
- talking with the staff from all areas
- the inspector joined 3 parents during a Parent's Timeout Group session
- brief with parents and carers from both sessions
- looking at service policies and procedures
- looking at records relating to health and safety
- looking at the environment
- observing practice.

The centre had a range of policies and procedures relating to health and safety, which staff could access at any time.

The service had noted on the self-assessment document that:

- "Children's needs are identified and responded to promptly".
This document also stated:
- "We work as a multi agency environment to meet the needs of individual children".

The staff worked a Key-working system and had built up positive relationships with all the young children. Staff were aware of their individual likes, dislikes and needs.

The staff promoted positive behaviour and encouraged the children to share and take turns, to be considerate of each other and to try to do things for themselves. Support and encouragement was given by staff.

The nursery building was well maintained by the local authority and the manager said they had no issues when any work or repairs were needed. This was a secure and safe area for the children - see also Statement 2:5.

The entrance to the nursery contained a wide range of information regarding health and wellbeing for parents and carers as well as leaflets they could take home. Parents who were asked said they thought the centre was an excellent environment for their children.

Control of infection was very good with staff observed encouraging the children to wash their hands appropriately. Nappy changing procedures were in place and managed to a high standard. There was a high level of hygiene and cleanliness noted throughout the building

The children had regular access to fresh air and exercise. The staff said they took the children outdoors as often as possible, normally daily, weather permitting. It was nice to see that the children could go out in all weathers because the centre provided all weather clothing as well as rubber boots. There were two areas and the "secret" garden was a lovely resource and provided an excellent area where the children could play and explore at their leisure. It was nice to see a vegetable plot and raised beds where they had grown a range of vegetables. See also Statement 2.5.

The service followed the nutritional guidelines and staff stated that healthy eating was promoted. They noted allergies and told us that the parents and carers were consulted about eating habits and likes/dislikes. The snack menu was displayed for parents and carers to view. At snack times the staff encouraged good table manners and were good role models regarding behaviour and manners. The children helped with snack and enjoyed a social time with their friends. Drinking water was available throughout the day in each room for all ages of children.

It was noted that the service took part in the national toothbrushing programme and received visits from the oral health team.

The family centre staff were aware of their role in keeping children safe from harm, abuse, bullying and neglect. This included child protection and staff had received training on child protection awareness. The service had appropriate child protection procedures in place, which were shared with parents and carers.

There was a suitable method for recording the administration of medication. The centre had an appropriate system in place for the recording of accidents and incidents. All staff had received training in first aid and appropriate first aid equipment was held within the centre.

The family centre was also very good at supporting specific care needs and those children would have an individual care plan developed when needed. The service worked in partnership with other professionals whenever necessary to support specific children. This was a key strength of the Family Centre Merkinch.

During the visit the inspector asked several of the parents and carers if they thought the service cared for the health and wellbeing of their child/children. It was noted that the parents and carers thought the children's health and wellbeing very well cared for and praised the manager and staff for the high level of care they provided.

As part of the inspection we looked at the returned Care Standards Questionnaires, as well as any results from surveys the service have completed. These showed us people were happy with the care provided. There were several written comments, one of which was:

- "The staff and environment are ideal for developing well rounded young people".

Areas for improvement

The manager stated that the health and wellbeing of the children were always at the heart of what they did. She also talked about the high level of parental support through the various groups and sessions they provided, which was a very important part of the centre. She stated this was an area they were always looking at and that they actively looked for new ideas and initiatives as part of their normal routine.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 2: Quality of Environment

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the environment within the service.

Service strengths

Family Centre Merkinch was found to be performing to a very good standard in relation to parental involvement in assessing and improving the quality of the environment. This has been partially reported on within Statement 1:1 and also within Statement 1:3.

We found evidence after:

- talking with the manager
- talking with the staff from all areas
- the inspector joined 3 parents during a Parent's Timeout Group session
- brief with parents and carers from both sessions
- looking at service policies and procedures
- looking at records relating to health and safety
- a tour of the centre
- viewing the outdoor areas
- observing practice.

In addition the service had noted on the self-assessment document:

- "Eco-Garden committee established October 2011".
- "Magic garden created by parents/community service volunteers/Forestry Commission".

The centre had gained the Eco school Registration and displayed this certificate for parents and carers in the entrance area.

We asked parents and carers if they thought the family centre environment to be a

safe, secure place for children. People who were asked said they were really happy with environment describing it as:

- "Yes - great"
- "a super environment"
- "Great they get suits on and go outdoors - and great suits are washed for you"
- "the secret garden - great place for kids".

This was also confirmed within returned Care Standards Questionnaires which told us parents and carers were very happy with the nursery environment. The family centre's own survey included questions on the environment and showed us people were happy with this.

Areas for improvement

The manager stated that they were planning to increase the security of the building by having a video door entry system and more combination locks within the centre.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 5

The accommodation and resources are suitable for the needs of the service users.

Service strengths

See also Statement 1.1, 1.3 and 2.1.

The service was performing to a very good standard in relation to this statement.

We found evidence after:

- talking with the manager
- talking with the staff from all areas
- the inspector joined 3 parents during a Parent's Timeout Group session
- brief with parents and carers from both sessions
- looking at service policies and procedures
- looking at records relating to health and safety
- a tour of the centre
- viewing the outdoor areas.

The Family Centre Merkinch operated from a detached building set in its own grounds. The entrance area was welcoming with a very cheerful greeting from the

receptionist. This area held information for parents and carers. The building was in a good state of decor and repair and they had recently had additional work done and were waiting for this to be painted. The playroom and creche room were decorated with a selection of the children's art and craft.

The atmosphere within the playroom was happy and busy, with the young children noted to be absorbed with their activities. This room was large and of open plan design with separate kitchen and laid out to create various play "areas", each containing different activities. The range of toys and activities provided was wide and varied and appropriate for the age of children who used the service.

The nursery was well organised and tidy, with appropriate storage areas. All furniture, equipment and resources were suitable for the age group attending. All were in a good clean condition and regularly cleaned.

All staff were noted to supervise their areas really well. Children were encouraged to show care and consideration towards their friends as well as to take care with the equipment. The children were observed to be happy and content. Staff were happy in their work.

The centre provided a safe and secure environment. Staff completed regular risk assessment as well as daily health and safety checks.

The outdoor area was well maintained and contained a varied and interesting range of outdoor activities and equipment. The "secret garden" was a great success with the children. There were various growing opportunities. The outdoor area was well used during the visit with the children being provided with all weather suits so they could explore this area freely whilst staying warm and clean.

The parents and carers who were asked said that they were happy with the environment - see Statement 2.1. We also looked at the Care Standards Questionnaires and the service's own surveys. Both of these told us that parents and carers were very happy with the environment at Family Centre Merkinch.

Areas for improvement

Some of the ceilings were in need of repainting which had been a result of problems with the roof. The manager said the local authority were working with this. She stated that generally they were very good at attending to any work needed on the building. She pointed out that they were waiting for the areas that had had recent work to be redecorated.

They also were in the process of making a willow dome with the children and help from the Forestry Commission and hopefully parents and carers.

Some of the outdoor equipment was showing signs of wear and tear and staff stated they would be replacing or changing items now the spring was approaching.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

Service strengths

The service was found to have a very good performance in relation to this statement. This has been partly reported on within Statement 1.1 and 2.1.

In addition evidence was found after:

- talking with the manager
- talking with the staff from all areas
- the inspector joined 3 parents during a Parent's Timeout Group session
- brief with parents and carers from both sessions
- looking at records relating to staffing
- observing staff as they worked.

The service adhered to a range of appropriate staffing policies and procedures as well as following suitable safe recruitment procedures. A complaints policy was displayed in the entrance area for parents to view and a copy was also included within the information parents and carers received when they started using the service.

The centre shared information regarding staff by:

- staff details with photographs in the cloakroom within the playroom
- key workers information given to parents and carers
- staff information displayed in the reception of the centre

The parents and carers were given opportunities to share their opinion about staff via the questionnaires and surveys. This was confirmed by three of the parents and carers who were interviewed during this visit. The parents and carers told us they liked the staff, thought they were very good at their jobs and several described them in various ways including:

- "wonderful"
- "super - so helpful".

The service had noted on the self-assessment document:

- "Parent/carer evaluation forms are completed for Family Learning programme activities".
- "A range of methods are used to consult with children".

During the visit the inspector talked with the staff and also watched them as they went about their duties. Staff were seen to have positive relationships with the young children in their care.

Staff were observed with the parents and carers and noted to be welcoming and friendly. They made time to talk with the parents who arrived to collect and drop off their child/children.

The manager stated that she was very happy with the staff team and said that they worked really well together and most had worked in the centre for many years.

Areas for improvement

The service had noted on the self-assessment document:

- "Continue to explore ways in which parents/carers and children can be involved in identifying strengths and weaknesses of the service".

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of recommendations: 0

Number of requirements: 0

Statement 3

We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.

Service strengths

Family Centre Merkinch was performing to a very good standard in relation to this statement.

We found evidence to show this after:

- talking with the manager
- talking with the staff
- talking with a visiting specialist
- the inspector joined 3 parents during a Parent's Timeout Group session
- brief with parents and carers from both sessions
- looking at records relating to staffing
- observing staff as they worked.

The service adhered to Bright policies and procedures relating to staffing, as detailed in Statement 3.1. All records were appropriately stored and up to date.

There was an appropriate induction regime for new staff and the manager stated that the whole staff team worked together to support new staff.

All staff received regular supervision but it was some time since the yearly formal reviews had taken place - see area for improvement below. The staff did receive individual support and supervision 2-3 times a year as well as very regular staff meetings where all aspects of the service were discussed. There were regular staff meetings where the whole staff team met and they took minutes which were kept in the staff meeting folder (viewed).

During the visit the inspector observed members of staff as they worked with the young children present during both sessions. Staff worked well with the children and demonstrated that they knew the children well and were aware of their individual needs.

The Care Standards Questionnaires also showed us that people thought highly of the staff. This was confirmed by written comments as well as by parents and carers who were interviewed during the visit.

During this visit a project worker from "Safe, Strong and Free" project was present working with the children. When asked how she found the family centre she replied she was very impressed with the quality of the service.

The staff who were asked, stated they were supported very well by the manager and that they enjoyed working at the family centre, describing it as "a great place to work". They said they could attend any training that would support them in their role. They also confirmed they could attend refresher training regularly when this was due. It was noted all training was up to date.

The service has also noted on the self-assessment:

- "Diverse range of issue-based training undertaken by individual staff".

SSSC Registration.

During the visit we looked at registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). We looked at the job titles and discussed which part of the register staff would be on. The manager stated that most members of staff meet the criteria for registration with the SSSC and this was an area they were looking at. Staff were aware when they were due to renew this registration. All staff kept a record of their continuous professional development. (CPD files).

Staff training was up to date.

The SSSC Codes of Practice were available within the service for staff.

Areas for improvement

The manager was aware of her role in ensuring staff reviews took place - see Recommendation 1. We discussed how they had been looking at the format used. The manager stated the Highland Council format was not very user friendly and as a result had developed a new format for staff reviews. She stated her intent to roll this out now with staff.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 1

Recommendations

1. To continue with plans to complete annual reviews with staff and update their Personal Development Plans.

National Care Standard 12: Confidence in Staff

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

Service strengths

The service was found to have a very good performance in relation to this statement. This has been partially reported on in Statement 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1.

In addition:

The service had a Parent Involvement Policy which detailed how they planned to work in partnership with the parents and carers to support and enhance the development of children in their care. There was a folder containing the centre's policies and procedures which was shared with all parents and carers.

The service had noted on their self-assessment document:

- Parent/carer Questionnaires reflect Quality Indicators in "The Child at the Centre" and "National Care Standards".

We also looked at the Care Standards Questionnaires, which showed us that people thought that the service was well organised and operating well. The service's own survey from 2012 included questions on how the service was managed and one asked:

- "How does the family centre rate in encouraging parents, carers and families to become involved in the life of the nursery?"

Parents and carers who were asked said they thought the centre very well managed describing it as "very organised". They said they were kept up to date with events and daily happenings in the centre and encouraged to join in. One parent described the "Stay and Play" session where she had joined her young child in the creche for the session and told us she had really enjoyed those sessions and felt she had learned from the experience.

They confirmed that the manager was easy to talk to and always made time for them. One parent described the manager as being:

- "A guardian angel".

The manager said they discussed a lot of issues at staff meetings to make sure everyone was involved in the daily running of the service. Staff who were asked said they were very well supported by the manager.

Areas for improvement

During the visit the inspector shared ideas and systems other services used to gather feedback about the management and leadership of services.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

Service strengths

This quality statement has been partially reported on in the previous statements 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1.

The service was found to have a very good performance in relation to this statement.

We found evidence after:

- talking with the manager
- talking with the staff
- the inspector joined 3 parents during a Parent's Timeout Group session
- brief with parents and carers from both sessions
- looking the quality assurance
- looking at the Care Standards Questionnaires and the service's own surveys.

The service had noted on the self-assessment document:

- "Evaluation forms completed by all Family Learning programme participants 'How Good is our Community Learning and Development? - 2', used for self-evaluation of Family Learning programmes

LEAP (Learning, Evaluation and Planning - used for Family Learning programmes)".

The manager said that they had quality assurance visits from the Quality Improvement Office Childcare and Education. They have a Principal Teacher of Nursery allocated to the service, who visits once or twice per month in a quality assurance role. The manager told us these visits were very helpful and a good way of keeping up to date with current practice. They receive a written visit record which is discussed with staff during the regular staff meetings.

During the visit session we talked about the importance of formally consulting parents and the manager stated they could fill in evaluation sheets at various times during the year. The manager also spoke about the various parenting groups as being another way they could use to discuss points, or raise issues or just generally evaluate the service.

Parents and carers who were interviewed during this visit confirmed that they were regularly consulted and given opportunities to have their say. Everyone who talked to the inspector stated they would be happy to approach staff if they had a concern and felt confident they would look into the matter. They also said they would approach the manager who was always available. From looking at the various surveys and questionnaires we noted people were happy which was confirmed by a written statement for 2012 which stated:

- "Am extremely happy with all services at Merkinch Family Centre".

The family centre also gave the children regular opportunities to evaluate activities and topics. This was set within the daily plans for example circle time and through their Learning Journeys. Since the last visit the service had given a lot of attention as to how they evaluate with children. The staff were very good at planning with the children and evaluating what they had learned.

Areas for improvement

The service had noted on the self-assessment document:

- "Staff to set time aside to gain feedback from parents/carers and work toward improvements highlighted"
- "Re-development of suggestion box".

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

4 Other information

Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

Additional Information

Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in SCSWIS re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).

5 Summary of grades

Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 3	6 - Excellent
Quality of Environment - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 5	5 - Very Good
Quality of Staffing - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 4	5 - Very Good

6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
10 Jan 2011	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	Not Assessed
		Management and Leadership	Not Assessed
28 Jan 2010	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	Not Assessed
10 Feb 2009	Unannounced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	4 - Good
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	4 - Good

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All inspections and grades before 1 April 2011 are those reported by the former regulator of care services, the Care Commission.

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