

Tongue Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Tongue Primary School
Lairg
IV27 4XL

Telephone: 01847 611 208

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 January 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2019377765

About the service

Tongue Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 14 children aged from 2 years to not yet attending primary school at any one time; of those 14 no more than 5 are aged 2 years to under 3 years.

Tongue Primary School Nursery is provided by The Highland Council and is based in a purpose-built nursery in the grounds of the primary school. The premises consist of a playroom with kitchen area, reception area, toilet and nappy changing facilities and an office. There is direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 29 January 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 10 children using the service
- reviewed online questionnaires from parents and carers
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Overall children were nurtured and supported throughout their experiences.
- Staff spoke knowledgeably and confidently about children's individual care needs and what they did to support them.
- Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their own play and learning.
- The outdoor environment was sensitively structured to take account of children's age and stage of development.
- The indoor environment needed to be further developed to promote a homely, comfortable and engaging environment.
- There was a collaborative approach to supporting improvement within the service.
- The deployment and number of staff working in the service was insufficient at times and did not always meet children's needs.

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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We 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

Overall, children were nurtured and supported throughout their experiences. They benefitted from warm, caring relationships from staff. Staff offered comfort, cuddles and caring interactions when needed. This provided children with reassurance and supported their wellbeing, contributing to them feeling valued and respected. However, due to competing demands placed on staff, they did not always pick up on children's cues for support and interaction. As a result, children did not always receive the right support at the right time.

To support children to be happy and confident, staff effectively used personal plans to capture and consider children's individual needs. These were completed with parents and ensured consistency and continuity in the care and support children received. As part of the service's quality assurance system, personal plans were routinely monitored to check that they were completed appropriately. All staff had a clear understanding of children's individual needs and how to support them to reach their full potential. This meant that all children were respected and valued as individuals.

Establishing good working relationships with families was a priority for the service. The manager explained that they were continuing to look at how they could improve parental engagement. There was daily communication with families, at drop off and collection time, via an online platform and there were opportunities for parents to spend time in the nursery.

Mealtimes were 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. However, during the morning snack some staff were task orientated, resulting in missed opportunities to support and extend children's social and communication skills. Staff sat with children during lunchtime which promoted close attachments and supported early language development.

Quality Indicator: 1.3 Play and learning

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their own play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned experiences, offering opportunities for children to develop life skills. Interesting experiences for children to investigate and be creative were available outdoors. For example, loose parts and open ended resources were used by children to empty, fill and transport objects, which successfully captured their imagination and enriched their play and learning. The outdoor spaces also provided areas to climb and run, which supported children's physical development and overall wellbeing.

Language and literacy experiences were interwoven into children's play. Staff displayed a good understanding and creative approaches to promoting these. A staff member was reading a story with a small group of children. This led onto discussion about the different uses of diggers, contributing to the development of their talking and listening skills. Good use of technologies further enhanced children's development in early literacy and communication. For example, children used a tablet to draw a picture and record a story. They then created a digital file that was uploaded to their parents to document their progress, these experiences encouraged children to communicate their ideas through drawing and talking.

We saw some skilled interactions from staff that contributed to children being supported to develop their skills and learning but this was not consistent. There were examples of staff extending children's play through learning conversations. However, on occasions, staff did not respond to children's cues to extend their play experiences. This resulted in missed opportunities to support children to widen their skills and learning.

Approaches were in place to evaluate children's progress and achievements. Staff effectively used information to respond and plan for individual needs. As a result, children were progressing in their development.

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this quality theme as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children enjoyed free flow access between the indoor and outdoor area. This enabled them to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Their happiness and engagement in play increased when they were outside. The outdoor environment was sensitively structured to take account of children's age and stage of development. The outdoor play space reflected children's current interests with appropriate resources and materials. Effective use of open-ended materials provided children with opportunities to be creative and challenge their thinking. For example, children played with everyday items which sustained their interest for prolonged periods of time, contributing to the fun they had while playing and learning.

Since the previous inspection, the service had made some improvements within the indoor playroom. This included, introducing softer lighting and sourcing some developmentally appropriate play resources. For example, they had increased their use of open ended natural resources. We recognised that some changes had been made. However, the playrooms still lacked a homely, comfortable feel and resources were not always effectively presented to readily provoke children's interests or curiosity. Additionally the indoor environment was cluttered, which had potential to distract and overwhelm children. The staff and management team should continue to review and develop the playroom to promote a homely, comfortable and engaging environment. This was an identified area for improvement at the last inspection and had not been met and will be continued. **(See Area for improvement 1 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection?')**

Displays around the rooms were used to reflect children's interests and experiences. This provided opportunities for children to revisit their play and learning and share their achievements, which contributed to children's sense of pride.

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

The manager and staff team recognised the need to review the current vision, values and aims, to reflect the aspirations of their children, families, partners and the wider community. Plans were in place to implement this review to help the service identify and understand more fully what is important for children and their families as the service moves forward.

Children's voices were valued in the service. Opportunities for children to share their ideas and influence their learning was part of daily experiences. Through observations of play and daily discussions, staff responded to children's interests and suggestions. Children were supported to share and record their ideas in floor books. This resulted in children being empowered, valued and allowed them to drive change.

A collaborative approach towards quality assurance and improvement was a priority for the manager. Some 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 experiences. However, the service should now accelerate the pace of change in relation to the indoor environment and review staff deployment to make improvements.

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?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this quality theme as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

Quality Indicator: 4.3 Staff deployment

Children benefitted from a caring and nurturing staff team who knew them well. They had developed strong relationships with children, who were confident in the setting. This was highlighted as a key strength by a parent who told us:

"Staff are great, my child loves them all and has such a lovely bond with them"

The ethos between team members was positive and interactions between staff were kind and respectful. This helped to create a positive atmosphere for both staff and children to feel comfortable and secure in. At times, the staff team communicated well with each other when a task took them away from their designated area. However, this was not always consistent throughout the day and there were times when staff did not communicate effectively. This led to gaps in interactions across the day and impacted on the quality of experiences for children.

The manager and staff told us that due to the rural nature of the setting, availability of supply staff was limited. However, the manager strived to provide consistency of care within the staff team. Where possible the manager used the same supply staff to minimise disruption to children's routines.

Due to competing demands placed on staff, they could not always offer the level of support and interaction they wanted to. The approach to staffing was not always outcome focused. The deployment and number of staff working in the service was at times insufficient to ensure high quality outcomes for all children. As a result, the quality of children's experiences was compromised and their wishes and choices were not always acknowledged. For example, we saw missed opportunities for extending play and learning to support children's curiosity and enquiry. Careful consideration and planning of staff deployment is required around key points of the day. This had been identified at the last inspection and the previous area for improvement is now a requirement. **(See Requirement 1)**

Requirements

1. By 31 May 2024, the provider must ensure children are safe and receive high quality experiences at all times. They must as a minimum review and make appropriate changes to staff deployment to improve experiences for children.

This is to comply with Regulation 4 (1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work and Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

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 access a warm and welcoming environment, the manager and staff should review and develop the environment to make it more interesting, nurturing and homely.

This should include but is not limited to, creating comfortable area with soft furnishings where children can rest and relax.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smell' (HSCS 5.18).

This area for improvement was made on 31 March 2023.

Action taken since then

Some progress has been made in relation to the indoor environment. This included introducing softer lighting and sourcing some developmentally appropriate play resources. For example, they had increased their use of open ended natural resources. However, the playroom still lacked homely touches and resources were not well presented to encourage and provoke curiosity.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children are safe and receive high quality experiences at all times, the provider and manager should as a minimum, review and make appropriate changes to staff deployment to improve experiences for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 31 March 2012.

Action taken since then

Limited progress had been made in relation to staff deployment. Children did not receive high quality experiences at all times.

This area for improvement is no longer in place and has been incorporated into a new requirement under 'How good is our staff team?'

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?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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