

Macdiarmid Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Macdiarmid Primary School
Carbost
Skeabost Bridge
Portree
IV51 9PD

Telephone: 01470 532 229

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 February 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017240

About the service

Macdiarmid Primary School Nursery is located within the primary school building. The nursery has access to a playroom with toilet facilities and limited kitchen facilities. The playroom opens directly onto a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The children also have access to the bigger main school playground. Both areas offered good space and a range of open-ended and natural resources.

The service is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a service to a maximum 12 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of those 12 no more than 5 are aged 2 years to under 3 years.

The manager is also the manager of Knockbreck Primary School and Edinbane Primary School and Nursery.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 15 February 2024. 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 feedback provided by parents and carers
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were safe, loved and secure in their attachments with staff.
- Children were happy and settled in the nursery.
- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with children.
- Staff had developed personal plans and used the information in them to support children and meet their needs.
- Good use was being made of loose parts and open ended resources to enrich children's play and learning.
- Work was required to improve the opportunities for play and learning outdoors.
- The service should continue to embed quality assurance systems and ensure this impacts positively on all areas of practice.

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?	3 - Adequate
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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children were happy, settled and enjoyed their time at nursery. Staff supported children's care and learning routines with kindness and compassion, which contributed to the development of strong and trusting relationships. Children experienced warm, kind, nurturing and responsive approaches to their personal care and learning needs. We observed staff who skilfully provided reassurance, praised children and offered cuddles and love when needed. This supported children to feel happy, loved and secure and promoted an inclusive care setting where all children mattered.

Children's wellbeing was supported by staff who knew them very well. Staff could confidently discuss children and their individual needs and the strategies to support them. This meant that all children were respected and valued as individuals. Each child attending the service had a personal plan. We reminded the manager that all personal plans should be completed and routinely reviewed in partnership with parents to ensure that they reflect children's current needs and the strategies required to meet these needs. We also discussed including monitoring and auditing of personal plans as part of the service's quality assurance process.

Snack and lunchtimes were relaxed, sociable and unhurried. Children were supported to develop important independence skills when pouring drinks and self serving snack. Staff were supportive of children who were new to the routine or needed assistance. This promoted children's confidence. Staff sat with children which provided opportunities to form and maintain relationships and support language and communication skills. Interactions between children and staff were particularly good at lunch time. There was a variety of topics discussed between the children and support was given in listening to each other and contributing.

Children and families benefitted from a service that valued the importance of establishing strong working relationships with families to support children. This ensured that children received appropriate levels of consistent care and support. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time and there were opportunities for parents to spend time in the nursery. Parents were positive in their comments about the staff and the quality of care and support provided by the staff. They described staff as being "an enthusiastic team that are caring and informative of my children's care" and "the teachers are friendly, approachable, knowledgeable, great with kids".

The service had established links with outside agencies and worked with them to provide responsive care and support to children. Children's health and wellbeing needs were supported by staff who used identified strategies based on children's individual needs.

Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Play and learning opportunities impacted positively on children's development, health, wellbeing and happiness. For the majority of the time, children benefitted from uninterrupted play, allowing them to become absorbed in their play.

The children were having fun and were engaged as they experimented and explored with a good balance of planned and spontaneous play opportunities which were in response to their interests. Children were offered good opportunities to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning. Play spaces were well resourced and promoted learning through real life experiences. Good use was being made of loose parts and open ended resources to enrich children's play and learning.

Being outdoors was particularly popular with all the children. Staff were passionate and committed to the benefits learning outdoors had on a child's development and wellbeing. Despite the inclement weather, they spent time in the large school playground, taking part in fun, physical games and activity songs and later in their own outdoor area taking part in imaginative play activities, all the time being skilfully supported by the staff.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interest. Carefully considered wall displays at children's height allowed the children to see what their current interests were and good use of the children's own art work, mark making and photographs brought the learning to life for the children. At the time of the inspection, the children were very engaged in learning associated with their favourite book. Staff had been creative in using the book to extend learning in various areas throughout the playroom, including literacy, language, numeracy. There were floor books which were used to record children's interests and illustrated how interests were extended and developed. The children enthusiastically told us about the different displays and proudly pointed out which piece of artwork was theirs.

Staff offered individualised support to children during their play, being aware of when to engage and when to step back. Staff understood their role in supporting children's development and were adding further value to children's play and learning through their carefully considered interactions. They naturally engaged effectively with children and showed interest. Staff were able to support, extend and challenge children's thinking. Staff interactions encouraged children to think independently and to reflect. As a result, children were respected, valued and achieving.

We recognised good quality play, learning and development was taking place during the inspection. Children had the opportunity to develop their numeracy and literacy skills and mathematical language while taking part in activities across the setting. We discussed with the manager and staff how they could further extend these opportunities, particularly outdoors. The manager acknowledged that use of the outdoor play area had been restricted due to recent storm damage, however there were plans in place to rectify this.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a clean, welcoming and homely nursery with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. Although there was limited space due to the size of the nursery play room, the staff ensured that the layout allowed the children to freely move around indoors. Overall, children experienced developmentally appropriate spaces that met most of their needs. Comfortable soft furnishings helped the environment to feel calm and welcoming. Distinct areas had been set up to facilitate a range of play and learning experiences and resources were accessible, enabling children to lead their own learning. Work had been done to display children's voice around the room with displays, photos and floor books which celebrate their thoughts, ideas and achievements.

This gave children a strong message that it was their space and that they mattered.

Ensuring a healthy and safe environment which promoted children's wellbeing was important to the management and staff team. There was a system to report any repairs and damaged items were replaced. Daily checks of the premises were completed and there were risk assessments in place to ensure that the environment was safe for the children attending.

Appropriate infection prevention and control practices were in place and minimised the spread of infection. For example, the setting was clean and well maintained. Food safety practices were appropriate and provided good levels of safety for children. We observed children being supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing at necessary times.

Children's safety was well managed as staff were attentive and alert to children's movements. Tools such as updated registers and regular headcounts helped children to move safely around the setting. Children's security and safety was respected because of the measures in place.

Effective arrangements were in place to ensure children and families' personal information was stored securely. Paperwork was stored securely within locked cupboards. This ensured confidentiality was maintained and complied with best practice guidance.

Staff had a good understanding of the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall health and wellbeing. The playroom opened directly onto the outdoor play area which the children could access on a daily basis. Unfortunately, due to damage caused by recent severe weather, the children were restricted to a small part of this area. Remedial work was planned to allow children access to the full area. Good use was also being made of the main school playground to provide children with the space to take part in physical play and activities.

Given the very rural location of the nursery on Skye, the opportunities for outdoor play and learning were plentiful and full advantage was made of these by the nursery. Staff took a positive risk benefit approach, and this supported children to assess their own risks and understand their own safety.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

We acknowledged that there had been a number of changes within the management of the nursery over the last three years. At the time of the inspection, there was an acting tri-cluster headteacher who was responsible for three primary schools and two nurseries on Skye. They had only been in post for a month however were beginning to lay foundations and was knowledgeable about aspects of the service which required to be improved.

The manager and staff fully engaged in the inspection process and appreciated the guidance and the signposting to various websites and best practice offered by the inspector. The manager and the staff demonstrated their commitment to the service and were motivated to make improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children.

The aims and objectives of the service were out of date and a number of the nursery's policies and procedures had not been reviewed and updated for some time. We discussed how the manager could encourage parental involvement in reviewing the vision, values and aims of the nursery. The manager should involve staff in the review of policy and procedures so that they underpin and influence staff practice and bring about positive outcomes for children.

There was an improvement plan in place for the whole primary school which included the nursery. We discussed with the manager the need to identify clear priority action points for the nursery. All relevant stakeholders, including children, their families and staff should be actively involved in the process of identifying these priorities. This would allow them to feel included and to show that their feedback was valued.

We discussed with the manager the importance of using self evaluation tools robustly and routinely to support the ongoing improvement of the service. Robust monitoring systems, including self-evaluation, needed to be more firmly embedded with a focus on monitoring children's personal plans, improving and enhancing outcomes for children, monitoring of staff practice and evaluating and improving the nursery as a whole. We signposted the manager to the Care Inspectorate Hub where they would find useful information and bitesize videos in relation to self-evaluation as well as the Education Scotland Hub (see Requirement 1).

Some monitoring of staff practice had taken place; however, this was not robust enough to secure progression. Support and supervision arrangements were still in the early stages and systems for providing feedback were informal. This did not ensure that individual staff were supported to identify their strengths and learning needs. As a result, training and development opportunities for staff did not always result in quality play experiences for children. The manager acknowledged the need to establish a more formal system to monitor staff practice and to provide effective support and supervision for each individual staff member.

The manager recognised the value of staff regularly coming together; however, at the time of the inspection meetings were generally informal. Regular staff meetings would provide time for the manager and all staff to reflect on their practice, identifying what they do well for children in their care and highlight areas for development across the service.

Requirements

1. By 31 May 2024, the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children and practice by implementing effective systems of quality assurance. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- a) regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented
- b) staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service
- c) clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service
- d) the management team effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole
- e) clear systems are in place for children and their families to provide feedback and to be actively involved in the evaluation of the service provided.

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

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

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. Therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The deployment of staff was well managed and effective to meet children's needs. Children were cared for by a consistent staff team who worked well together.

We observed all staff being very welcoming, kind and nurturing in their approach. It was evident through discussions and our observations that they were all very motivated and committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming setting where all children mattered. Staff talked knowledgeably about children's individual needs, next steps and how they were being met. Staff demonstrated an awareness of when and how to effectively intervene, picking up on cues to support children's wellbeing and extend their play and experiences. They were responsive and respectful of children during interactions and play which supported children to feel safe, secure and happy. Children enjoyed spending time with staff and were comfortable in their company.

Staff were warm, caring and sensitive and demonstrated positive team working. They worked well together and their differing skills and knowledge complemented one another and resulted in quality interactions with children. Staff communicated effectively with each other and worked flexibly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. This promoted a happy and secure environment where children were encouraged to lead their own play and learning.

Children benefited from effective supervision and quality engagement throughout the day. Staff were empowered to deploy themselves and respond to the needs of the children. This enabled staff to follow children's needs and interests without compromising the experiences of others. Transitions were seamless and well planned, with children being comfortable about what was happening next. During busier times of the day, routines had been established which promoted children's safety.

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?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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