

Tarradale Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Tarradale Primary School
Black Isle Road
Muir of Ord
IV6 7RR

Telephone: 01463 870 484

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 March 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003017277

About the service

Tarradale Primary School Nursery is situated in the village of Muir of Ord in the Easter Ross area of the Highlands.

The nursery is located in a building in the grounds of Tarradale Primary School. Accommodation comprises of a reception area, cloakroom, three large, bright playrooms, kitchen facilities, toilet provision and an enclosed outdoor space. The nursery also has access to a large school garden area.

The service is provided by Highland Council and managed by the primary school head teacher. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 60 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 March 2024 and 6 March 2024. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 and three of their families;
- reviewed online questionnaire feedback from five families;
- reviewed online questionnaire feedback from five staff;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and children's experiences; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced compassionate, caring and warm interactions. A very nurturing ethos had been created where children were loved, safe and secure.
- Children's wellbeing was effectively supported through personal planning which was reviewed regularly with families.
- The play and learning environment enabled children to explore opportunities which promoted their curiosity and imagination.
- Robust quality assurance practices were in place which supported the continuous improvement of the service.
- The manager and staff team had developed strong partnerships and collaborative working practices with families.
- Effective staff deployment across the service meant that the right number of staff were meeting children's individual needs, consistently throughout the day.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm and nurturing approaches from staff which supported their overall wellbeing. We observed kind, compassionate and caring interactions from staff which modelled empathy for children and supported them to communicate with their peers in a thoughtful way. New children were offered comfort and reassurance when settling into the service and families were welcomed to stay and support their child's transition. This helped children feel safe and secure and develop their confidence.

Children's wellbeing was effectively supported through personal planning which was reviewed regularly with families. Staff spoke confidently and knowledgeably about the care needs of children and implemented strategies to support them. Personal planning documentation contained relevant information and strategies which staff used to support the development needs of children. All families who responded to our survey strongly agreed with the statement: 'Staff know my child well, including what they like and what is important for their care'. As a result, all children received well-planned care and support to meet their individual needs

Staff worked in partnership with outside professionals to improve outcomes for children when they needed additional help. Appropriate strategies had been identified and put in place to support children, for example with developing social skills and their communication and language. As a result, children were supported to reach their potential.

During snack and lunchtimes, children were provided with opportunities to eat in an unhurried, relaxed atmosphere which meant that they benefited from a caring and positive social experience. Staff sat with children which provided opportunities to promote close attachments and develop their language skills. Food choices at snack and lunchtime were nutritious and children had access to fresh water throughout the day to support hydration. Children's independence and ownership of the mealtime experience was promoted as they helped to prepare snack, had opportunities to select their own food and drink, and collect and clear away their plates and cutlery. This supported children to take responsibility and develop skills for life.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Staff had high aspirations to enable children to be successful. Children's voice was valued, and they were empowered to lead their own play and learning. As a result, children were confident, happy and motivated to learn. Effective questioning provided opportunities to widen children's thinking skills and consolidate their learning through play experiences. This supported children to achieve their potential.

Children were being effectively supported to develop their language skills as staff used age-appropriate words, conversations, and interactions. We observed staff explaining the meaning of unfamiliar words to children as well as adding information and ideas in conversations to develop their understanding of new words further. Children experienced an environment that promoted literacy and included the use of age-appropriate books, storytelling opportunities and mark making experiences. As a result, children were progressing well with their early literacy skills.

Planning approaches within the nursery were child centred and responsive to the children's interests. Children's words, pictures and ideas were captured within floor books which demonstrated their involvement in the planning process. The service had recently identified the need to improve the quality of planning and assessment approaches and had taken steps to strengthen children's voice within the process and more accurately track and monitor children's progress in literacy and numeracy. As a result, children were experiencing play and learning opportunities which provided challenge and supported their development and progress. Families also had opportunities to contribute to planning for their children's development and learning which supported them to be active partners in the planning process.

Children's ongoing learning and developmental progression was supported by sharing observations and next steps with parents via a digital platform and through feedback during termly focussed planning weeks. Observations detailed significant learning and next steps which were relevant to individual children. As a result, children were effectively supported to learn and progress.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to their community. The service had regular play and learning opportunities with a neighbouring early learning and childcare service and local childminders. This strengthened transition links for children entering primary one. Children benefited from regular visits to the local library to share and enjoy books and take part in Bookbug sessions. They had supportive links with a local care home and Muir of Ord Food where children had been learning about growing and planting food. This enabled them to develop their sense of place and contribute to their local community.

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

The indoor playrooms were homely, calming and comfortable, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. This provided a warm and welcoming space for children and families. The layout of the indoor spaces enabled children to access a wide range of resources easily and lead their own play. This demonstrated the value of children's ownership and autonomy within the service.

Within the indoor spaces, children had access to resources that were clean, well-presented, and encouraged exploration, enquiry and fun. The continuous provision indoors had been considered to include a variety of open ended and natural resources, enabling children to explore opportunities which promoted their curiosity and imagination. We observed children following their own interests using dough and sand while using open ended objects to empty and fill containers, make imaginary food and be creative. Children's interests had also been considered within the environment with 'babies' reflected in the resources and objects available for them to play with. Children commented as they played: "This was me when I was really small, now I'm bigger." and "XXXX was born in a swimming pool!". These experiences supported children to feel engaged and included in the nursery space.

The service had identified the need to improve aspects of the indoor provision further including developing more homely and cosy features to enhance spaces for children to rest and relax. They had also identified the need to extend the resources and materials available within other areas of the nursery to support the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills and imaginative and creative play.

Children benefited from free-flow play between the indoor and outdoor area and were effectively supported by staff to access a further outdoor area within the school grounds. This enabled children to have choice, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Outdoors, there were opportunities for children to take part in more physical play experiences, helping to extend their gross motor skills. For example, riding bikes, balancing, running and climbing. As well as this, the outdoor spaces also included loose parts and open-ended resources which supported children to be curious and creative.

Staff worked well together as a team to identify and remove risks to children within the setting. This ensured that the environment was safe for the children attending. For example, safety measures whilst children were moving between the various indoor and outdoor spaces were supported through effective communication, appropriate levels of supervision and sufficient teamwork by the staff. Staff utilised walkie talkies to discuss children's movements, deployed themselves in different zones, carried out head counts and used registers to monitor children. This helped provide a safe and secure environment for children where they had choice in where they could play.

Effective infection prevention and control measures supported children's health and wellbeing. Children were well supported by staff to wash their hands effectively at key times throughout the day. This helped to minimise the risk of infection and keep children safe.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The vision, values and aims of the service were shared in a joined up approach with the wider school community. The service values were clearly underpinned by children's rights and had recently been updated with the views of children, families, staff and the wider community. The manager was using the new service values to support the development of the curriculum and inform practice across the nursery and wider school community.

The manager and staff team were committed to developing strong partnerships and collaborative working practices with children and families. They provided regular opportunities for them to be meaningfully involved in the development of the service. The management and staff team had developed a comprehensive programme of family engagement which included questionnaires, open afternoon sessions, literacy and numeracy workshops, parent interview sessions as well as regular weekly 'Welcome Wednesday' drop in sessions. As well as this, families had opportunities to join their children in nursery for lunch and get involved in fundraising and community events. They had also participated in the development of the vision, values and aims and provided time and resources to support the development of provision outdoors. Families spoke positively about communication with the service. One parent commented: "Parents have had opportunities to comment on the visions and aims of the nursery at parents evening, have continuous access to the policies, folders and floor books etc within the setting. There are frequent surveys, engagement sessions and coffee mornings etc where feedback is not only listened to but also taken on and engaged with in a meaningful way!". Involving families in this way helped to promote strong relationships and a shared partnership in the delivery of high-quality care for children.

Robust quality assurance practices were in place across the service. This included personal planning audits, staff professional reviews, team meetings and monitoring of children's experiences and the learning environment. These were carried out by the manager and the staff team. The quality assurance tasks that took place linked to the service improvement plan and helped staff to measure the impact of the changes taking place. For example, improvements observed within the refreshed planning approaches included staff feeling more confident to plan for children's individual needs and respond to their interests. Staff reported that children were now having play and learning experiences which were more attuned to their development and learning needs and were supporting them to make progress.

Staff understood that they had an important role to play in self-evaluation and told us how they used the Care Inspectorate quality framework to explore their progress, development and practice against specific quality indicators. This enabled them to identify strengths and areas for development to improve outcomes for children and their families. For example, reviewing progress around mealtimes resulted in improvement to the children's snack experiences which offered them more choice and opportunities for independence. The staff team were committed to embedding a culture of self-reflection and evaluation into their practice. This was resulting in children and families experiencing positive outcomes.

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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children were cared for by staff who were warm, compassionate, and nurturing. Staff provided individualised support by effectively engaging with children throughout the inspection. 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 children who felt respected within the service. Parents commented, "The staff are extremely attentive to my child's needs and are very attuned to her." and "All members of staff at Tarradale nursery are fantastic practitioners whom I trust fully with my child's safety, wellbeing and education. Thank you Tarradale ELC!".

Children benefited from a service that was appropriately staffed to meet their needs. Effective staff deployment across the service meant that the right number of staff were meeting children's individual needs, consistently throughout the day. Staff were proactive in recognising any gaps and ensuring effective supervision and quality engagement with children. Staff worked very well together and ensured children were able to access the full provision. They recognised that some absence had an impact on the team structure, however, their team approach and commitment ensured continued positive outcomes for children.

Continuity of care for children was consistent throughout the day with minimal changes to staffing. At lunchtime, staff breaks were well planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. Staff shared important information about the needs of children at necessary times. This ensured positive transitions for children and very good communication with families at pick up and drop off times.

A good mixture of skills, knowledge and experience in the staff team contributed to positive interactions, play and learning experiences for children. They communicated well and worked together to ensure children were safe and engaged in quality experiences throughout the day. This allowed routines and key tasks to be carried out whilst ensuring children were appropriately supported and outcomes remained positive. As a result, children experienced a very calm, nurturing experience for the majority of their time.

Arrangements for unplanned absence were supported by effective systems to ensure children's needs were met. For example, the service tried to use members of the existing staff team for supply work to ensure consistency in care and minimise disruption to children's routines. Personal planning information was updated regularly and available to all staff. Overall, this ensured that staff working in the service understood the needs of children and how to support them.

Positive working relationships had been formed between staff which meant they were all meaningfully contributing to the inclusive and positive ethos of trust and respect. The staff team worked collaboratively and supported each other well. Regular meetings and support from the manager engaged staff well in the process of reflecting on practice. This meant that staff felt valued and empowered to grow professionally and provided children with a happy, secure and supportive environment.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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