

St. Cyrus School Nursery Class

Day Care of Children

St.Cyrus School
Beach Road
St Cyrus
Montrose
DD10 0BJ

Telephone: 01674 850 215

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 March 2024

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003015753

About the service

This service is provided by Aberdeenshire Council. It is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children at any one time aged between 3 years and those not yet attending primary school.

Adult : child ratios will be a minimum of: 3 years and over
1:8 if the children attend more than 4 hours per day or
1:10 if the children attend for less than 4 hours per day

The nursery is part of St. Cyrus primary school building in the coastal village of St. Cyrus. The nursery has access to an enclosed outdoor area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 and 14 March 2024. One inspector carried out the inspection. Feedback was given at the end of the inspection visit.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received feedback from seven families
- spoke with staff and the manager
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children attending the service were happy and comfortable within the nursery environment.
- Staff were nurturing, kind and knew children well.
- Children's health and wellbeing was promoted through outdoor play opportunities.
- Children were having fun and were fully engaged in their play.
- There was a wide range of high-quality resources, offering children opportunities for challenge, creativity and problem-solving.
- Effective quality assurance and self-evaluation processes supported the service to deliver high-quality care and support to families.

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?	5 - Very 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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children attending the service were happy, settled and experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff. Interactions between staff and children showed where strong relationships had been made. Cuddles were regularly offered to children who looked for reassurance. Parents shared with us, "Lovely caring staff. I feel very confident in leaving my child in their care" and "Wonderful caring staff".

Children's health and wellbeing was well supported by the use of personal planning documents. Information gathered was used effectively to help staff provide individualised care. Children with additional support needs had care plans in place and staff worked proactively with outside professionals including speech and language to support children. These documents were reviewed regularly with families. This ensured that staff had accurate and up to date information to support them to fully meet the needs of children in their care. As a result, staff were knowledgeable about each child's needs and the strategies in place to support them. For example, staff regularly and consistently used visual aids and choices to support children with additional support needs. As a result, children were happy and settled. Staff shared with us, "We provide a setting that is safe, caring, nurturing and inclusive to all our children" and "We continually work in partnership with families and professionals to improve outcomes for the children".

Children enjoyed eating snack together in a relaxed atmosphere, supporting an unhurried, social experience. Some children chose to have their snack outdoors so to not interrupt their play. Children's life skills were supported during the snack process. Children helped staff prepare snack for their peers and enjoyed this responsibility. Children benefitted from opportunities to be independent through self-serving and pouring their own drinks. Children also washed their plates once they had finished eating. Snack choices were healthy and fresh water was available for children throughout the day.

Children went through to the gym hall for their lunch. During lunch, staff sat with children to support safety, communication and maintain positive relationships. The manager recognised that improvements could be made to the lunch experience as the gym hall was noisy and there were limited opportunities for children to be involved in self-serving. We also discussed the addition of cosy touches such as tablecloths and flowers or laminated family placemats to support a more homely approach. We recognised that visiting the gym hall for lunch aided transitions to the school, however, we asked the manager to consider how to make this experience more relaxed and social, like the snack experience.

No children required medication, however, nappy cream was stored appropriately. A detailed medication policy reflected current guidance. Consent forms were completed with parents and medication care plans were reviewed every three months in line with best practice. We asked the manager to review nappy consent forms every three months in line with best practice also.

All staff had accessed child protection training relevant to their role and responsibility to keep children safe. Chronologies were used effectively to record significant events in a child's life that may impact on their health and wellbeing and other agencies had been contacted and collaborated with when necessary. This meant families were provided with support and help when required.

Nappy changing was a warm and nurturing experience. Staff spoke with children and sang to them throughout this process to support them to feel relaxed and involved. Infection prevention and control measures were followed throughout.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were happy, having fun and fully engaged in their play. Children particularly enjoyed building with the blocks and drawing and their creations were verbally recognised by staff which supported their confidence. When asked what children like about the nursery they shared, "the reading corner", "playing with my friends" and "I like the toys" and going on adventures to the beach".

Play experiences provided opportunities for children to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy. For example, children enjoyed reading stories and singing rhymes with staff and there were good opportunities for children to mark make throughout the environment. Staff also extended children's play interests with an effective use of questioning. Staff shared with us, "As a team we are good at scaffolding play, there and then and building in the next steps which the children see as a challenge".

A wide range of resources were available to support and extend children's play and interests indoors and outdoors. For example, children benefitted from a wide range of loose parts. These supported children to develop their skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving. A parent shared with us, "I have nothing but positive things to say about St. Cyrus nursery, the set-up, the staff, the learning and transition are all professional in their work, friendly, challenging and there seems to be a very child led ethos which allows children to be highly engaged in their learning and be leaders in learning".

Approaches to the planning, observation and next steps cycle were a key recent improvement which the service was continuing to develop and embed in practice. Planning was now a mixture of intended and spontaneous learning to support children to access a breadth and depth of learning opportunities. Floorbooks were used to support planning and recording of children's experiences. These offered children opportunities to be involved and revisit their learning. The quality of recorded observations of children and their next steps in development and learning was on the whole very good. Children and families were now involved in creating next steps. A parent shared, "My child has become increasingly confident about speaking about their learning and is eager to show us what they have learned". Staff and management also had an effective overview of children's learning and development to meet individual children's needs. A parent shared with us, "In some cases the staff have supported my child in their learning and documented excellent wow moments in their journal that gives a picture of what was happening at the time. Can't fault them at all".

Very good use was made of the local community. The children regularly went out for walks and visited the beach and the park. Other trips included visiting the local building site after a child had shown an interest in this. Staff had also requested the local recycling lorry come to visit the children at the nursery as recycling was a focus of interest of the children. It was recognised by the service that parents and carers could also visit to share their interests and skills, and some had visited to share their interests of football and crochet.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was welcoming with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Children had ample space for their needs. Refurbishment since the previous inspection had made improvements to the reception area and toilets. Children could store their belongings in a small cloakroom area and had a space to store any arts and crafts to go home. Children had decorated their own labels for their pegs which supported them to feel valued. A parent shared, "The setting is well maintained with a focus on the children taking ownership and responsibility for looking after their resources".

The setting was furnished with good quality furniture for children. Homely touches and decoration helped children to feel welcomed and included. Staff had considered lighting and fabrics to soften areas and quiet areas had been created. Children could relax on rugs and cushions looking at books and playing with soft toys and puppets to support their emotional wellbeing. A calming sensory area had recently been created and this was well used by several children. The manager shared she had further plans to make the environment more calming for children through the use of dimmed lights.

The indoor environment was safe and secure for children. Outdoors, a fully enclosed fence with lockable gate also supported children's safety. Benefit risk assessments were in place to identify benefits and hazards and mitigating actions to minimise risks to children for activities, outdoors and some play areas indoors. We asked the manager to create a general risk assessment for the indoor environment to further support children's safety. Children were included in risk assessing lunch in the gym hall and outdoors, and had considered how to access these areas safely. The manager was in the process of reviewing all risk assessments and planned for children to be involved in these also.

Children benefitted from direct access to outdoors and could choose if they wished to play indoors or out. The outdoor area was developmentally appropriate for the children. There were ample resources available for children including a reading den, mud kitchen and a sand pit. Children also regularly accessed a natural environment in the school grounds which gave them the opportunity to explore nature and climb trees. Responses from parents in regard to the outdoor area were mixed. Parents shared they would like, "A bigger outdoor space for nature nursery" and "More varied outdoor play opportunities and using the wildlife space more often". While another parent shared, "Between the outdoor spaces available to the nursery and those shared with the school (grass areas, concrete around the front, etc), nature nursery (outdoors all day) my child loves the variety". During the inspection we found the outside areas to be fully resourced and utilised well.

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The setting had a shared vision, values and aims with the school. The manager shared, these were to be reviewed in the near future with current staff, families and children to support a shared approach.

The service was well led by a strong, approachable manager who delegated responsibility appropriately to staff and involved them in the development of the service. The manager and staff undertook peer monitoring of each other's practice to support development and improvements. Staff were encouraged to share feedback through a two stars and a wish approach. This supported professional dialogue and ongoing improvements.

On going self-evaluation using key best practice documents allowed the manager and staff to deliver high-quality care and support for children and families. An improvement plan identified relevant areas for improvement. This was regularly reviewed and evaluated. Staff shared, "All staff are involved and improvements are driven forward by all staff". A quality assurance calendar was in place to support management. This highlighted various tasks that were to be undertaken throughout the year. Regular audits were done of paperwork including personal plans, medication and accidents. Management also regularly undertook monitoring of the environment to support continuing development and improvements.

Family's views were actively sought, and the service recognised the importance of working in partnership with parents. Families could visit for stay and plays, newsletters were shared regularly, and parents were encouraged to give their feedback regularly. Staff shared with us "We know our parents and work hard to develop good relationships with them".

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff displayed warmth and kindness which enabled children to feel valued, loved and secure. They recognised the importance of nurturing, warm, responsive attachments, and interactions. A parent shared, "The staff are welcoming, they meet the needs of my child, adapt to my child's needs".

The provider and manager appreciated the importance of appropriate staffing levels. Adult to children's ratios were maintained at all times and additional staff were always available to allow staff to be responsive to individual children's needs. Staff breaks did not impact on the quality of care and children's experiences.

The deployment of staff supported the supervision and care of children. Rotas were well organised, and staff were clear on their roles and responsibilities throughout the sessions. On the whole staff communicated well with each other to ensure appropriate supervision promoted children's safety and engagement. We shared a couple of occasions where to fully minimise risk, staff should reach out to the manager for support if required.

Families were welcomed into the setting at collection by a member of staff. Staff were available to chat with parents and were observed interacting positively and sharing information with families which demonstrated positive relationships had been formed.

The staff team were a well-established stable staff with one newer member of staff. Newer staff completed inductions with regular reviews from management to help build professional relationships. We suggested the manager could use the Scottish Government National Induction resource to support a more in-depth induction with a focus on learning conversations and reflection.

There was a very good range of staff skills and experience within the team to support children. All staff had all undertaken core training and staff had made good use of other additional training to help improve their practice. For example, all staff had recently attended Intensive Interaction training to support children with additional support needs. Staff were able to reflect on the impact of their training and how this was improving outcomes for children.

Staff shared that regular one to one appraisals and wellbeing meetings supported their confidence and development. Regular staff meetings were also established to support communication and reflection.

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?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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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