

Noss Early Learning and Childcare Day Care of Children

Noss Primary School
Ackergill Street
Wick
KW1 4DT

Telephone: 01955 609 990

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 February 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003013514

About the service

Noss Early Learning and Childcare is registered to provide a service to a maximum of 80 children, aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The service is operated by The Highland Council. The head teacher is the registered manager of the service. The service operates term time only.

Noss Early Learning and Childcare is located within Noss Primary School in Wick, Caithness. It has its own separate entrance. The premises consists of three playrooms, with direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 and 14 February 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
- reviewed online questionnaires from 14 parent and carers
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff were responsive to children's individual needs.
- Children enjoyed free flow access between the indoor and outdoor area.
- Children were offered good experiences to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning.
- Leaders and staff had high aspirations for children and families which was promoted in their shared vision.
- Overall staff were welcoming, placing a strong importance on providing children with a positive experience.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - 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

Most children experienced warm and caring interactions to support their wellbeing. Most staff were proactive in supporting children with comfort and reassurance when needed which contributed to children feeling secure in their experience.

Staff were responsive to children's individual needs. Staff cuddled and comforted children and were quick to respond if a child became upset. Staff were good at following cues from children and recognised when a child needed support. This resulted in strong relationships between children and staff.

Overall staff knew the care and support needs, preferences and routines for the majority of the children attending. However, written personal planning information was inconsistent. Children's personal plans did not always reflect the child's needs and the strategies required to meet these needs. As a consequence, staff did not always have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of the children attending and how best to support them to progress and achieve their potential.

Children experienced unhurried mealtimes with a relaxed, positive atmosphere. Their independence was encouraged through opportunities such as, preparing snack and self-serving. This helped to build their confidence and life skills. Children and staff enjoyed eating and chatting together at snack time, which promoted good eating habits and contributed to the development of early language skills. The leadership team had identified that there was scope to further develop the lunch experience to be more social.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Most children were having fun leading their own play. Some staff used skilled interactions to support children's early literacy, language and communication development. For example, reading books with children and introducing song and rhyme. This practice could be developed further to ensure these experiences are consistent for all children.

Some staff introduced mathematical language, such as more and less, to play situations encouraging children to contrast and compare sizes and amounts. They labelled numbers and counted out items with children, using their fingers to demonstrate the quantity. This supported children's developing numeracy skills.

Children were offered good experiences to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning. For example, children enjoyed messy play, painting their hands, encouraging self expression and the development of fine motor skills.

Children were involved in shaping their play and learning. They contributed to floor books with comments and drawings about their experiences. However, there was limited evidence of children's learning recorded. Staff were knowledgeable about children's individual development. Whilst observations of play experiences were personal to each child, they did not consistently capture learning. Children's next steps had been identified. However, these were not always measurable or followed up. As a result, there was the potential for children's achievements to be missed.

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

Play spaces benefitted from plenty of natural light. Consideration had been given to creating a quiet space for children to rest and relax. This enabled children to seek out a calm area where they could have some individual time which supported their emotional wellbeing. However, this could be further developed to promote a more comfortable and welcoming environment, with more cosy areas and homely touches in all playrooms.

There were some open ended natural real life resources inside that supported children to develop their skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving. However, the service should continue to develop and embed the use of loose parts play to fully support children to develop their curiosity and creativity. Consideration should also be given to the accessibility of resources for all children, to promote and encourage independence.

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. On the day of the inspection, resources outdoors had been minimised following a recent storm which impacted on the quality of play experiences outdoors. The manager was aware of this and plans were in place to resolve this.

Staff were mindful of where children were at all times. They regularly counted the number of children in each area and told other staff if they were taking children to another area of the setting. The interior playroom doors were secured, ensuring children could not leave the playrooms unattended. This contributed to keeping children safe in their environment.

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

How good is our leadership?

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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Leaders and staff had high aspirations for children and families, which was promoted in their shared vision. Families told us that they were confident the setting was well managed. A culture of continuous improvement had been established with all staff and leaders demonstrating a commitment and passion to make positive changes for children and families.

A collaborative approach towards quality assurance and improvement was a priority for the leadership team. 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.

Self-evaluation processes were evolving, supporting staff to reflect well together. They made good use of best practice documents, supporting the overall evaluation of key performance indicators. This contributed to some improvements to children's play, care and learning.

The leadership team engaged well in the inspection process, responding positively to improvement discussions. They were confident in the capacity of staff to deliver positive outcomes for children and families, resulting in staff feeling empowered. Parents could be confident that the setting was managed well.

How good is our staff team?

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 4.3: Staff deployment

Overall staff were welcoming, placing a strong importance on providing children with a positive experience. They had developed strong relationships with children and their families. Parents commented:

"I feel that the staff are very responsive to the children's ideas and interests and they plan meaningful play experiences around these."

"The staff are very welcoming, they are very accommodating to all the children and put their needs first."

Overall a good mixture of skills, knowledge and experience in the staff team contributed to positive interactions, play and learning experiences for children. However, there were some inconsistencies in staff interactions between all three play rooms. This meant there were some instances where children did not benefit from high quality interactions.

Overall, the deployment and levels of staff within the nursery was effective. For the majority of time, a good staff to child ratio allowed staff to be responsive to individual needs. However, during busier times of the day there were occasions when the staffing arrangements did not meet children's needs at the right time. There were also a few instances where children were not being appropriately supervised, as staff did not position themselves so they could monitor the room at all times.

Staff told us they worked well together. They were motivated to continue to improve children's experiences and outcomes. They told us, "Staff and management work well as a team and are always looking for ways to improve and develop for the interests of the children."

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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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