

Tarves School Nursery Class

Day Care of Children

Tarves School
Duthie Road
Tarves
Ellon
AB41 7JX

Telephone: 01651 851 247

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 March 2024

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003015705

About the service

Tarves School Nursery Class is situated within a self-contained annex of Tarves School in the heart of the village of Tarves.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 18 children at any one time aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is provided in a playroom, cloakroom and bathroom, with toilets and nappy changing facilities. Children have access to a dedicated outdoor area as well as the wider school playground. The service is on a bus route and is near to local shops and facilities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 March 2024 between 09:30 and 16:30 and 28 March 2024 between 09:15 and 12:15.

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:

- spent time with children using the service and spoke to one of their parents/carers
- received 15 responses to our request for feedback from parents
- spoke with staff and management
- received five responses to our request for feedback from staff
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were cared for by kind, attentive, nurturing staff.
- Staff knew children well and planned individualised care to meet their needs.
- Children experienced a good mix of spontaneous and planned play and learning activities.
- Children enjoyed welcoming, well-structured play spaces.
- Positive experiences and outcomes were promoted by effective quality assurance practices.
- Staff worked well together to 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?	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 evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, enabling interactions with the adults caring for them. There was a strong ethos of nurture within the team, and staff recognised the value of fostering positive relationships with children and their families. Flexible approaches supported children to settle and thrive. For example, when children started attending the setting, times and support were agreed individually, and parents were invited to stay. One parent told us "I was nervous leaving my little one, but staff went out their way to help. Now he loves going." These measures told children and families they mattered and helped them feel welcome and cared for.

Children were cared for by staff who knew them well. Staff used information provided by parents in personal plans to support children's care. Information had been reviewed and updated regularly and additional information had been recorded where children had specific needs. Parents spoke very positively of the communication from staff in relation to their children's care. Staff were able to describe strategies being used to support all children, however we identified that this information was sometimes difficult to find in their personal plans. When we discussed this with management, they decided to adapt existing information displaying children's learning to include the support strategies. This will help ensure that information is readily available to promote continuity of support.

Families had opportunities to be involved through events such as Stay and Play, Health and Wellbeing sessions, sports day and a planned family picnic. Although parents were welcome to enter the setting at drop off and collection, most chose to remain at the door and staff gave a detailed handover. We encouraged management to explore more regular ways of inviting parents in to the setting to participate in their children's experiences.

Children were supported to understand their emotions. Children were comforted when they were upset and supported in their interactions with their peers. Staff chatted with children about emotions, and children independently accessed feelings jars, where they placed their photo depending on how they felt. This helped promote emotional intelligence and resilience.

Children were supported sensitively throughout the day. Staff were attentive and noticed when children required support to join in, prompting them gently. Children were asked what they thought should happen next during routines such as lunch and handwashing and reminded gently when they forgot. These measures helped children build confidence and independence.

Children's health was supported through correct storage of medication. We identified some minor issues, where information had been missed in the recording of medication. Management agreed to review arrangements to ensure that all records comply with guidance, helping to promote children's wellbeing at all times.

Children's mealtime experiences were relaxed and sociable. They helped prepare snacks, served themselves and were involved in cooking and baking activities. Soup was made weekly, sometimes using vegetables grown in the nursery garden. This was available for children who did not like the lunch provided.

Staff told us that children particularly enjoyed trying the soup when they had been involved in making it. Staff were aware of choking risks and were knowledgeable about children's allergies. They sat with children, chatting and enjoying time together, helping to make mealtimes a safe, positive and pleasant experience.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children had opportunities to lead their own play and learning, with one parent commenting "There is a great balance between free play and structured activities." Stimulating play experiences for children were promoted through staff continually reviewing and developing the provision. Regular evaluation of activities helped to ensure that these followed children's interests and met their learning needs. Each member of staff had an area of responsibility within the setting which they developed in line with plans for children's learning. This helped ensure that the provision met children's needs, and extended their learning.

Children had a wide range of resources to choose from. These included opened ended, real life items such as familiar items in the home corner and dressing up clothes to reflect real life. Opportunities for sensory play included playing in water, sand and playdough. Staff played alongside children, supporting them to develop ideas. This promoted children's curiosity and imagination in their play, and children were busy and engaged throughout the inspection.

Children benefitted from planned and spontaneous learning opportunities. Staff acknowledged that children all learn differently. Planned provocations for learning recognised the importance of providing flexible and varied opportunities for children to develop their skills in ways that suited them. Keyworkers knew children well and carried out observations to support their learning. These were shared with parents and included meaningful next steps. Families were encouraged to add to these by sharing children's achievements from home. Parents told us they were happy with their children's progress and learning. Staff discussed children's learning needs and how these were to be met at regular planning meetings, which helped ensure that children's learning was individualised and relevant.

Children enjoyed projects which supported their learning. These were planned around children's interests and included topics such as 'Food heroes'. We observed rich learning opportunities, including children sampling and cooking different fruits and vegetables, learning about their textures, colours and tastes.

Children had opportunities to develop language, literacy and numeracy skills. Staff modelled positive use of language and were particularly skilled in asking children questions to support and challenge their thinking. They varied their approach to suit the individual, giving children time to process information and praised their efforts. Numeracy and literacy were embedded throughout the setting and activities, with children being asked to count and sort as part of routine tasks. The 'book of the month' provided opportunities for children to develop ideas. Links to learning were shared with parents to promote continuity in children's learning.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Children played and had fun in a thoughtfully structured learning environment. Staff had developed child-centred, flexible play spaces, where children were free to play as they chose. These had been extended from the playroom into the cloakroom, where a cosy area had been set up to provide further opportunities for children to read quietly or relax. Parents commented positively on the learning environment and told us their children enjoyed the play opportunities.

Children had freeflow access to the outdoors. The nursery playground, which was fully enclosed, led to the wider playground through a secure gate. Children enjoyed playing outdoors in all weathers. During the inspection, it rained heavily. Children and staff, dressed in waterproofs and wellies, played alongside each other. One group made the most of the large puddles that had formed and enjoyed splashing in these together, whilst others played football and rode bikes. Children's access to these areas gave them varied opportunities for physical play, access to fresh air and the natural environment.

Children had access to the wider school. This included weekly visits to the PE hall, and visits to the lunch hall during the transition to primary one. Children had regularly played in the wider school playground, which gave opportunities for them to socialise with older children. This helped promote a variety of social and learning experiences for children.

Children's health and safety was supported by infection prevention and control measures. The setting was clean and fresh, and children were encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet, before eating, and after playing outside. Nappy changing arrangements, however, did not always meet current guidelines. Although a changing unit was available, staff told us they did not feel this met the needs of the children and therefore used a changing mat on the bathroom floor. This did not follow current guidance and risked cross contamination. Management agreed to review nappy changing arrangements and make changes to ensure that current guidelines are followed (see Area for Improvement 1).

Children's safety was promoted through staff's knowledge and awareness. Risk benefit assessments were in place, and staff used information from research and guidance to review and update these frequently. Children were supported to take shared responsibility for their own safety. For example, when playing in the school playground, they were asked to explain the boundaries to staff, who supervised them closely while they played. This helped children understand the rules in place to keep them safe.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing, and reduce the risk of cross contamination, the provider should ensure that nappy changing facilities and arrangements comply with current guidance.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed. (HSCS 5.4)

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

Children benefitted from the positive, caring ethos shared by the staff team. The positive aims of the service included providing "a welcoming, safe and nurturing environment" which was reflected in staff's practice, and supported families to understand what to expect. These had been developed alongside staff, parents, carers and children and helped to create a strong vision, which promoted positive experiences and outcomes for children and their families.

Children and families had opportunities to be involved in developing the service. Parents were asked for feedback in a variety of ways, which helped capture their views and suggestions. When providing feedback, all parents agreed they felt meaningfully involved. Children's views were gathered regularly, and staff were skilled in interacting with them in ways that suited them. This included the use of floor books, voting stones and daily chats. These measures helped create conditions where children and families felt heard and respected.

Positive experiences for children were promoted through effective quality assurance practice. Regular audits and clear roles and responsibilities helped to identify where practice needed to be adjusted, and that this was acted on promptly. The manager was skilled in promoting positive practice. They had adopted an approach to the daily monitoring of practice, where areas for development were identified and actioned in the moment. This worked well and was supported by a more formal programme of 1-1 meetings and appraisals. These measures helped to promote very good outcomes for children.

Staff evaluated their practice during daily reflection, and as a team, using guidance documents such as Education Scotland's 'How good is our early learning and childcare' and the Care Inspectorate's 'Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare'. Positive links with nearby services gave opportunities for staff teams to collaborate to help evaluate and develop each other's practice. Staff described this as particularly effective in building professional relationships and confidence. This gave opportunities for them to identify areas for improvement, which were reflected in a realistic and achievable improvement plan. This helped ensure that developments to the service were child focused and promoted positive outcomes.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

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

Children were supported by enthusiastic, committed, and motivated staff. Positive attachments between staff and children were evident, and all interactions were respectful, considerate, and kind. Parents were very positive about the friendly, helpful staff. This helped children feel relaxed and comfortable in the setting.

Children were cared for by a knowledgeable, skilled staff team. Staff showed a commitment to continuous professional development and had attended training courses both together and individually. They shared their learning to improve experiences for children. This had included recent development of planning and observations of children's learning. Staff were able to confidently speak about how they used their learning in these areas to promote meaningful experiences for children.

Children's care was promoted through well-planned support. Staff understood their roles and responsibilities and worked well together throughout the day. This was evident when children chose to play outside in two different areas of the playground. Staff responded flexibly, positioning themselves to ensure children had the correct number of adults to support them in their play. The staff team were stable and consistent, which ensured families knew which staff were supporting their children. Additional staff were employed to help support children with additional support needs, and there was a positive ethos of attendance within the service. This supported consistency and high-quality outcomes for children.

Children benefitted from positive, nurturing relationships between staff and families. Staff valued the relationships they had fostered with parents and carers, and the opportunities that this gave for offering support when it was needed. Staff acknowledged children's home lives and adopted a flexible approach to settling in and transitions. Positive professional relationships with other agencies promoted a holistic approach to meeting children's needs. This helped meet individual needs and promoted a supportive environment for children and their families.

A supportive induction for new staff, using the Scottish Government's 'National Induction Resource', helped promote a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The manager told us they used this tool to help identify strengths and areas for development to support new staff in their practice. Leadership and modelling of good practice from management and more established staff helped ensure children's experiences were consistently positive.

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

Information on children should be effectively logged by staff and should be stored securely.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16. Standard 3: Health and Wellbeing.

This area for improvement was made on 29 August 2016.

Action taken since then

All information on children was found to be recorded and stored appropriately. This included children's personal plans. These held information to support children's care and support and staff updated these with parents regularly. Children's records were stored in a locked filing cabinet and accessed only by the appropriate persons. Online information was password protected.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

Staff should be more actively involved in the monitoring, evaluation and development of activities to extend children's learning.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16. Standard 13: Improving the Service.

This area for improvement was made on 29 August 2016.

Action taken since then

The manager and staff were involved in regular monitoring, evaluation and development of activities to extend children's learning. This included evaluation of daily activities and children's learning, self evaluation using guidance documents and effective quality assurance.

This area for improvement has been met.

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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