

Tomintoul Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Cults Drive
Tomintoul
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
24 May 2024

Service provided by:
The Moray Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001892

Service no:
CS2003016382

About the service

Tomintoul Primary School Nursery is situated within a rural village in Moray. The service operates within the grounds of Tomintoul Primary School. Children have access to a designated entry door and cloakroom, a large, open plan playroom, and children's toilets. There is a small kitchen within the playroom for the preparation of snack and the serving of lunches. Outside, the children have access to a fully enclosed playground as well as to the school playing field.

The service is provided by Moray Council and is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 20 children aged 3 years to not yet attending primary school. In August, children aged 2 years 11 months may attend the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 May 2024, between 9:45 and 17:00. 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
- Gathered feedback from families
- Spoke with management and staff
- Observed practice and children's experiences
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing and respectful interactions from kind and caring staff.
- Children benefited from excellent approaches to play and learning, which were child-centred and responsive to their needs and interests.
- The indoor and outdoor spaces were very well resourced to promote children's natural curiosity and imagination, and their sense of wellbeing.
- The service involved children and families very well in the continuous development of the service, which led to positive outcomes for children.
- The service was very well led, and the dedicated staff team demonstrated a positive ethos of high-quality care and learning.

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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were very well nurtured and supported through their daily experience by kind and caring staff. The staff knew the children and their families very well and as a result were able to support individualised care and learning routines. This supported the children's overall wellbeing. One parent told us, "The whole team are kind, caring and show genuine interest in my daughter and her peers which I think makes them feel really valued." Children were encouraged to play and explore independently, while staff carefully responded to cues for reassurance and support. Where personal care was needed, this was discretely delivered with warmth and care. This supported children's security and confidence and helped to build positive relationships. Another parent told us, "The children are always happy, listened to, and everything done is of the children's interest. Children are at the heart of everything done."

Mealtimes were relaxed and unhurried, with children gathering round low tables. Children helped to set the table and pour drinks for themselves and their friends. The weekly snack helper chose the order of snacks for the week from the menu and could choose for the children to bake snack on one of the days if they wished. These opportunities offered the children independence and choice. Staff sat with the children and ate their meals alongside them. This enabled a positive social experience with lots of chatter, whilst staff focused on all the children to ensure they were kept safe. Children could serve themselves parts of the meal, and staff shared with us that many children were now trying a wider selection of foods than before. We discussed with the manager that next steps in terms of best practice at mealtimes would be to introduce even more independence and flexibility at mealtimes, for example by offering a "rolling" snack.

Food choices were nutritious and reflected current guidance, and fresh water was easily accessible throughout the day. Staff gave children regular reminders to drink water and remain hydrated. This was naturally woven into the theme of being healthy which the children were learning about during the inspection.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through very effective use of personal planning. Information was gathered from families based on the wellbeing indicators, and this was regularly reviewed with families. "Quest" passports contained further information which had been gathered by families at home, such as likes, dislikes and current interests. These were used to plan individualised next steps for support and learning, which helped to promote consistency and continuity of care. A parent shared with us, "Parents are well informed and included in all aspects of their children's nursery experience."

Where children needed additional care and support, effective procedures for sharing information with other professionals were in place. Staff worked proactively with children, families, and other professionals to identify appropriate next steps and strategies based on individual needs and prior learning. This ensured that all children were getting the support they needed to reach their full potential. Where children required medication, this was being stored appropriately and delivered in a safe and sensitive manner.

Parents told us that they were very happy with the care and support their child received. One parent said, "They provide a wide range of activities and resources to help each child grow and develop at their own level."

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

We made an evaluation of excellent for this quality indicator, as we considered the quality of children's play and learning to be exceptional. We found innovative, effective practice and very high-quality performance across a range of activities from which other services could learn. We were confident that this level of performance was sustainable and that it will be maintained.

Children were happy, confident and having great fun as they engaged in the outstanding range of learning experiences on offer. They were empowered to be fully involved in their play by highly skilled and attentive staff, who knew when to promote independence and when to offer support. The children freely chose where to play, within the indoors spaces, or when outside. This enabled them to explore, experiment and seek out resources that advanced their rights, and captured their interest, imagination and natural curiosity.

The manager and staff team ensured that a balance of responsive and planned, high-quality experiences was offered. They gathered information from families at the start of each term on the children's interests at home, and planned experiences around them. They skilfully planned additional themes, such as seasons and being healthy, to offer additional play and learning opportunities. We were impressed by the way in which all staff took opportunities to link these interests to learning about nursery values, all curricular areas, children's rights and the wellbeing indicators. They also worked as a team to create meaningful links with current events and themes. For example, children had developed an interest in insects. The staff had planned experiences around National Bee Day, including building a bee "hotel," or Air Bee and Bee. We saw a child choosing a piece of wood to add to the hotel, which was slightly too long for the space available. The child was supported to don protective glasses and apron and cut the wood to size using two different saws. Throughout, the staff member and child talked about being safe, shape and size, and skills for life and work. With the task complete the child was encouraged to take photos and videos to add to their learning journal, before following their next interest.

The staff team also very effectively supported children's interests in the moment. There was much excitement and joy when one child spotted that a caterpillar had hatched from its cocoon overnight. They had been plotting the length of the caterpillars as they grew, and a group of children chose to record this new development on a calendar. This led to some children drawing their own caterpillars and a discussion around growing and healthy eating. Approaches to planning were completely child centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. As a result, children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned, schematic play opportunities promoting choice and independence. Parents strongly agreed that their children's interests were at the centre of plans for play and learning. One parent told us, "Our child is very enthusiastic and will say how he has been supported by staff who helped him to achieve what he's wanted to do. We have really enjoyed seeing how activities have been tailored to home interests too."

Detailed and high-quality learning observations were carefully logged using an electronic platform. This meant that parents benefitted from regular updates on their child's learning and progress. Links were explicitly made to developmental and curriculum milestones, and each observation was also linked to the nursery values. This supported the service to share how the values, which had recently been reviewed by staff, children and families, ran through everything that the children experienced. Next steps for learning were developed and revisited regularly, to ensure that they remained relevant and meaningful. Parents were

encouraged to comment on journals and had regular opportunities to come into the service to discuss their child's progress. These connections between home and the nursery helped to ensure that children's voice was strengthened and developed in their learning journals, which benefited their overall development. All parents strongly agreed that they were involved in their child's learning. One parent said, "There are regular opportunities to feedback to staff (including the nursery manager) about what is going on in nursery that term, what parents would like to see and how it could be consolidated at home."

Staff used a variety of engaging approaches to encourage and promote children's literacy and numeracy skills. We observed children as they enjoyed creating stories and acting them out as they shared these with friends. Children enjoyed singing throughout our visit, they eagerly collected "song bags" and other attractive props to inform the group of the next song and its actions. The local authority central team had supported the service to take part in Bookbug sessions. This had been consolidated with a trip on the service bus to Elgin library for a final Bookbug session, and a visit to the bookshop. This gave the children a range of additional, valuable and memorable experiences and helped to instill the joy of reading. The children had also been very involved in developing a "Creation Station" so that they had easy access to mark-making, writing and drawing materials outside.

Numeracy was a focus for improvement at the time of the inspection. The staff team took part in regular moderation activities with teaching staff in the school, where they shared numeracy resources, plans and approaches. This had led the team to develop "homework challenges" for families, as a way of enabling them to be fully involved in the improvement work. For example, over the October break families had been challenged to create a shape Halloween decoration and share it in the nursery or via learning journals. Children were asked to critique each other's work, using mathematical language around shape, and families were asked to give feedback too. One parent commented, "I know what I want her to learn, I just don't know how to do it in child friendly ways. This homework has helped." Other improvements in numeracy were based in the nursery. For example, the staff team had identified that children would benefit from more opportunities to recognise coins. As a result, the children had been running a weekly tuck shop where they could experience working with money in a real-life and meaningful way. As a result, children were making very good progress in numeracy.

The manager and staff team had begun to share their innovative practice in numeracy with staff in other settings, by leading moderation activities during in service training days. We fully agreed that their exceptional approach to play and learning should be showcased and shared with others.

Children's play and learning opportunities were further enhanced as they developed excellent connections to their own and wider communities. For example, on the first morning of the inspection the children had taken part in their first session at the local bowling club. The service had sponsored a planter on the main street of the village, and children had planted this out to tie in with National Bee Day. Links were made with people who worked in the local fire service or in local businesses, to talk about their skills. Grandparents had been invited in to work with children on a craft activity. These experiences all contributed to a wide range of experiences overall, which stimulated children's interests and enhanced their learning opportunities. Parents agreed that the service used the community well, with one commenting, "We're very happy that the outside space is used as much as possible (when the weather allows) both immediately around nursery as well as the wider village."

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

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

Children benefited from a large, airy playroom, and a spacious outdoors area. Both had been thoughtfully laid out to promote curiosity and provide different types of play opportunity. Furnishings and resources were of a high quality and resources could be easily accessed by the children. There were lots of homely touches throughout, including in the outdoor spaces. For example, indoors, there was a cosy corner where children could choose books and relax or come together for daily routines. Outdoors, a space was being developed which the children had decided should be a cosy place for reading books. Hence, there was a sense of ownership by the children, and this gave a strong message to children that they mattered. Parents agreed that the nursery spaces were engaging. One parent said, "The setting has good zones for different types of play and learning, it's been very well thought through, and the space used creatively."

Spaces and resources took account of all children's stages of development and learning. The home corner was well stocked and well used, as was the construction area which contained a variety of blocks and loose parts, along with a woodworking bench and tools. "Learning in Progress" signs could be used by the children to show that they intended to return to their play, so that other children and staff knew not to tidy it away. This showed consideration for children's needs and respect for their play. Outdoors, children had the chance to take part in physically stimulating play, such as using ratchet straps to climb trees, under full supervision. The staff team had recently carried out an audit of the spaces indoors and outdoors, in line with good practice and in order to identify any gaps in the provision of spaces or resources. They were considering other ways in which physically challenging play opportunities could be developed and had identified that the local country ranger could support this.

Children were fully involved in assessing risks as they went about their daily play. At the start of each academic session the children created a safety manual, in which each child added lists and photos of things and people that kept them safe. They had the chance to add to this as the year progressed and as they identified further hazards. When the group were heading outdoors a child was appointed as the "safety inspector," and the other children prompted them to check for secured gates, tidy playground surfaces and safe play spaces. The children had learned about Simoa the elephant, and about how to stay safe when leaving the setting, and Simoa assisted with all safety inspections. These practices were backed up by thorough checks and risk assessments developed by all staff and carried out every day. This helped children to take responsibility for themselves and others, and to ensure that they could play safely wherever they went.

Robust infection prevention and control measures were in place to ensure high levels of safety for children. Checklists for cleaning were in place and these were comprehensive. They were regularly monitored by the manager as part of their quality assurance procedures. Children showed a high level of independence and responsibility as they washed their hands. They were encouraged to aim for "high quality handwashing" and had been learning about this through their "being healthy" theme. We discussed with the manager the need for adult supervision of handwashing to ensure that this strong practice continued beyond the learning theme. All staff had undertaken appropriate training in infection prevention and control and effective quality assurance procedures were in place to ensure that all areas of the nursery setting were consistently clean and 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 management and staff team were enthusiastic and committed to providing high quality experiences for children and their families. They had developed a strong ethos of continuous improvement which led to positive outcomes for everyone. The manager had led a review of the nursery values to ensure that they remained in line with the aspirations of staff, children and parents. It was agreed that the values: Creative, Adventurous, Perseverance, Enjoyment and Skills would remain unchanged, and the golden capes that had been created when the values were first introduced, continued to be used in the playroom. These were worn by children who had demonstrated the values, and these successes were celebrated and shared with families. Families' understanding of the values was further supported through links in learning journals, and staff skilfully referred to them in conversations with children throughout the day. A member of staff confirmed, "We encourage children to "believe in yourself, be you" through our vision and values." As a result, everyone knew how best to meet the needs of children and families.

The manager encouraged and motivated everyone involved in the nursery to feel confident in initiating changes. They supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children and families to reach their full potential. For example, each member of staff led developments in an area of the nursery environment or in an area of practice. In turn, the staff team skilfully involved children in making the changes. This led to many improvements including changes to the outdoors space layout. The staff team regularly met informally to evaluate changes made and consider next steps. This was captured more formally in comprehensive self-evaluation documents which showed how the changes had positively impacted outcomes for children.

Children and families were also meaningfully involved in the development of the service. Their views were actively sought by the manager to inform improvement work. For example, parents were regularly asked to give feedback through "Have Your Say" surveys on specific events and aspects of the service. Surveys had recently been sent out to gather feedback on the numeracy homework challenges for families, and on the contents of children's learning journals. The staff team reflected together on the survey results and made some changes accordingly. Views on parental engagement were also gathered annually. As a result, the staff team had planned a variety of invitations for parents to come in for termly "Tea & a Chat" and stay and play sessions, as well as opportunities just to come in and have a look around. Children and families contributed to the self-evaluation books which further informed the next steps for improvements. These opportunities gave children and families meaningful ways in which to be involved in the life and development of the nursery.

The high quality of experiences available to children was supported and maintained through comprehensive procedures for quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement planning. The quality of conversations taking place between staff regarding the development of the service was consistently rich. Capturing these through the management systems in place meant that the manager and staff had a very strong platform on which to measure where the service was at, and what to work on next. For example, the manager monitored learning journals to identify curriculum areas not yet explored by the children. Having identified that more opportunities for social studies were required, the manager and staff planned ways of offering experiences linked to the local community. As a result, targets in the improvement plan for the service were meaningful, practical and ambitious.

Staff meetings were planned to ensure that all aspects of the service were regularly being discussed and evaluated. The manager also sought support from the local authority central team to identify very good practice in other settings, to help her identify additional areas to work on. This enabled the service to ensure that high quality learning through play was at the heart of improvement planning.

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 benefited from a happy, caring and committed staff team who knew them well and were passionate about providing high quality care and support. All staff modelled respectful and caring behaviours which were reflected in how the children interacted with staff and with each other. As a result, children felt loved and valued by the people who cared for them. Staff also told us that they felt valued, with one member of the team sharing, "I feel extremely grateful to work in this great setting and enjoy coming to work every day."

The staff team was consistent and stable, including the catering staff who came in to support mealtimes. This helped to provide continuity of care for children. All staff were focused on offering high quality learning experiences through play, in order to achieve positive outcomes for children. They had a very good working knowledge of all curriculum areas and also planned engaging opportunities to learn about rights, wellbeing indicators and skills for life. For example, they had developed characters for the wellbeing indicators who had "regular" careers during the day and turned into superheroes at night, which really captured the fun and joy of learning. Staff shared with us that they were, "Well-resourced and willing to go above and beyond to create meaningful experiences." We agreed that their approach demonstrated a very good understanding of the way in which young children develop and learn.

The staff team were effectively deployed to reflect their differing experience, knowledge and skills. This helped to ensure that the children's experiences were positive and that they were kept safe at all times. They were flexible in their approach, which meant they supported each other well through routine tasks and especially so at busy times such as mealtimes. They undertook regular training to ensure that their skills continued to develop. There were opportunities to reflect together on training undertaken and to evaluate how it could be used to impact positively on outcomes for children. Regular staff meetings enabled all staff members to be supported and updated, contributing to a strong team ethos.

It was evident from conversations with staff that they all shared a common, child-centred approach to their work and that they had been ably led and empowered by the manager to do so. A team member told us, "We work well as a team and have a supportive manager who is accessible at all times for support, and day to day work." Another member of staff shared, "Staff feel very supported and work well together."

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	6 - Excellent
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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