

# Cradlehall Nursery Day Care of Children

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Inverness  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
6 May 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Childcare Highland Ltd

**Service provider number:**  
SP2015012472

**Service no:**  
CS2015336577

## About the service

Cradlehall nursery is situated in a residential area of Inverness close to local amenities. The service provides care to a maximum of 52 children at any one time aged from six weeks to those not yet attending primary school. The care service operates between 8:00 and 18:00, Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year.

The nursery consists of a reception area, three separate playrooms, nappy and toilet facilities, kitchen and office space. The pre-school room and toddler rooms each had direct access to enclosed outdoor play areas.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between Tuesday 30th April and Thursday 2nd May 2024, with feedback taking place on Monday 6th May 2024. 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 attending the service.
- Reviewed feedback provided by 20 families.
- Spoke with staff and the management team.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing support from staff.
- Children were happy, confident and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
- The manager and staff were committed to the ongoing development of the service.
- Positive relationships with families supported continuity of care and effective partnerships.
- Work was being done to improve the outdoor space and the opportunities to extend children's play and learning.
- Quality assurance processes need to be embedded to secure sustained improvements across the service.

**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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
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?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support

Most children were happy, active and having fun with their peers on the days of inspection. Natural friendships had formed between children in the nursery. We observed children being caring and inclusive in their play with each other.

Children received caring and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. We observed positive interactions, and appropriate cuddles and comfort offered when needed. Staff had established secure and respectful relationships with children, which contributed to them feeling safe and secure. Feedback from parents supported this. Comments made included: 'Staff are caring and have a brilliant relationship with my son', 'I know that they look after him and are extremely knowledgeable about his likes and dislikes to an extent where my child trusts them', 'Staff are lovely and very knowledgeable' and 'the staff in the room are very open and friendly and my daughter has formed very positive relationships with all of them'.

Most staff knew the care and support needs, preferences and routines for the majority of the children in their care. However, written personal planning information was inconsistent and not always organised well to allow ease of access. Personal plans did not always reflect the individual child's needs, strategies required to meet these needs, and not all forms were fully completed, signed or routinely reviewed with parents. As a consequence, staff could not always readily access up to date information to enable them to best support the children to progress and achieve their potential. The manager should ensure that personal plans are regularly reviewed and updated with the most current targets, support strategies and next steps. The storage of personal plans should also be reviewed. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Children's health was promoted through a selection of nutritionally balanced home cooked meals. Children enjoyed calm, relaxed, unhurried rolling snack times within their playrooms. They were able to have snack at a pace which was right for them. We saw that staff and children sat together during lunch. The children enjoyed their lunch and the opportunity to chat to each other. Children were being supported to develop their independence skills. For example children in the pre-school room were able to self serve snack, lunch and their drinks. Staff praised and encouraged the children as they ate and were on hand to help them as needed. Lunch was a sociable event, where staff supported children to develop their language and communication skills.

Safe sleep routines supported children's emotional wellbeing, the individual needs of children and family wishes were followed. Staff supported children to settle and sleep, and offered home comforters as required. Sleeping children were supervised appropriately with regular checks completed and recorded. Children in the Toddler Room would benefit from having more personal space between their beds as per safe sleeping guidelines.

### Quality indicator 1.3 : Play and learning

Children were provided with play and learning opportunities that impacted positively on their development, health, wellbeing and happiness. For the majority of the time children benefitted from uninterrupted play, allowing them to become absorbed and have fun. This increased children's happiness and engagement.

We observed children having fun, both indoors and in the outdoor play area. We saw some children who were engaged in their play in a purposeful and meaningful way. We also saw some examples of staff effectively extending and building on children's play and learning. However, we identified missed opportunities when skilled and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills, and promote development of imagination.

Some areas of the nursery would benefit from additional quality resources to encourage imaginative play, spark curiosity and increase the opportunities for children to extend and consolidate their learning through play. Literacy and numeracy opportunities could also be developed further across the nursery. For example, encouraging children's use of books, helping children to expand their vocabulary, having access to math materials and activities and supporting children's understanding of written numbers. The manager and staff should review the current space and resources and develop play and learning opportunities available each day by focusing on children's interest, provocations, and experiences that spark children's curiosities. **(See area for improvement 2)**

We recognised some quality play, learning and development was taking place in each of the playrooms and outdoors. However, there was scope to continue to develop the quality of written observations of children's experiences to ensure they were evaluative and focus on children's learning. Quality observations were not routinely being completed. Many contained only limited evaluation of children's progression and achievements. As a consequence, information was not effectively being used by staff to plan appropriately to meet children's individual needs, show progression in learning and identify next steps. The manager and senior staff should support staff to develop their skills and understanding in relation to monitoring and tracking children's learning and progress. This would add value to the children's experience and ensure they are fully supported and challenged. **(See area for improvement 3)**

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met, the provider, manager and staff should ensure:

- a) personal plans, including protocols, set out children's current needs and how they will be met
- b) all staff are aware of and understand the information within the personal plans and use this to effectively meet each child's needs
- c) personal plans and protocols are routinely reviewed with parents and carers and, where necessary, updated.
- d) personal plans are organised and stored to allow easy access.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

2. To promote children's continued learning, development and enjoyment, children should have access to a wide range of resources and experiences which are challenging and suitable to their individual interests and stages of development. There should be a sufficient amount of resources to enable children to make independent choices and engage in deep and meaningful play.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

3. To support children to achieve, the provider should improve the approach and skills of staff in relation to planning for children's learning and tracking and monitoring their progress. Staff should be supported to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

## How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 2.2 : Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in an environment which was clean, bright and welcoming. The playrooms were comfortable with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. Good use of soft furnishings, fairy lights and natural resources created a calm and homely space. Ensuring a healthy and safe environment for the children was a priority for the manager and the staff team. There was a system to report any repairs and damaged items were promptly replaced.

There were three playrooms containing a range of resources that provided opportunities to stimulate children's interests and learning. There were open-ended, real life and natural objects being use in the playrooms to provide a stimulating space which offered some challenge and promoted children's curiosity and imagination. Children were able to independently select resources of their choice and lead their own play. There were some examples of opportunities and experiences to promote children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy, however these needed to be extended.

There was free flow access from the pre-school room to an enclosed outdoor area. This enabled older children to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. The toddler room also opened directly onto an enclosed outdoor area, however free flow access was not always offered. Babies accessed the same outdoor area via the toddler room. We discussed with the manager the need to look at systems to clearly record whether children were indoors or outdoors to ensure all children were accounted for at any given time.

We directed the manager to the Care Inspectorate Simoa (Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) guidance and practice notes which raise awareness and the need to act responsibly to safeguard, protect and support children's wellbeing.

The management team and staff had identified the development of the outdoor area as one of their priority areas within their improvement plan. However, the pace of change was slow and many of the ideas to improve the area, the range of resources and the opportunities to extend and enrich children's learning experiences had yet to be actioned. Work should continue to develop outdoor experiences to support and extend children's problem solving skills, imaginative play and provide them with greater challenge.

There were risk assessments in place which were routinely reviewed. We discussed with the management team the need to develop appropriate risk assessments in relation to outings and walks in the local community.

Cleaning schedules and infection prevention and control procedures were in place. This helped to support children's health and wellbeing within the setting. The nappy changing facilities should be reviewed to ensure that they meet current best practice guidance. We signposted management to the Care Inspectorate 'Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding Childminders)'. Any improvements made should meet required standards. This will support good infection control, the health and wellbeing of children, and ensure that children's dignity and privacy are protected during personal care.

## How good is our leadership?

## 3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager and staff fully engaged in the inspection process and appreciated the guidance and the signposting to various websites and best practice offered by the inspector. The manager and the staff demonstrated their commitment to the service and were motivated to make improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children. Staff in the different playrooms confidently discussed what changes they had already introduced to improve outcomes and experiences for the children.

The vision, values and aims of the service had recently been updated. The manager explained that the staff had been fully involved in reviewing them. We discussed how, in the future, the manager could encourage parental involvement in the review process. A number of the service's policies and procedures had not been reviewed and updated to reflect current best practice. The manager should involve staff in the review of these policies and procedures so that they underpin and influence staff practice and bring about positive outcomes for children.

There was an improvement plan in place for the service with several key areas of practice identified. For example, the manager and staff had been focussing on the development of the outdoor area to increase the quality of the play and learning experiences for children. However, the development of the area had still not been completed even though a substantial period of time had elapsed. We discussed with the manager the need to speed up the pace of change. More opportunities should be introduced to encourage all relevant stakeholders, including children and their families, to be actively involved in the process of identifying the priorities for future developments. This would allow them to feel included and to show that their feedback was valued.

Some monitoring of staff practice had taken place; however, this was not robust enough to secure progression. Support and supervision arrangements were still in the early stages and did not take place on a regular basis. This did not ensure that individual staff were supported to identify their strengths and learning needs. As a result, training and development opportunities for staff did not always result in quality play experiences for children. The manager acknowledged the need to establish a more formal system to monitor staff practice and to provide effective support and supervision for each individual staff member.

The manager recognised the value of staff coming together and there were now regular full team meetings. These provided an opportunity for the manager and staff to reflect on their practice, identifying what they do well for children in their care and highlight areas for development across the service. They were also an opportunity for the sharing of good practice and for some training to take place.

## How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children benefited from a caring and nurturing staff team. They were enthusiastic and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. They were warm, friendly and responsive in their approach and demonstrated positive team working, which promoted a happy and secure environment for children. They modelled positive social interactions, both verbal and nonverbal, supporting children to develop an understanding of relationships.

The manager recognised that continuity of care was important to ensure positive outcomes for children and took this into account when deploying staff. Staff were flexible and breaks were planned to minimise the impact on children whilst making sure that staff had time to rest. We discussed with the manager the need to ensure that she took into account and planned for the busier times of the day, such as drop off and pick up times. Parents had highlighted that during these times staff often did not appear to have the time to provide specific feedback about their child's day.

For most of the day, staff were appropriately deployed which ensured they met children's needs at the right time. Staff in each room worked well together as a team and their differing skills and knowledge complimented one another and resulted in quality interactions with children. There was good communication between staff and they worked together to ensure effective supervision and engagement with children across the day. Staff communicated when a task took them away from an area, for example when they had to support children with personal care and accessing toilet facilities.



## 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

The care service should have clear policies and procedures about sharing information with parents or other relevant persons in the child's life, including what to do in circumstances where a parent is not living with the child. Where a parent does not access the service these should be made available to them electronically.

**This area for improvement was made on 30 January 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

This area for improvement has not been met and will be continued.

### Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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