

Pennyland Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Trostan Road
Thurso
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
11 June 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003017255

About the service

Pennyland Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 80 children, from the age of three years to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery is operated by The Highland Council. The head teacher is the registered manager of the nursery. The nursery operates term time only.

The nursery is located within Pennyland Primary School in Thurso, Caithness. It has its own separate entrance. The nursery premises consists of four large playrooms, kitchen area, large reception area with cloakroom facilities and notice boards. There is an enclosed outdoor play area which contains a range of loose parts and open ended resources which extend and enrich the children's imaginative play and learning experiences. The main school grounds are also used for energetic physical play.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 10 and 11 June 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
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- reviewed online questionnaires from nine parents and carers.

Key messages

- Children were very well nurtured and supported through their daily experience by kind and caring staff.
- Staff's understanding of child development, differing learning approaches and children's right to play supported the provision of high-quality experiences.
- Children benefitted from a very good range of open ended, natural child centred resources, enabling them to explore their creativity, imagination and problem solving skills.
- Playrooms were homely and fostered a welcoming atmosphere for the children.
- The service had effective systems in place to keep children safe.
- The leadership team encouraged and motivated everyone involved in the nursery to feel confident in initiating changes.
- Children benefitted from a happy, caring and committed staff team who knew them well and were passionate about providing high quality care and support.

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

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were very well nurtured and supported through their daily experience by kind and caring staff. They knew the children and their families very well. As a result, they were able to offer individualised care and learning routines. This supported the children's overall wellbeing. One parent told us, "I feel very involved in discussions with my child's key worker who clearly knows my child well. I have been impressed by the evidence and documentation".

Staff listened to children and sensitively responded to their individual cues when seeking comfort and reassurance. Children were well supported to explore and express their emotions, gentle discussions with staff promoted their understanding of their own feelings and those of others, this supported children to feel emotionally secure and resulted in a positive and friendly environment.

Children's holistic wellbeing was supported through good use of personal planning. Information was gathered and regularly reviewed with families. These were used to plan individualised next steps for support and learning, which helped to promote consistency and continuity of care.

Snack and mealtimes were positive sociable experiences. Children enjoyed eating snack and lunch together. Children's life skills were promoted during the snack process. They helped prepare snack for their peers and enjoyed this responsibility. Independence skills were being developed as children self-served and poured their own drinks. Real crockery and soft touches, such as tablecloths, contributed to a welcoming and homely mealtime experience. One parent commented, "The cafe set up for lunch time allows my child to develop skills for life, like setting out crockery, serving herself, buttering her own bread etc".

Children benefitted from their families being warmly welcomed back into the service. They were enabled to support their children to settle in and participate in stay and play sessions. Establishing good working relationship with parents was important to the staff. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time as well as online updates.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were busy and deeply engaged in their play throughout the day. They had fun as they freely explored a wide range of experiences which provided challenge, creativity and discovery. They were well supported to communicate their wishes in a way that supported their individual needs and preferences. Staff skilfully listened to them and responded to their individual requests. This provoked children's continued interest and high levels of engagement. Staff's understanding of child development, differing learning approaches and children's right to play, supported the provision of high-quality experiences.

Effective questioning and shared interactions encouraged children to widen their thinking and further extend their learning. Additionally consultative planning gave them a voice and they were fully involved in the provision of daily activities. This contributed to an interesting learning environment which respected children's right to play. Children's learning and development was captured throughout planning floor books, wall displays and personal learning. Regular assessment and evaluations of children's individual learning supported planning approaches to promote continued success and individual achievement.

Children were supported to develop literacy and numeracy skills through every area of the setting and in meaningful conversations and interactions with staff. They valued the importance of good quality books and stories being available throughout all areas. Staff were creative at engaging children and followed children's interests to support the development of emerging writing skills through play. For example, using a range of messy and sensory play experiences. This meant children had fun as they played and made progress at a pace that was right for them.

Children were well supported to make positive connections with the local community for example regular use of parks nearby were utilised. This increased variety to children's learning experiences.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very 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

The staff and leadership team had worked hard to create an attractive and stimulating environment. As a result, children were offered exciting and developmentally appropriate play spaces, both indoors and outdoors.

The playrooms were well thought out and planned to maximise children's play and learning experiences. Children benefitted from a very good range of open ended, natural child centred resources, enabling them to explore their creativity, imagination and problem-solving skills. For example, children played with real ornaments and everyday items. One parent highlighted this as a strength of the service they told us, "The rooms in the nursery have been well set out with a home type area and a 'cafe', which appears inviting and fun".

Playrooms were decorated in neutral colours which promoted a natural, calm environment. This fostered a welcoming atmosphere for the children. The addition of homely touches and carefully considered furnishings, supported children to feel valued and gave a strong message that they matter.

Children had opportunities to rest and relax in safe, cosy areas. Blankets and cushions were available for children to independently access. This enabled children to seek out a calm area where they could have some individual time if needed. This supported children's emotional wellbeing.

Children had direct access to the outdoor garden space giving them good opportunities for free flow play between indoors and outdoors. They moved freely between the play areas and engaged in a variety of outdoor play experiences. Children used the outdoor space with confidence and experienced enjoyment, challenge and fun. For example, children enjoyed den building outdoors with staff contributing to the development of problem solving and team working skills. Areas to climb, run and balance outdoors provided opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills. The service had identified further improvement to the outdoor play space and involved children and families in the planning and development of this area.

The service had effective systems to keep children safe. Risk assessments were in place and used by staff who referred to these regularly. They updated them and included important information needed that considered any risks and preventative actions for individual children.

Staff had good knowledge and understanding of our SIMOA (safety, inspect, monitor, observe, act) keeping children safe campaign and how this supported them to ensure children were accounted for at all times. Staff communicated well with each other regarding numbers of children and which area they had chosen to play in. This created a safe and secure environment where children could enjoy a variety of play experiences supported by effective staff practice.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very 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

The staff and leadership 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 leadership team 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. In turn, the staff team skilfully involved children in making the changes. This led to many improvements including changes to the environment.

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. Their reflections demonstrated they were forward thinking in identifying their improvement priorities and clear about their actions on how they would deliver these. They made very good use of best practice guidance such as, 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare' and 'A Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding and School Aged Childcare'. We could see this was a working document, embedded in their quality assurance processes and was having a significant impact on children's outcomes. This meant children received high quality play and learning that supported them to reach their full potential.

The service had effective quality assurance systems in place that ensured children's learning journeys, planning, playroom observations and improvements were continually reviewed. This ensured children experienced high quality play, learning and engagement. As a result, staff were well informed and understood their role in delivering a very good service for children.

The service recognised the importance of involving children and families in the evaluation process. Children and families were consulted and their views, thoughts and ideas were valued and responded to. Children and their families' views informed ongoing improvements and shaped developments. This resulted in children and families feeling valued and included in the improvement journey.

Families experienced a varied family engagement programme led by staff. This included, stay and play sessions, the use of online platforms and raising awareness of how to support numeracy and literacy development through play.

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 benefitted 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 am really happy and looking forward to the future developments we have planned".

The staff team was now consistent and stable. 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. Parents commented, "Staff are friendly and welcoming to parents and engage us often in conversations regarding [child] and their day and week" and "The staff go above and beyond for my child. They make me feel so at ease I know my child is safe and well looked after".

Staff 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 at busy times throughout the day. 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 leadership team to do so. One parent commented, "My child is given a stimulating and engaging nursery experience. The play and learning is pupil centred and ensures that they are being met with new and interesting stimulus".

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 18 August 2023, the provider must ensure children are safe and receive high quality experiences at all times. To do this the provider must at a minimum, ensure that at all times suitably qualified and competent staff are working in the nursery in such numbers as are appropriate for the health, welfare and safety of children.

This is to comply with regulation 15 (a) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210)(Requirements for Care Services).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15).

This requirement was made on 12 May 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

There was a sufficient number of suitably competent and qualified staff working within the nursery. As a result, children were safe and received high quality play and learning experiences.

Met - outwith timescales

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

To effectively deliver high quality play and learning experiences, the manager should support staff to access training appropriate to their role and apply the training to their practice.

This should include but is not limited to:

- a) how to complete meaningful high quality observations
- b) reporting and recording children's progress
- c) using best practice guidance to support high quality play experiences

- d) using children's interests to plan experiences
- e) identify resources to support play and learning opportunities.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 12 May 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff had been effectively supported to access training appropriate to their role and the impact of training was evident in their practice. As a result, children benefitted from high quality play and learning experiences.

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?	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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