

Muck Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Muck Primary School
Port Mor
Isle of Muck
PH41 2RP

Telephone: 01687 462 367

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 September 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017249

About the service

Muck Primary School Nursery is located on the Isle of Muck within the Lochaber area of Highland. The nursery is accommodated within the primary school building. Children using the service have access to a partitioned area of the school classroom, a small room off the classroom area, a library area, and reception, kitchen and toilet facilities. Children also have access to an outdoor area which is shared with the school and they regularly access the nearby community hall.

Muck Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of four children at any one time aged from three years to an age to attend primary school.

The manager is also the manager of the following service:

Eigg Primary School Nursery (CS2003017205).

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 and 24 September 2024 between 09:00 and 15:00. Feedback was shared with the service virtually on 25 September 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 the children using the service
- Spoke with staff and management
- Spoke with families using the service
- Observed practice and the child's experiences
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, caring and kind interactions from staff, supporting them to feel safe and secure.
- Approaches to planning play and learning experiences were child-centred and responsive to the children's interests.
- Children benefited from daily opportunities to play and learn outdoors.
- Facilities for preparing food and for providing intimate care required to be improved in order to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.
- Quality assurance processes including self-evaluation were becoming embedded and positively impacting outcomes for children.
- Staff worked closely with other school staff to promote continuity of care and experiences across the day.

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?	3 - Adequate
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?

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.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children benefited from warm, caring and nurturing approaches which helped to support their overall wellbeing. Staff carefully observed how children were feeling as they played and responded sensitively to their needs throughout the day. This meant that their care and learning routines were individually tailored to their needs. Staff offered praise, reassurance and encouragement throughout the day, balancing this well with stepping back and letting children explore, try things out and play.

Personal care was delivered in a way which promoted dignity, privacy and respect. Children's and families' preferences were reflected in the protocols for this. Hence, children's security and confidence were supported throughout.

Mealtimes were a positive and sociable experience. Children were supported to wash their hands before collecting cups, plates and food from the school kitchen. This supported them to be involved in the planning and preparation of meals. At the snack table children were encouraged to choose, and serve each other, from a shared plate and to pour their own drinks. They chatted with staff about the food and their choices and shared news about their weekends and interests outside of nursery. This led to a homely and relaxed experience. Children were closely supervised at all times during snack and staff were confident in preparing food in line with best practice guidance, to minimise the risk of choking. Children had access to fresh water throughout the day which helped them to stay hydrated.

Children were well supported through effective use of personal planning. Staff contacted families when their child was enrolled. The nursery provided opportunities for children and their families to visit the school and nursery during the summer holidays prior to starting. During these visits, a wide range of information was gathered from families, and this was used to support continuity of care between home and nursery. A parent told us that they felt that staff had got to know their children very well in a short space of time, and this had helped them to settle in. Ongoing communications between the nursery and home helped to ensure that staff could respond quickly and sensitively to any changes in the child's life.

Staff worked closely with families and other professionals to help children to reach their full potential. For example, parents were invited in for meetings and open afternoons within the service so that they had further opportunities to be involved in the life of the nursery and their child's care and learning. Staff worked very closely with primary school staff and were further supported by the local authority early years team and health professionals when necessary. To support their role in keeping children safe and protected, staff had recently undertaken training on child protection, and they were confident in their roles and responsibilities around this.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun as they experienced high quality play, learning and development opportunities. Through the skilled observations and interactions of staff, and the provision of quality experiences, children were supported to lead their own learning. As a result, they were fully engaged in their play, which positively

impacted their development. For example, the children had previously spent time in the garden, planting seeds and tending to plants in the polytunnel. Staff supported their interest by allowing them to explore changes since their last visit, and offered opportunities to cut seaweed which would be used as mulch around seedlings. Children were keen to master using scissors to do this, and staff very skilfully supported each child to achieve this at the pace that was right for them. Hence, children's play was purposeful and enabled them to develop skills for life.

Children benefited from staff who had a very good understanding of children's development theory and practice. Staff supported learning through words, wondering aloud, questioning and making links to other learning or interests. They offered gentle support as children developed physical and practical skills. Children's interests were evidently at the centre of their play and learning. Staff carefully observed what the children were focusing on, and skilfully supported this. For example, a child playing in the home corner was supported through modelling and conversation to make a phone call, and to hold a conversation. As a result, children could make informed choices about leading their play in a stimulating, challenging and creative setting.

Planning approaches within the nursery supported staff to offer a balance of spontaneous and high quality, planned play opportunities. Floor books were used effectively to record interests, learning and reflections on learning. These were used alongside an electronic sharing platform to share learning with children and families. These approaches also helped staff to identify and plan for coverage of all areas of the curriculum and make meaningful links across all aspects of the children's learning. Opportunities for literacy and numeracy learning were naturally woven into experiences across the entire day. Staff made careful observations which enabled them to effectively assess progress, achievements and the impact of any support in place. Next steps were effectively identified, planned for, and evaluated. As a result, children were gaining confidence and progressing well.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to their own and wider communities. Along with children from the school, the nursery children regularly had contact with children from a nearby island, through use of technology and in person. Staff regularly welcomed visitors to the island into the nursery to speak with the children about their lives, work or hobbies. For example, the parish church minister visited during the inspection, and children had benefited from visits by police officers, artists and employees from the nearby fish farm. This helped to stimulate children's interests and widen their knowledge of the world.

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

The nursery spaces were well furnished, welcoming and homely, with plenty natural light in the main spaces and cosier spaces for quiet time. Resources that the children were interested in were kept in sight and their latest art works and mark making were displayed, giving a strong sense of belonging. In both the main room and the small side room, furniture and resources had been thoughtfully positioned to provide interesting areas while ensuring that children had ample space for their needs.

Children benefited from indoor and outdoor environments which provided developmentally appropriate spaces. The layout and resources were regularly reviewed by staff. This meant that play and learning could be supported at all children's stages of development and learning. The home corner, shared with the school, was well used and stocked with real household items, clothing and a wide range of natural objects. Children gravitated to the quiet space in the smaller room for stories and quiet time. A large grassy area with a paved

path gave the children opportunities to run and engage in energetic play, while the garden and wooded areas provided them with peaceful and natural spaces to explore. These rich, stimulating areas and resources supported children's interests and helped to spark their curiosity. As they accessed the spaces available, staff encouraged children to think about risks and take steps to keep themselves and others safe, and this was naturally woven into conversations.

The setting and surrounding grounds were secure, and boundaries were well maintained, and this helped to keep children safe. There were systems in place for maintenance and repair of the building, and this meant issues could be addressed promptly.

There were hygienic practices in place to minimise the risk of the spread of infection in all parts of the setting. Staff had received training on infection prevention and control, and on food safety. They were clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding this. However, some of the kitchen surfaces were worn, or were constructed of materials that could not be effectively cleaned. This included a hole in the flooring, and untreated wooden peg rails at children's height. This meant that the kitchen was not capable of being cleaned effectively, in line with best practice guidance. We made a requirement to ensure that the kitchen is brought up to a suitable standard for preparing and serving food (**see requirement 1**).

Nappy changing facilities, in line with best practice guidance, were not available within the service. The head teacher and staff had implemented an interim protocol for nappy changing. This supported staff to protect children's dignity and to minimise the risk of the spread of infection. We previously made a requirement for suitable nappy changing facilities to be provided. This requirement has not been met and we agreed a time extension until 18 August 2025.

Requirements

1. By 18 August 2025, the provider must ensure that children experience an environment which is safe and clean. To do this, they must, as a minimum:

- a) Review the kitchen environment for potential risks and take action to address these.
- b) Remove items that cannot be effectively cleaned; and
- c) Implement an effective system to audit the environment and ensure actions identified are appropriately and timeously addressed.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of the Social Care and Social Work and Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19).

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.

The service had in place a shared vision, values and aims. The head teacher and staff had consulted with children and families in a meaningful way about this and several other aspects of the service. This helped to ensure that decisions made about nursery experiences reflected the aspirations of children, families and the

wider community. Children's and families' views about experiences in the nursery were actively gathered by the head teacher, to inform the development of the setting. For example, surveys were sent out to parents, and discussions were regularly held with children. One such discussion led to the head teacher and staff creating regular opportunities for children to travel to the nearby island to visit children in the nursery there.

Children, families and the community were involved in many aspects of the service. Regular open assemblies were held, and as part of these events families and other island residents were invited to share their views and opinions. This meant that the school leadership team and staff knew what was important for the nursery, to meet the needs of children and families. This was reflected well in the nursery development plan.

Quality assurance systems had been introduced and these were supporting the head teacher and staff to drive forward improvements in the nursery in a sustainable way. For example, staff had recently carried out an audit of the environment. This enabled them to identify resources and experiences that would be beneficial for children who had recently joined the service. This increased leaders' and staff capacity to support children to reach their full potential. We discussed with the head teacher, ways in which this approach could be extended beyond the nursery playroom environment to all areas of the nursery, such as the kitchen and toilet facilities. This would support the head teacher to identify further improvements which meet the needs of the children and service.

A quality assurance calendar had been introduced to the service and this detailed a wide range of monitoring and moderation activities. Regular monitoring of children's experiences took place, and records such as accident and incident logs were regularly audited. Staff were reflective in their practice and used the principles of self-evaluation on a daily basis. This meant that experiences and opportunities were continually being fine-tuned to meet the needs of individual children and families in the service. Self-evaluation had also begun to take place at team level on a regular basis. This further supported the head teacher and staff to initiate well-informed changes, to enhance the delivery of high-quality practice. This was contributing to positive changes to outcomes for families and children.

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.

Children benefited from a passionate and committed staff team who had spent time getting to know them well in the first weeks of the session. Staff were warm, welcoming and nurturing, and modelled calm, respectful and caring behaviours at all times. As a result, children felt secure and valued by the people who cared for them. Parents agreed that the staff team had quickly built strong and positive relationships with their children.

Nursery staff worked closely with their colleagues in the school to ensure that children were supervised and able to play and learn in all areas of the nursery, indoors and outdoors, at all times. They were flexible and supported each other at busier times such as at mealtimes or when personal care was required. This meant that children's needs were met, and they were safe.

Due to the unique context of the nursery setting, local agreements were in place which enabled staff to have time allocated for planning and professional development. This ensured that there was continuity of care across the day and children's experiences were positive and safe. However, there were no opportunities for staff to take breaks during the working day. This had the potential to impact negatively on their wellbeing. We acknowledge that a recent recruitment campaign to employ an additional member of staff

had been unsuccessful. However, we advised the provider to review their protocols for staff wellbeing, particularly the arrangements for suitable rest. We made an area for improvement for this (**see area for improvement 1**). The head teacher was keen to explore options to support staff wellbeing.

Children benefited from staff who were very skilled and competent and were supported through ongoing professional development. They demonstrated a very good understanding of how children develop and learn, and had undertaken further academic studies to extend their skills and knowledge further. They had been supported by leaders and the early years team to implement planning through floor books, and to undertake training on high quality observations. This linked directly to enhanced outcomes for children and the nursery improvement plan. Staff also demonstrated a very good working knowledge of best practice guidance and national policy. They had high aspirations for the children in their care and recognised the importance of fun in children's play to enable their learning. This meant that children's experiences were positive, safe and enabled them to progress well in their learning and development.

Staff were beginning to benefit from regular opportunities to hold professional discussions with other staff based in small settings. They also benefitted from effective support and supervision from the leadership team, and they were empowered to lead on many aspects of the nursery provision. As a result, staff felt well supported to ensure that children received high quality interactions and experiences.

Areas for improvement

1. To support the wellbeing of staff, the provider should review their protocols for staff wellbeing. This should be reviewed in line with the guiding principles of The Health and Care Staffing (Scotland) Act 2019.

This is to ensure 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).

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 24 June 2024, the provider must ensure that appropriate nappy changing facilities are available within the service.

This is to comply with the Regulation 4 (1)(b) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/10).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected' (HSCS 1.4).

This requirement was made on 18 September 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

In October 2023 a site visit took place by Highland Council Estates team to assess the possibility of installing a nappy changing facility in the existing nursery space or elsewhere in the existing school building. This was deemed to be unfeasible. Highland Council are now considering an extension to the building in order to accommodate appropriate facilities.

In August 2024 the head teacher and staff developed an interim protocol for nappy changing which includes mitigations to protect dignity and ensure effective infection prevention and control.

This requirement has not been met and we have agreed a time extension until 18 August 2025.

Not met

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 support children's health and wellbeing, the provider should ensure maintenance issues are addressed. This should include but is not limited to:

a) Making repairs to the hot water tap in the children's toilet area to ensure warm water is always available for handwashing.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furniture and equipment' (HSCS 5.22).

This area for improvement was made on 18 September 2023.

Action taken since then

The hot water tap has now been fixed and children are now safely able to access hot water in the children's bathroom at a safe temperature.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support the effective development of the service and improve children's experiences, the provider should ensure effective quality assurance processes are developed and implemented. This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) Developing and implementing effective monitoring, including staff practice and the quality of children's experiences within the service.
- b) Supporting staff to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and providing sufficient opportunities for staff to evaluate their work and the work of the service; and
- c) Ensuring effective systems are in place to identify, monitor and review the impact of improvements.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 18 September 2023.

Action taken since then

Procedures to monitor practice and provide support are now in place, including monitoring of children's experiences in the setting. Leaders and staff have protected time to evaluate the impact of improvements on outcomes for children which supports continuous improvement. Regular audits of information including accidents and incident are scheduled and carried out.

Staff are supported to engage in effective self evaluation and these sessions are included in an annual quality assurance calendar. The service has received support from Highland Council Early Years team on self-evaluation methodology and professional discussion around planning, and moderation of practice between services has taken place.

The head teacher visits the service on a regular basis to support staff in their professional learning and to carry out quality assurance. To support professional development further, the provider and head teacher are developing a network of sole practitioners.

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?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
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
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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