

Aboyne Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Aboyne Primary School
Morven Place
Aboyne
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 November 2024

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003016303

About the service

Aboyne Primary School Nursery operates from a purpose-built nursery within the primary school close to local amenities such as shops and parks. The premises consist of an entrance area and an open-plan playroom. Children have direct access to toilets, nappy changing area, and kitchen facilities. The service has free-flow access from the playroom to an outdoor area.

Aboyne Primary School Nursery is provided by Aberdeenshire Council. The service operates within the local primary school and is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 72 children aged from two years to not yet of an age to attend primary school at any time, of those no more than five are aged under three years.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 November 2024 between the hours of 08:35 and 17:10 and 27 November 2024 between the hours of 08:40 and 12:40. 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 during their play
- spoke with staff and management
- received 21 parent/carer online questionnaires
- received eight staff online questionnaires
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were very settled and happily engaged in play and learning.
- Children led their own play through a well-balanced mix of activities, both indoors and outside.
- Children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them very well.
- The staff team were very motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to continue to complete training to develop their practice.
- Continue strengthening partnerships with parents to ensure all feel welcome in the service and develop strong connections with staff.
- The setting provided high quality care and experiences for children, self-evaluation and quality assurance should continue to be a focus to sustain this.

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?	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.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm and nurturing care from staff. Children were very settled, confident and relaxed. When children required support or reassurance, we saw that staff were responsive to their needs throughout the day. Positive attachments had been formed which contributed to children feeling safe and secure.

Staff knew children very well and were able to confidently discuss their likes, dislikes, interests and any support that had been put in place. Most parents told us they had a strong connection with staff caring for their children. One parent said; "I feel relaxed with the staff and feel they have a really good rapport with my child - each of them not just [their] key worker." Another parent said "Easy to speak to, always friendly and welcoming. They seem happy and kind with any interaction I have. They take an interest in your child and their family which is really nice." This promoted a supportive ethos of children's needs being well met.

Effective personal planning was in place for all children. The format included the wellbeing indicators which helped the setting to gather meaningful information, supporting children to receive care and support that is right for them. Support plans had been created for children who required one. Clear strategies were in place which further supported staff to tailor individual care. Evaluating and reviewing these plans regularly with families meant they contained relevant and most up-to-date information.

Mealtimes continued to be an improvement focus for the service. Children ate food that was nutritious and took account of their preferences and dietary needs. There were opportunities for children to develop independence through preparing snack, serving food and drinks, and scraping plates. Staff sat with some children, supporting them as they ate which provided a nice social experience. However, not all children enjoyed this experience. There were missed opportunities to encourage children to eat, enjoy their food and support their social skills. We suggested the setting review staff deployment at lunch time to ensure all children experience a supportive, relaxed and social mealtime.

We observed nappy changing to be a very nurturing and relaxed experience for the children. Staff took time to talk to children about what they were doing and involved them in the process. Staff wore PPE (personal protective equipment) and both staff and children carried out good hand washing practices in line with best practice guidance. This practice helped to ensure that children were safe from infection.

There were no children attending the service on medication at the time of our inspection. We did not observe any children resting or sleeping during our inspection. However, policies and procedures were in place to guide staff to and support children's health and wellbeing.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun and were fully engaged throughout the inspection. Staff were very responsive to children's interests and supported their choice in where they wanted to play. For example, children were given the choice to visit the school gym hall and the local library.

The pace of the day was unhurried and relaxed which meant children had time to explore their ideas. Children had opportunities to lead their play most of the time and we saw children use their imagination and problem solve. Children used a variety of brushes and car windscreen scrapers to paint the nursery wall with water from the water tray. One child was keen to make a squeaky noise with the rubber wedge on the scraper and experimented, using it in a variety of ways to create the noise. Other children wanted to copy and were well supported by an adult modelling for them. The adult then took this opportunity to extend the activity by painting shapes and encouraging children to try. Children were using the range of resources available to them very well and this supported their thinking skills and curiosities.

Staff interactions were calm, patient, and encouraging. During discussions with children, staff adapted their pace and language, which supported children's understanding and language development. Most staff were skilled in using open-ended questions to support children's learning. For example, when playing in the water tray a discussion arose around floating and sinking which the children had explored earlier. Staff used questions such as "Why is it floating?" and "I wonder why it's sinking?" to support children's thinking skills. This ensured learning was meaningful and provided appropriate challenge for children.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were embedded within the environment and children's play. Children engaged very well with real resources, such as food packaging and old phones in the shop and home corner. Adults sang and read stories with children in groups in different areas of the playroom. Numeracy and language were being supported through play and experiences. For example, when painting the wall with water outside, children had discussions around the size of the brushes and were looking for a 'tiny one'. They were exploring how high they could reach with their brushes saying, "I reached all the way up there, nearly as tall as you". Children benefited from exploring a variety of books mark making materials available throughout the environment and used these well to support their play and learning. For example, a baking book in the house corner had led children to reading the story of gingerbread man and baking gingerbread men. This ensured there were lots of opportunities available for literacy and numeracy within play spaces and experiences.

Planning processes were effective and the use of planning whiteboards supported the contribution of all staff. Staff worked together to promote a balance of intentional and responsive learning experiences for the children. This was evident in the approach to learning during the inspection. The child's voice was evident in planning and observations. We discussed the value of children having the opportunity to reflect on their learning as the setting didn't use a learning wall or floor books. Management shared that children can do this through accessing their learning journals on iPads and the smart board. This supported children to reflect on their learning, encouraging life skills, such as questioning, explaining and memory.

Learning journals were being used to capture children's learning and development. This provided an opportunity for families to see their child's play and learning in more detail. The observations we sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress, allowing them to plan the next steps with children and their families. The setting had started tracking children, which allowed them to tailor support and consider challenge for individual children. This contributed to children's learning and development being appropriately supported.

Children benefited from very good connections with the school and wider community. Children had access to areas within the school, such as the gym hall. Children enjoyed regular walks within the community and visits to the local care home, library and fire station. The setting also made good use of wooded areas nearby. Parents told us about the types of outdoor activities their children enjoyed. One parent said; "Nursery garden as well as accessing local woodland areas and community walks". Another parent said; "The nursery also go out of their way to arrange experiences for the children. For example fire station trip

and walks to local woods". This contributed to children's sense of belonging and supported them to have different opportunities out with the setting.

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 experienced an environment that was very well maintained and furnished with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Children's photographs and artwork were displayed, providing children with ownership of their setting as well as creating a sense of belonging. Resources were of a very good quality and included lots of loose parts to promote children's curiosity, imagination and creativity. Soft furnishings, such as sofas, bean bags, rugs and cushions and small dens set up in different areas, provided cosy, quiet spaces for children to relax and rest during their busy day.

The layout of indoor play spaces and resources ensured that children could move around areas with ease, allowing them to access resources of their choice independently. The labelling of shelves and clearly labelled boxes contributed to this. Children were very confident while moving around these spaces, exploring their ideas and interests. They also had the freedom to transport and move around resources to extend their play and learning further.

Children had free-flow access to outdoors which benefited their health and wellbeing, extended their play and learning, and gave children choice in where to play. Children spent time exploring loose parts, playing in the water tray, using brushes to paint the wall with water and playing on the swing in the trees. They enjoyed being active and displayed confidence, resilience and a sense of keeping themselves safe on the swing as they took turns. All parents told us their children's development was supported through interesting and fun play experiences and they had the opportunity to play outdoors. One parent said; "There is a great mix of indoor and outdoor play. Some of the children walked to the wood and collected leaves to create a lovely picture. There is a tinker table which my child enjoys and during Halloween time they were hammering golf tees into a pumpkin. Lots of messy and water play." Another parent said; "Recently they have been collecting leaves, twigs to make autumn collages in the wood. Making gingerbread men in conjunction with the "gingerbread man" book...[my child's] favourite saying at the moment is "you can't catch me.....I'm the gingerbread man!"

Systems were in place to help keep children safe. Robust risk assessments helped staff to mitigate risk and enhanced children's safety. Benefits were considered alongside these to support risky play and resilience which we saw during the inspection. Children were being involved in developing their skills and awareness of staying safe through introducing the Care Inspectorates 'SIMOA' campaign and opportunities to carry out risk assessments of their play spaces and experiences. There was a culture of talking about being safe and we heard both staff and children regularly using this language. This supported the children's understanding of risk and keeping themselves safe.

Generally, infection control measures were understood and implemented effectively by staff. Robust washing routines were in place. Staff protected children by providing a clean and hygienic environment and personal protective equipment (PPE) was used at appropriate times, such as during nappy changing and food preparation. However, we found that the staff and visitor toilet was within the nappy changing area. Best practice guidance states that it may be suitable for changing facilities to be within an accessible toilet

if the toilet is used only by children attending the setting. This means the accessible toilet should not be used by staff or visitors. We asked that the setting adhered to the guidance. As a result, the service has put plans in place to relocate the nappy changing unit into the children's toilet once an appropriate partitioned area has been secured. In the meantime, staff and visitors were using toilets within the school. This will ensure children were kept safe and well from infection (see area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. The service should ensure that children have access to appropriate nappy changing facilities and receive personal care in an environment that supports high levels of infection control and dignity and respect.

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, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed' (HSCS 5.4).

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 improvements are led well

The nursery have a vision, values and aims in place, however, have plans to update these soon. These will be created in consultation with staff, children and families, ensuring that they are meaningful and capture the needs and wishes of those using and working in the setting. Children's, families and staff views and suggestions about children's care, play, and learning were valued by the setting. Stay-and-play sessions were offered regularly, which incorporated information sharing for families such as supporting their understanding of schemas. More formal feedback was gathered from families and staff using various Microsoft Forms alongside informal slips to gather feedback following events. The setting used Sway to share information through newsletters and made information available to families in the cloakroom such as links to the local community. The feedback we received from parents highlighted that most felt they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service while others did not. We discussed approaches the setting could put in place to highlight that suggestions had been taken into account. Sharing this would ensure all parents felt listened to and collaborative approach to improvement has been taken.

Staff told us they felt well supported by their team and some leaders in the service. A recent staff questionnaire had highlighted the need to support staff wellbeing and ensure they were clear on their roles. This was considered and a wellbeing walk and picnic was arranged which had been embraced. Staff welcomed recent staff meetings which were now in place and they were very motivated to be involved in driving improvement. Effective staff monitoring, peer monitoring and support and supervision supported staff's confidence, skills and knowledge in their practice. This contributed to them feeling valued.

The nursery was using a quality assurance calendar as a working document to effectively support procedures, audits, and monitoring within the nursery. These were evaluated and shared with staff to ensure everyone was clear and knew the outcome and the impact of these.

The local authority quality assurance document, known as the 'RAG' document, had supported the setting to identify areas for improvement. Action plans were then used to support improvement and document

developments. The manager planned to transfer these to a format which could be shared with staff and parents to support their understanding of the development focuses. Utilising different methods of self-evaluation and engagement with recognised audit tools, such as the Quality Framework, had allowed the setting to recognise what they were doing well and identify areas for improvement. Through evaluating improvements, it was clear an impact had been made on outcomes for children, their learning, and experiences.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff demonstrated genuine warmth, kindness and interest towards the children they cared for which resulted in children being settled, happy and confident. When we asked parents what would make the service better, some told us they were unable to get to know some staff due to not being able to access the nursery regularly at drop off and pick up times. During our inspection, we did not see families come into the playroom and directed the setting to the Care inspectorates practice note "Me, my family and my childcare setting." The setting had already recognised the need to strengthen parent involvement and this was a priority in their improvement plan. This would support parents to feel welcome, get a better insight into their child's learning and develop connections with all staff.

The manager recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed at all times. Overall, the deployment of staff was effective. We did however discuss how practice could be improved at lunchtime to more effectively support the needs of all children. Although staff were flexible in their approach, communicating well with each other and moving naturally with the children, there was little evidence of them being supported and guided throughout the day by lead practitioners on the floor. As a result, we observed staff ask the manager questions when they were unsure. Lead practitioners should be clear on their role to support the effective running of the day and meet the needs of children.

Staff were appropriately qualified and had a good knowledge of child development. Staff were able to discuss how they had identified individual areas for development and were supporting children with their social skills, emotions and language and literacy. When asked about the most positive aspects of their children's experiences one parent said; "Seen a huge improvement in overall learning ability. Creative side has come out. Has settled in with ease." Another parent said; "The learning experiences this year in particular are so varied and interesting. My child learns a lot and enjoys going."

Staff were committed to their professional development to ensure they delivered a high-quality service and improved outcomes for children. Staff had undertaken a range of learning which included formal training, professional discussions, and self-directed reading. This supported staff to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, children's care, play, and learning were informed by current research and best practice. The team were being encouraged to reflect on their professional development, making use of the training logs that were available. This was supporting them to evaluate the impact training had and allow them to identify further training needs.

Staff inductions had supported staff knowledge and awareness of their role and responsibilities. The setting was using the 'Early Learning and Childcare National Induction Resource' to encourage questions and

reflection for practitioners and had adapted this for support staff. This supported staff to have a good understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and effective ways of working.

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

In order to appropriately support children's learning and development, all staff to ensure effective, recorded observation, assessment and next steps in learning for all children which then influences forward planning for individual children.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16. Standard 4: Engaging with Children and Standard 6: Support and Development

This area for improvement was made on 17 January 2018.

Action taken since then

Observations sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress, allowing them to plan the next steps with children and their families. The setting had started tracking children, which allowed them to tailor support and consider challenge for individual children. This contributed to children's learning and development being appropriately supported.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

In order to promote good outcomes for the children in their care, the provider and management to ensure staff are appropriately supported to effectively and consistently assess the development and learning of each child and then evaluate this information to plan children's individual next steps in learning and development. This information to then be shared with the child and parents.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16. Standard 4: Engaging with Children and Standard 14: Well-Managed Service

This area for improvement was made on 30 August 2013.

Action taken since then

Planning processes were effective and observations sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress, allowing them to plan the next steps with children and their families. The was shared with families on the learning journals App. The setting had started tracking children, which allowed them to tailor support and consider challenge for individual children.

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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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