

Cawdor Early Learning and Childcare Day Care of Children

Cawdor Primary School
Cawdor
Nairn
IV12 5XZ

Telephone: 01667 402 460

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2007156804

About the service

Cawdor Early Learning and Childcare is a day care of children service. The service is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of 30 children aged three years up to primary school age. The service is provided by the local authority and operates in term time only.

The service is situated within the village of Cawdor. Children have access to a dedicated playroom, cloakroom and reception area. They also have direct access from the playroom to a well equipped, and secure outdoor area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 20 February 2025, between 9.00am and 1.00pm. 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

This inspection was part of a pilot to test the 'Quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors' developed jointly with Education Scotland. Because this inspection was part of a pilot, no new evaluations (grades) have been awarded.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with five children using the service;
- received 12 completed questionnaires/survey responses;
- spoke with five staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Strong leadership was supporting everyone to have responsibility for continuous improvement. This was contributing to positive outcomes for children.
- High quality childcare and learning was at the heart of the setting's improvement planning, which meant that children received care and support based on relevant evidence and best practice.
- The mix of experience, skills and knowledge across the staff team was a key strength in the setting, with all staff demonstrating responsive care and support approaches towards children. This meant that children benefited from high quality experiences.
- Staff empowered children to be independent as they allowed them to choose where they wanted to play.
- Children influenced the design of spaces. This meant that children were listened to and that their views mattered.

Leadership

Quality indicator 1.1: Leadership and management of staff and resources

A shared purpose, vision, values and aims was positively informing the life of the setting. The manager had worked closely with children, their families, staff, the community and other professionals to develop the setting's purpose, vision, values and aims. They had ensured that all stakeholders had the opportunity for meaningful dialogue in developing these, which were underpinned by children's rights. This collaborative approach was contributing to positive outcomes for children and their families, as everyone had shared aspirations.

The manager had created an environment which had fostered a shared responsibility in driving forward continuous improvement in the setting. They had recently analysed feedback received from families, developing further improvement priorities as a result. This ensured that families understood how their feedback was used to shape wider decisions about how the service was provided. Families told us:

"We are regularly asked for feedback from the setting and also Tea with Mr C is a way we could voice any development ideas we have."

"We are regularly asked our views on the service and for ideas to help improve it via questionnaires / surveys / informal meetings with the head teacher."

"Lead for ELC offers parents structured discussion time to help develop any improvements they are making within the setting and have our say, it is then up to parents to participate."

This contributed to active engagement with families, and a quality culture.

Improvement planning was informed by very effective quality assurance and self-evaluation processes. High quality childcare and learning was at the heart of the setting's improvement planning, underpinned by relevant evidence, best practice and current research. Quality assurance of key areas of practice highlighted if performance needed to improve, to ensure that children were achieving, and meeting their potential. For example, the monitoring of the quality of observations and staff interactions, identified the quality of provision, which contributed to all children reaching their potential. Quality assurance of children's experiences supported the setting to make changes, for example, to transitions across the day. This led to quick and positive changes, ensuring a relaxed pace which met individual needs.

Very strong leadership from the manager created a reflective ethos across the staff team. They were actively encouraged to develop leadership roles, and identify areas for improvement. This enabled the high levels of confidence amongst the team on their involvement in self-evaluation, further reflection on practice and whole team ownership of quality assurance.

There was a strong emphasis on value based recruitment, ensuring that successful candidates' values, demonstrated at interview, matched those of the setting. The manager recognised the importance of new, and temporary staff, having the necessary skills, knowledge and experiences to meet children's needs. They ensured that core training opportunities were made available to them, such as intimate care and infection prevention control, which contributed to children's health and wellbeing. The setting's induction programme supported new staff to gain, and develop skills and knowledge, with any necessary supports put in place. Highly effective arrangements were in place to share key information about the setting, children and staff which was shared as new or temporary staff joined the staff team. This meant that staff were better able to meet the needs of individual children.

Very effective communication kept children and families informed about who was in the setting, by sharing photographs of staff, and information about staff roles, at the entrance to the setting. Where possible, the same supply staff were used to cover any absences, which contributed to continuity of care. This had allowed relationships to develop, with one parent commenting "Each (staff) is special to my child and even the bank staff are normally the same ones so kids are used to them as well".

Quality indicator 1.2: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

Staff demonstrated an exceptional understanding of how children learn and develop, using skilled, and compassionate, interactions to support them throughout this inspection. Staff performance was regularly evaluated by management, with termly supervision sessions and annual appraisals. Information from these supervision sessions enabled ongoing evaluation of staff performance which was linked to the improvement plan and used to create a training plan. This enabled the setting to tailor quality professional learning opportunities to meet staff's, children's and the setting's needs. For example, staff had been given the opportunity to undertake training in "Making maths matter to young children". This had contributed to staff's high levels of confidence in supporting children, through actions, conversation, and resources within the setting, with their developing numeracy skills.

There were highly effective opportunities for all staff to come together with the manager, who had ensured that everyone had protected time to meet together. Staff used this time to engage in professional dialogue about their practice, celebrating achievements and recognising where improvements could be made. Staff spoke confidently about their roles and responsibilities in supporting children with their overall wellbeing and to meet their potential.

Very well considered staffing arrangements contributed to children receiving high quality care and support across breakfast club and nursery. The mix of experience, skills and knowledge across the staff team was a key strength in the setting, with all staff demonstrating responsive care and support approaches towards children. This meant that children benefited from high quality experiences.

Staff interactions were consistently nurturing, and of a high quality, aligning with the setting's values. For example, they showed kindness when speaking to each other, and teamwork, through clear communication and support for each other. Staff recognised where gaps in supervision might exist, and were flexible as they moved about the setting. They took the time to explain to colleagues and children what they were doing, and where they were going. This contributed to the positive ethos within the setting.

Children consistently experienced high quality care and support, as staffing arrangements took account of transitions and busier times of the day. Staff received appropriate breaks to keep them refreshed, with no impact on either children's experiences, or the quality of information shared with families.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces

The setting was warm and welcoming for children, with creative provocations inviting them to play. The layout of the environment supported children to have ownership of their space, as they confidently moved about the setting. Resources offered reflected children's interests and needs, and stage of development, and they were encouraged to move resources to where they wanted them to be. This supported their natural curiosities and developing independence.

Staff empowered children to be independent as they allowed them to choose where they wanted to play, supporting them to move freely between inside and outside. They encouraged children to take risks, helping them to identify their own boundaries. Such as, supporting them to build platforms to jump off of, in a safe environment. As a result children were growing in confidence, and developing their sense of self-esteem.

Children were kept safe as staff shared the responsibility for recognising where risks may occur and taking action to address these. Children were encouraged to monitor their environment for risks by undertaking daily health and safety checks, alongside staff. Staff regularly counted the number of children present in the setting, updating colleagues verbally, and recording the total number on visual reminders. Staff positioned themselves where they could effectively supervise children. This contributed to children's health and wellbeing, whilst not compromising their fun, play experiences.

Staff were confident in providing and maintaining a high quality, clean and safe environment. They followed best practice guidance when preparing food, and ensured that the environment was maintained to a high standard. Children were supported to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before eating. This meant that children were protected from the possible spread of infection.

Children influenced the design of spaces, as staff observed how they played and considered what they needed to do, such as adding resource, to extend interests. This supported children to feel valued and listened to.

Resources were attractively displayed in a way that supported children to be independent. They could select what they wanted, and were encouraged to move things about the setting, as they developed their imagination and natural curiosities. This contributed to children being happily engaged in their play for sustained periods of time. Literacy and numeracy were embedded across the setting, with a wide variety of resources to support these, both inside and outside. For example, menus at the mud kitchen and measuring resources were available, as children made 'cakes'. Such resources supported children's developing early language, literacy and numeracy skills.

Children and their families were positively reflected in the resources on offer, for example there were a variety of books that reflected different cultures and languages. Parents were invited in to the setting to share stories in their own language. This supported children and their families to feel included and respected.

Record keeping was effective in ensuring the right people had access to the information they needed to support children. Children's personal information was stored in line with best practice guidance, ensuring confidentiality.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

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