The 3 O'Clock Club
Day Care of Children

Portakabin
Dingwall Primary School
Tulloch Castle Drive
Dingwall
IV15 9ND

Telephone: 01349 867 709

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 February 2024

Service provided by:
The 3 O'Clock Club

Service provider number:
SP2003001872

Service no:
CS2003008703

About the service

The 3 O'Clock Club is registered as a day care of children service for a maximum of 40 children aged from 3 years to 12 years. The service provides a breakfast club and after school club during term time and during school holidays it operates between 8:30am and 5:30pm. The 3 O'Clock Club offered families in the local community affordable childcare.

The service is located in Dingwall within the grounds of the primary school. It operates from a portacabin which consists of three interconnecting playrooms, toilets and office/kitchen facilities. The club also has use of the primary school's large outdoor play areas which surround the portacabin.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 26 February 2024 and Tuesday 27 February 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 8 people using the service
- reviewed feedback from 21 parents and carers
- spoke with 4 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefitted from very positive relationships with staff.
- Children were very happy, confident and settled in the club.
- Children told us how much fun they had at the club and how much they enjoyed taking part in a range of activities.
- The service provided affordable, flexible childcare for families in the local community.
- Families were very happy with the out of school club, the range of activities and the friendliness of staff.
- Staff were motivated, enthusiastic and genuinely cared for the children.
- Quality assurance systems involving children, families and staff should continue to be developed to plan for improvement.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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? 4 - Good

Quality indicator 1.1 : Nurturing care & support

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

When children arrived at the service they were made to feel very welcome by staff. Positive relationships and attachments had been established between the children and staff. There was a great deal of laughter, smiles and chatting. This supported children to feel happy, loved and secure and promoted an inclusive care setting where all children mattered. Children told us they enjoyed attending the club. They spoke about their experience and described staff as kind, fun and friendly. As a result, we found children were confident, happy and settled.

Children's wellbeing was supported by staff who knew them very well. Staff could confidently discuss children and their individual needs and the strategies to support them. This meant that all children were respected and valued as individuals and their health and wellbeing needs were being met. Each child attending the service had a personal plan. We discussed with the manager the need to ensure that they had all relevant medical information included in personal plans for those children with specific health needs. They should have appropriate health protocols in place for children with allergies. This would ensure children receive consistent care which is right for their needs. We also discussed including monitoring and auditing of personal plans as part of the service's quality assurance process.

Snack and lunchtimes were relaxed, sociable and unhurried. Staff sat with children, which provided opportunities to form and maintain relationships and role model social skills. This contributed to creating a homely, relaxed and enjoyable snack time experience. We discussed with the manager reviewing breakfast and snack choices to ensure that they met current best practice nutritional guidance.

The manager and staff had established good working relationships with families. This ensured that children received appropriate levels of consistent care and support. We observed parents being made to feel very welcome when they arrived to collect their children and being provided with informal feedback about their child's time at the club. Parents all spoke very highly of the manager and the staff. Comments made included "The staff are really friendly and always tell me what they have been up to", "The staff are really friendly and I feel they know my children well. My children talk fondly of them",

Children's safety was carefully considered when collecting children from the primary school and the nursery each afternoon. There were clear procedures to follow if a child was not at the allotted place for collection by staff at the end of the school day. There were also clear procedures for the collection of children at the end of the day. Parents commented on how conscientious the manager and staff were at ensuring they knew where the children were at all times.

Quality indicator 1.3 : Play and Learning

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.

The pace of the day from children arriving from school to home time was relaxed and we found children were happy and were enjoying their time at their club. They were engaged in various play experiences and activities. When appropriate, the children were supported by nurturing and responsive staff. They were having fun as they played independently and cooperatively with friends. This supported children to develop positive relationships as they played together, shared and took turns.

There was a wealth of activities and resources for the children to freely access. These promoted children's curiosity and encouraged them to be creative, problem solve and use their imagination. Children were taking part in arts and crafts, construction activities, table tennis, younger children taking part in role play, children reading and others enjoying the opportunity to sit and relax with their friends after a full day in school.

Children said how much they enjoyed attending, being able to choose what they wanted to do even if it was only sitting and chatting with friends. Parents were extremely happy with the range of activities offered. Comments made included "The activities have been amazing over the summer", "They can wind down and do lots of interesting things after school", "I know the staff get ideas from the children on what they want to do and try to take these forward" and "They do so many different activities my child is learning different things through play and children also have the option to amuse themselves if they do not want to join in".

Staff were flexible in their approach and planning. They placed the interests of the children attending at the centre of their planning approach, which supported children to feel involved and empowered. Children were able to share their ideas, wishes and choices with staff. This approach encouraged children to feel valued, respected and included.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this quality indicator, 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 service was based in a demountable building within the grounds of the local primary school. The building was old and required regular maintenance. The age and condition of the building was the main concern highlighted by parents in our online questionnaire. Some parents commented that the building was "Old and not really fit for purpose", and "Dated and past its best". The manager explained that ensuring the children were cared for in a safe environment was a priority and as a consequence they worked hard to get all repairs and improvements completed.

Children experienced a clean, welcoming and homely environment. They could freely move around the building. The staff fully involved the children in the layout of the building and the range of resources and activities available. The children had a sense of ownership of the service. Areas were organised to promote children's interests and choices. There were displays of the children's art work and various examples of items they had made or constructed. Since the last inspection a new quiet book area had been introduced. This was a popular area for children who enjoyed reading or even just wanted a quiet area to relax after a busy day at school.

The resources available supported children to be creative, follow their interests and have fun. The children confidently told us about various activities they had enjoyed taking part in at the club. Parents were also very positive about the range of resources and activities their children could access.

Comments made included "Good variety of play opportunities and areas", "Lots of varied activities on a daily basis. plenty of outdoor time. My child always comes out having enjoyed herself and looks forward to going each day.", and "The activities have been amazing over the summer".

The children and parents confirmed that very good use was made of the outdoor play area for fresh air and active play. Staff respected children's views as they consulted children on where they would like to play. This enabled children to have choice, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Children's safety was carefully considered when moving between indoors and outdoors with staff conducting regular head counts to make sure all children were accounted for. The entrance to the building was secure with access to only authorised adults.

There were appropriate systems in place in relation to accidents and incidents. Staff explained that parents were offered a copy of accident records for their child as well as being given a verbal account of what happened and how staff had cared for their child.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this quality indicator, 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 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. This was highlighted by the improvements which had been put in place since the previous inspection.

The manager and staff worked very closely to provide positive outcomes for children and their families. They promoted a warm, caring, nurturing experience for all children. They had a shared vision, values and aims to provide flexible and affordable childcare to families in the local community. Parental comments supported this. Comments made included "The 3 O'Clock club is an absolute godsend, I'm a single parent and if it wasn't for the service I wouldn't be able to work.", "The club provides a very valuable service to my family and we are happy with the service provided", "Convenient wrap around care for school aged children reasonable price for the care given enabling us to work", and "Excellent and valuable childcare service".

Following the previous inspection, the manager had introduced a more robust system of quality assurance to support the development and improvement of the service. The manager explained that the improvement plan for the service was very much focussed on the requirement identified following the previous Care Inspectorate inspection. We were able to see what progress had been made in relation to meeting the action points identified in the improvement plan and how these had impacted positively on children's experiences and outcomes. For example, there had been improvements to the quality of personal plans, observations and next steps, which in term impacted positively on outcomes for children.

The manager and staff continued to encourage parents to be involved in the ongoing development of the service. They welcomed parents into the setting, and to give any feedback and suggestions which might improve outcomes for children. They also continued to use short questionnaires to get feedback.

The majority of parents commented that they felt the service routinely asked them for any suggestions as to how the service could be improved for their children. Overall, parents were very happy with the quality of the service provided.

Involving children in evaluating and developing the service was very important to the manager and staff. The children were encouraged to have ownership of their club and were regularly consulted on the day to day running of the service which contributed to them feeling included in decision making. They were actively encouraged to give their feedback on the activities provided, the layout of the building and the range of resources. The children we spoke with confirmed that staff listened to them and involved them in deciding changes to their club.

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3 : Staff deployment

Children were cared for by a small and consistent staff team who had worked together for a number of years. We observed staff being very welcoming, kind and nurturing in their approach. It was evident through discussions and our observations that they were all very motivated and committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming setting where all children mattered. Staff talked knowledgeably about children's individual needs, next steps and how they were being met. Staff demonstrated an awareness of when and how to effectively intervene, picking up on cues to support children's wellbeing and extend their play and experiences. They were responsive and respectful of children during interactions and play which supported children to feel safe, secure and happy. Children enjoyed spending time with staff and were comfortable in their company.

The deployment of staff was well managed and effective to meet children's needs. Staff worked very well as a team and communicated effectively with each other. Their differing skills and knowledge complemented one another and resulted in quality interactions with children. Staff worked flexibly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. This promoted a happy and secure environment where children were encouraged to lead their own play and learning.

Children benefited from effective supervision and quality engagement throughout the day. Staff were empowered to deploy themselves and respond to the needs of the children. This enabled staff to follow children's needs and interests without compromising the experiences of others. Transitions were seamless and well planned, with children being comfortable about what was happening next. During busier times of the day, routines had been established which promoted children's safety.

Parents all spoke very highly of the staff, their friendliness, helpfulness their commitment to the children and the service. Comments made included "Very friendly staff", "Friendly supportive team who genuinely care about the children", "All the staff are friendly and very accommodating to the children's needs and routines. They come up with unique ideas and the children always love them", "Excellent service run by approachable competent staff" and "The staff were amazing and we are so grateful for the time they've spent making new memories with our child".

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 7 April 2023, the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children and practice by implementing effective systems of quality assurance. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

a) clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service

b) have an effective quality assurance calendar in place which informs the monitoring of all areas of the service to embed quality

c) monitor staff practice and provide regular and effective support and supervision for all staff

d) carry out regular and effective monitoring and auditing of records and personal plans to ensure detailed and relevant information is gathered to support children's needs

e) staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service

f) children and their parents and carers are encouraged and supported to provide feedback which is used to inform the improvement of the service.

This is to comply with the - Regulation 3 Principles and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210). (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, SSI 2011/210.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, 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 requirement was made on 7 December 2022.

Action taken on previous requirement

In response to the requirement, the service had continued to embed systems for quality assurance. They were using self evaluation and audit tools as part of their quality assurance processes. These included an improvement plan and quality assurance calendar to support the service with keeping processes on track. We were able to identify the improvements which had been put in place since the previous inspection. For example, all personal plans were being reviewed and updated which had impacted positively on outcomes for children.

As a small team who had worked together for a number of years, they had established very good working relationships which supported regular communication and discussion in relation to the ongoing evaluation and development of the service. At the end of each session, staff informally reviewed how it had gone. There were also more formal reviews of the play schemes run during the school holidays.

We saw evidence of how families' views were sought to inform the development of the service. For example, parental questionnaires were routinely circulated to ask parents for feedback and suggestions as to how to develop the service. Parents were also made to feel very welcome when they came to collect their children and asked informally for any feedback they might have.

Involving children in any decisions about the club was important to the manager and the staff. They wanted the children to have ownership of the club. As well as daily informal discussions with the children, the manager had also made use of questionnaires to get their feedback.

The manager acknowledged the importance of continuing to develop and embed their quality assurance system and ensure it is having an impact on all areas of practice. This would contribute to improved outcomes for all.

The requirement had been fully met.

Met - within timescales

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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