Sandhead Nursery
Day Care of Children

Sandhead Primary School
Sandhead
Stranraer
DG9 9JD

Telephone: 01776 830 256

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 September 2023

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003015540

About the service

Sandhead Nursery provides a daycare of children service in the village of Sandhead near Stranraer. The provider is Dumfries and Galloway Council. The conditions of registration are:

To provide a care service to a maximum of 30 children of whom no more than 10 may be 2-3 years old.

At all times, the children cared for shall be supervised according to Annex A of the National Standards for Childcare and Early Education.

The service is based in Sandhead primary school and has a local shop, beaches and parks within walking distance.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 6th and 7th September 2023 between 08:45 and 17:00. 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 10 people using the service.
- Spoke with 7 staff and management.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

• Staff worked well as a team.

• Children's well-being benefited from responsive routines, warm interactions and relationships with families.

• Staff were kind, caring and responsive.

• The security of children using the service was compromised by open access to other parts of the primary school.

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?	4 - 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 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.

Staff used warm, caring and nurturing approaches to support children. Planned approaches to support children were in place. As it was the start of a new term, staff were beginning to identify children where early interventions would be beneficial.

Each child was allocated a key worker which offered families consistency and continuity of care and helped to facilitate effective communications between families and staff working with their child.

A warm welcome at the door on arrival and departure gave staff the opportunity to gather any informal information to help the child with their day at the nursery. A parent told us' I think the staff really get to know my child - if they're happy going in, so am I.'

We spoke with staff about the upcoming Care Inspectorate document, 'Me my family and my E.L.C.' which will provide additional ideas to continue to welcome families back into the playroom after COVID.

Staff were skilled at identifying how best to plan to meet their needs. Children were provided with opportunities to engage in both one-to-one supported sessions and small group nurture experiences. This helped to support their learning and development.

We sampled personal plans and found they met the legal requirements and were reviewed with parents within the six-month time-frame. S.H.A.N.A.R.R.I. (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included) language was used to help parents reflect on their child's needs and we saw that staff used the associated cartoon characters with children to good effect.

Parents told us through questionnaires:

"The Nursery provides holistic, child centred care." and "The staff are extremely kind and passionate, informative."

We looked at the arrangements to protect children from harm. Staff were provided with annual refresher training. This meant that staff were alert to any concerns-staff we spoke with provided confident responses to the questioning around their roles and responsibilities. Chronologies were maintained and kept securely for privileged access.

Staff were working with families to build positive relationships which enable them to meet children's individual needs. Effective communication strategies, such as informal daily chats and PEEPS events, along with electronic learning journals were in place. Some parents told us they would appreciate more detailed daily feedback. We shared this with management who agreed to look into this. The manager had made some approaches to parents to establish a parents' forum. This would be a reference point for trialling ideas and planning further improvements to the service as a whole.

Parents, through our questionnaires, told us:

"Great team of people that look after the kids who go above and beyond to help them out."

"My child loves going to nursery and the staff are brilliant with him."

Well planned transitions, such as shorter days, ensured staff took time to get to know children as they started at the service. This enabled them to begin early intervention strategies, such as supporting existing interests and liaising with external agencies for additional support.

We saw children receive praise and encouragement for attempting and completing tasks. This helped to support their self-esteem and develop and sustain social skills. Children's rights were celebrated and displays around the play areas showed where these rights had been well considered.

Snack and mealtimes had been a key area for improvement for the service. Staff had worked hard to make improvements and we could see the positive impact and good opportunities for developing independence and social skills. Helpers were able to cut, serve and pour.

A good awareness of the dangers of choking meant that staff were available to model good behaviour and provided effective support. We suggested that a 'floating' staff member be in place to allow constant supervision at each table. Older children could choose when to eat, meaning their play was not interrupted. To ensure younger children received additional support during their early months at the service, staff were monitoring their lunchtimes more closely for the first term of the year.

The environment was inviting and well organised. The review of the snack service and listening to children meant positive changes had been introduced and provided a more relaxed and enjoyable experience. The review recognised an opportunity to extend snack into the garden and this had been a positive step, meaning children's play was not interrupted.

Although there were no children receiving regular medication, we spoke with staff about their management of administration practices. We found that they had developed good flow charts to ensure children's care was specific to each child, helping to keep them safe and benefiting their well-being. Safe sun care was being followed, with parents supplying sun cream and the service offering hats and shaded areas. We saw children encouraged to drink water. We asked that staff consider involving children in risk assessing outdoor play, such as looking at weather forecasts.

We saw that, at times, some children needed noses wipes and faces wiped after food. Although we saw that staff encouraged children to use the mirror to do this, the supervision of this shared area made this difficult. Staff agreed to monitor this further.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning.

The indoors and outdoors environments were well considered and resourced to provide key areas for play and learning. Children could freely access stored resources within low baskets meaning they had additional choices. We saw children enjoying the outdoors, through mainly free access to the nursery garden. We spoke with staff about ensuring free access to the play area is available at all times. Staff knew the children well, meaning they were able to build on their interests, such as the pirate activity and transport.

We saw a good variety of loose parts materials, both indoors and out, meaning children could develop skills and experimentation with scale, size and encouraging numeracy and language. Outdoor champions were in

place to lead the development of the work.

The outdoor area was a plan in action-staff were keen to offer a rich inviting space for exploring and to develop skills. This was clearly identified in the nursery improvement plan and staff hoped to involve both children and parents/families to take their ideas forward.

Staff had a good understanding of child development and used best practice guidance, such as 'Pre-birth to three' to support the very youngest children. We spoke to staff about ensuring provocations were continually offered to extend interest. Additional resources, such as baby care materials and dressing up clothes should be considered.

Parents, through our questionnaires, told us:

"I would like to see more topic-based activities i.e. art activities relating to themes. More topics with wider range of experiences given to the kids i.e. space, zoo, jungle" We shared this comment with the manager and asked that further information is provided to parents about how the nursery offers play experiences.

"There's is always a good variety of things to play with and all maintained to a high standard as well as being changed up regularly."

Children were encouraged to be fully involved in their play and learning through some skilled interventions by staff. There was mostly effective questioning by staff but a refresher on HOTS would benefit the team as a whole. Children were listened to and we saw their ideas being extended into learning opportunities.

We used S.O.F.I. monitoring (Short Observational Framework for Inspection) to focus on particular times of the day. The group observation was carried out over lunchtime and in the main, there was good engagement and respectful interventions by staff.

PEEP leaning together programme was in place and offered an important opportunity for parents to engage in their child's learning.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities.

The areas used for children were clean, well-organised and a pleasant space to play and learn. The service environment was visually checked each day and staff were alert to any maintenance issues.

Effective arrangements were in place to manage maintenance and repairs. Staff used risk assessments well to identify and reduce risks, such as a potentially slippery surface outdoors, putting an action plan in place to manage this. This helped to provide a safe environment for children. We found there were some blind spots in the playrooms and asked that staff consider how to limit the potential isolation of a child.

We discussed how children accessed the courtyard garden from the adjacent playroom. Best practice tells us that freely accessed independent outdoor play benefits children. The shared access route to the garden meant that primary school pupils used the same spaces -this had been properly assessed by staff and

mitigation's put in place to reduce the risk, however, there was a risk that the very young and curious children could venture into unsupervised areas unnoticed. We have made this an area for improvement, below.

Staff had been focusing on developing the outdoor play spaces and had included this in the nursery improvement plan. Open-ended resources were in place and staff told us they had clear plans to focus on improving this. Children told us they enjoyed being outside and that they could 'dig in the sand and make things in the kitchen.'

Parents told us:

"There's is always a good variety of things to play with and all maintained to a high standard as well as being changed up regularly."

Policies and procedures had been developed to support a safe environment for children. However, we found that infection prevention and control practices were not consistently followed. Children used the nursery toilets for hand and face washing, particularly after snack and lunch service, but we saw that they were not always monitored.

Children's personal information was stored safely, either in a locked cabinet or by a secure password if electronic records. Staff shared information on a 'need to know' basis, ensuring the right people had the right information at the right time.

The staff used the local authority format to record any accidents or incidents, ensuring this was shared with parents by signing an acknowledgement. The manager had an effective system in place to audit trends, such as particular areas of accidents. This helped to reduce risks.

Nappy changing arrangements followed current best practice, including providing a private space for changing. We spoke with staff about considering an intercom for the area should additional help be needed.

The sleep or rest arrangements was in a busy area-we asked that the placing of this be reconsidered to ensure the very youngest children have a quiet place for rest or sleep. A parent told us they disagreed that 'My child is able to rest or sleep when they need to within an area that is comfortable and cosy', saying, "A relaxing area would be an improvement" the manager agreed to review the rest area arrangements.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure all children have constant safe access to the courtyard garden, the provider should ensure the premises are suitable and meet the aims and objectives of the service.

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

I can independently access the parts of the premises I use and the environment has been designed to promote this. (HSCS 5.11)

My environment is safe and secure. (HSCS 5.17)

As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity. (HSCS 2.27)

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

We looked at the monitoring calendar used by the manager and found this to be effective and meaningful. The team commitment to families was evident and parents told us they were very satisfied with the service and how the staff supported them. A positive ethos was demonstrated by the individual support both staff and families received. We saw that the manager was a well organised and efficient and led improvements very well.

The service had a clear improvement plan. It identified areas which they had felt would make the most impact. The service had a vision, values and aims and objectives statement in place which had been shared with both the staff team and parents. The manager had plans in place to engage with parents in the forum to help demystify the meaning of the statement and encourage their input.

Comments arising from our questionnaires told us:

"Management are friendly, approachable and present."

"The nursery seems well organised and resourced and information is communicated well."

One parent told us:

"Better feedback on changes have been told sometimes we will receive an update etc which never follows up. More regular newsletters out at the start of each term. We raised this with the manager.

Staff engaged in professional dialogue and we saw how they were able to meet as a team-informally at the start and end of each day as well as more formal team meetings. The manager should consider improving the team meeting recordings format to ensure that matters relating to specific children can be appropriately transferred to the relevant personal plan.

Quality assurance, including self-evaluation, were in place led to continuous improvement. Tracking against benchmarks was in place which highlighted that the management team knew the service well and were working to improve outcomes for everyone involved.

The range of quality assurance processes that were in place enabled reflection on the service and planning for improvements. They were being used to highlight strengths as well as areas for improvement, for example tracking of next steps in children's learning.

The overall feedback from parents showed a high level of satisfaction.

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

The leadership team recognised the importance of ensuring the service was appropriately staffed to meet the individual needs of children. Staffing had been sporadic due to some staff changes and use of agency staff, but a newly established team meant plans could be taken forward to improve this.

Each area of the nursery had a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience which benefited children. This allowed staff to learn from each other and share ideas in a collective approach to planning for children's care and learning. This supported the well-being of children.

Staff were warm and responsive in their approaches. In the main, children went to staff when they needed help or reassurance. They communicated effectively across the day and were able to meet in both planned and informal ways, helping to share important news and discuss care needs.

Most staff were responsible for small 'key' groups. They worked on a rota to cover various aspects of the service, such as snack and lunch times and outdoor spaces. After a period of staff changes, an established team was in place, with the manager supporting their work. A consistent staff team will assist in forming relationships, helping children feel safe and secure.

Staff had been given training opportunities, such as annual refreshers in protecting children from harm and abuse. Staff spoke of using best practice documents to support their work, such as 'Out to Play' for the refresh of the garden and 'Pre-birth to three' for supporting the very youngest children.

Staff files showed a log of training achievements and the manager held a record for forward planning in staff matters, such as S.S.S.C. (Scottish Social Services Council) registration. A helpful handbook for supply and temporary staff provided useful basic information to help staff settle into the service and capture important key information about children. The National induction resource was used to good effect.

When we asked parents through our questionnaires, 'What I like about this service', we were told:

"All the staff are very kind and helpful especially if there are any queries I may have. They are always very welcoming towards children."

"The friendly and approachable staff who go to great effort to get to know the children and provide them with a range of learning through play opportunities. The opportunities for outdoor learning available, all of the time. Walking Wednesday's which allow the boys and girls to learn about their local community. The way that the nursery is involved in the school, e.g., Assemblies."

A parent told us "The staff are just lovely and helped me too as a first-time user of a nursery I didn't know what to expect."

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

The service should improve all personal plans to ensure meet the requirements to ensure the health, welfare and safety of children. They should be updated as necessary and at least once in every six month period.

This area for improvement was made on 20 February 2018.

Action taken since then

We reviewed the content of a sample of personal plans and found improvements had been made to make the information more relevant.

This recommendation is 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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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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