Alehousewells School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Alehousewells School
Bremner Way
Kemnay
Inverurie
AB51 5FW

Telephone: 01467536910

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

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HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

About the service

Alehousewells School Nursery is registered to provide a daycare of children service to a maximum of 50 children at any one time, age from two years to an age to attend primary school, of whom no more than 10 may be under three years of age. The service is based within Alehousewells Primary School in the village of Kemnay. The service provider is Aberdeenshire council. The setting consists of a large playroom and an enclosed outdoor area. Children also have access to school facilities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 March 2023. Two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate carried out the inspection.

To prepare for 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:
- received feedback by email from six families of children who attended;
- spoke with the children, staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

• Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
• Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's interests.
• Children experienced genuine warmth and caring and nurturing approaches supported their wellbeing.
• High quality resources and play opportunities supported children's curiosity, enquiry, and creativity.
• Positive relationships had been established with families. A compassionate team provided guidance and support to help families during challenging and emotional times.
• Both indoor and outdoor environments provided children with a wide variety of interesting and engaging experiences.
• Quality assurance had been well used to identify what the service does well and areas for improvement. Families were consulted about how they felt the service could improve and their views used to inform developments.
• Staff worked well together. Their flexible approach enabled them to deploy themselves effectively across all areas of the setting. This ensured they were consistently responsive to the needs of the children.

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?	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 this supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were settled, happy and having fun. They experienced nurturing and warm care from staff who knew their interests, needs and preferences well and adapted care to offer children individualised support. This ensured children experienced care that was right for them.

Staff had developed a nurturing and inclusive ethos in the service, and this was evidenced through their warm and caring approach towards children. Staff were very attuned to children and their needs and responsive to children's requests and ideas. Staff sat alongside children during play and interactions, providing closeness, cuddles and affection. This contributed to positive attachments and children feeling safe and secure.

Children were supported to reach their full potential by proactive staff who sought advice from professionals and welcomed multi-agency working. This ensured children received the right care and support. This included effective partnership working with parents to establish shared strategies, which contributed to a continuity of care for children. Children who required additional support were well supported by staff to feel respected and included in daily experiences.

Families were supported extremely well by a compassionate and caring team. Staff recognised that families have different needs and life experiences and offered support and guidance to ensure families were included and respected. This highlighted that the wellbeing and inclusion of children and their families was clearly at the heart of the service. One parent shared, "They show me a great deal of care and compassion. They're all amazing and do anything and everything to help me get the correct support."

Children's individual wellbeing benefitted from effective personal planning. Their care and support needs were discussed with parents regularly to ensure consistency between the service and home. Plans included individualised information on children's needs and how these would be met. Information was updated and shared regularly with the staff team to ensure everyone working with children was aware of children's needs and a continuity of care provided.

Mealtimes were an unhurried, positive social experience. Children's choice and preferences were respected by allowing children to choose where they sat. This provided good opportunities to develop friendships and social skills. Children's health and wellbeing was supported through nutritious food options and access to fresh water throughout the day. Staff promoted a nurturing social experience by sitting with children and eating together. This enabled opportunities for language development and ensured children were supported well and were kept safe when eating. Children developed their life skills through serving food and clearing away dishes. This allowed children to have ownership of mealtime routines and provided opportunities to be independent and responsible.

Appropriate storage and systems were in place for medication being administered safely to meet children's needs. Information was collated and displayed which ensured staff were knowledgeable about children's health needs and knew the signs, symptoms and actions to take where a child may require medication.

Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and Learning

Children led their play, having fun playing alone, with friends or with staff. Children were highly engaged throughout our visit, choosing how and where they spent their time, allowing them to be independent, confident and feel respected. Staff were responsive to children's ideas and choices and extended these well. One parent shared, "I am really happy with the care my child receives at Alehousewells and all of the staff are very nurturing. They engage with the children and everything is very much child led. I have seen a huge difference in my child's development and confidence."

Planning approaches were inclusive of children's ideas and interests. It was evident that children's voices were highly valued. Through mind maps, planning walls and daily discussions, regular consultation with children took place and their ideas used to inform provision. As a result children were progressing well and experienced learning that was meaningful. Learning profiles captured and celebrated children's achievements and effective tracking and reflection ensured an appropriate level of support and challenge for each child.

Children experienced inviting play spaces that provided high quality learning and fun. Areas were well resourced and promoted learning through real life experiences with creative approaches used to support children lead play and learning. For example, a variety of real objects and open-ended resources allowed children to experiment, explore and inspired creativity.

Staff had a good understanding of child development and spoke knowledgeably of children's needs and the strategies in place. Strategies were effectively implemented to meet children's needs and supported children's engagement and learning.

Staff made good use of observation skills and listened well to children. This allowed them to extend children's play through effective questioning to deepen learning and support children's thinking and understanding. Interactions promoted children's curiosity, imagination and problem-solving skills and enriched children's experiences.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were embedded across all experiences. For example, environmental print was displayed which supported emerging reading and tools were available to allow children to mark make and develop their writing skills. Measuring tools supported children explore size and volume and staff used mathematical language to support children's maths and numeracy development. These provided rich learning opportunities within planned and spontaneous experiences.

Experiences were enhanced through good links with the community, with a range of opportunities for children to participate in meaningful outings. Visits to local amenities, including shops, allowed children to experience learning beyond the setting and extended children's interests. A variety of outdoor learning enabled children to explore natural environments and stay active. This developed their connections and sense of belonging within the local environment.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how this 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 a setting that was secure, clean and welcoming which supported their safety and wellbeing. Natural lighting and homely touches such as soft furnishings promoted a sense of calm and provided nurturing spaces for children to explore and learn. The lay out of spaces had been well considered and thought out to meet children's needs and ensure they could explore and learn comfortably.

Displays around the environment showcased children's work and creations. As a result children felt valued as they were able to share their learning with parents and friends. This gave a strong message that children mattered and enabled children to take pride in their work and celebrate their achievements.

A variety of stimulating spaces engaged children's imagination and enriched their play and learning. Spaces were interesting and well-resourced, promoting curiosity and a sense of wonder. This resulted in highly engaged children. Resources were easily accessible allowing children to lead their play and choose from a wide range of play experiences.

Cosy spaces provided children with areas where they could spend time alone or with peers. Spaces allowed children to rest and relax in comfort, offering quiet or focussed play times when needed. These offered safety and security to support children's emotional well-being.

Children benefitted from free flow access between the indoor and outdoor areas which enabled them to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Outdoors provided rich experiences for children to explore their natural curiosities in a well thought out and purposeful environment. Loose parts were used effectively to engage children's imaginations. The outdoor environment offered choice, challenge and opportunities to develop creativity and problem solving. For example, we observed children build an obstacle course using large loose part resources. Children experimented with a variety of parts before creating their course to balance, jump and climb. This provided children with excitement and allowed them to challenge themselves in a fun way.

Risk assessments were carried out to support a safe environment for children to play and learn. Staff developed assessments as a team, which contributed to a whole team approach to assessing the environment and ensured they were clear on procedures to minimise risk.

Staff demonstrated good practice in infection prevention and control. For example, handwashing practices were well supported, rooms were well ventilated and regular cleaning took place. We asked that the service ensures all staff are aware and familiar with current nappy changing guidance to support best practice.

Storage of children and families' personal information complied with best practice. Confidential information was stored securely within the office but readily accessible to staff. This meant that they had access to the relevant information when needed to support them to meet children's needs.

How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how this supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service values and aims set out a clear vision for the setting, with children's wellbeing, inclusion and achievement at the heart of the service provided. These were developed collaboratively with families resulting in shared aspirations and ensuring their hopes and wishes were included.

The team was led well by the nursery manager who was dedicated to their role and the wellbeing of the families and staff. A commitment to the pastoral care of the staff team promoted a positive ethos and recognised the importance of staff's health and wellbeing. This supported staff feel valued and respected in the service.

An improvement plan identified priorities to support the continued development of the service, including family engagement, mealtimes and teaching and assessment. The team reflected well on the progress of priorities, recording the impact developments had, which allowed them to identify the next steps to support the setting's improvement journey. The service demonstrated that effective self-evaluation was continuous and influenced developments and positive change.

Quality assurance systems were effective. Self-evaluation was being carried out with formal and informal monitoring taking place, including peer monitoring. This supported staff involvement within self-evaluation processes and demonstrated a collaborative approach. Best practice guidance informed evaluations and ensured that high quality learning was at the heart of improvements.

As part of our inspection processes, we reviewed accident and incident notifications submitted by the service. We were satisfied that the manager and leadership team had taken appropriate action to support the safety and wellbeing of children.

Regular team meetings provided opportunities for staff to reflect on children's individual needs, share learning and discuss planning and developments within the service. Staff told us they felt confident to share ideas and make suggestions for improvements. Leadership roles had been taken on within the team to enhance provision and support quality assurance. The service could develop further leadership roles to utilise staff skills and areas of expertise. This would contribute to staff driving improvements.

The service actively sought the views of families using a range of feedback methods. Daily chats, questionnaires and online platforms provided opportunities for families to evaluate the service and make suggestions. This ensured they were included and influenced change. Regular communication with families took place through a variety of ways, including daily updates at drop off and pick up times and parents meetings. This contributed to the positive and supportive relationships families had built with the service.

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how this supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3 Staff deployment

The team worked well together, with staff respectful to each other and supportive of colleagues. This created a positive atmosphere and provided a happy, safe and relaxed environment for children.

Children experienced caring and nurturing approaches supporting them feel loved, secure and valued. The quality of engagement with children throughout the day was positive, with staff attuned to children's

needs. Staff were friendly and warm which contributed to a welcoming ethos within the service. Feedback we received highlighted that families feel the team are approachable and always available for discussion. One parent shared, "The staff are always happy to speak with parents no matter how minor the issue is". Another parent told us, "Communication is excellent. Staff can be contacted by phone, text, email, face to face or Facebook group and they update us on various platforms regularly."

Children were supported by a staff team with a variety of experience, skills and knowledge. Staff were enthusiastic about their role and committed to securing positive outcomes for children and their families. A variety of training opportunities allowed staff to develop their skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children. Staff understood the benefits of training in furthering outcomes for children and were motivated and keen to continue with their development.

Effective staff deployment across the service meant that children's individual needs were being met by the right number of staff consistently throughout the day. The staff to child ratio allowed staff to be responsive which enhanced children's experiences and ensured children had the right support at the right time. Staff were flexible and supported each other to work as a team to benefit children. Staff breaks were well managed and did not impact the care provided and allowed staff time to refresh. Staffing arrangements promoted continuity of care across the day and ensured that tasks and routines did not impact negatively on children's care.

Staff communicating well with each other and shared key information throughout the day. This ensured children's needs were consistently met. Staff kept track of numbers within groups as children entered and left the service and when children moved areas. This helped plan staff deployment effectively to monitor children's supervision and support their safety and wellbeing.

Staff absence was managed well, with management covering positions or through using supply staff. This ensured ratios were met and consistency maintained for children and families. An effective induction program supported new and supply staff team members in their role, providing key information on children's needs and support strategies. Shadowing opportunities were provided which contributed to the development of staff knowledge and skills and ensured staff had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.

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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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