Ballogie Nursery
Day Care of Children

Ballogie Estate
Ballogie
Tarland
Aboyne
AB34 5DP

Telephone: 013392 67760

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 November 2022

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003015749

About the service

Ballogie Nursery is provided by Aberdeenshire Council, and the setting is a part of the wider Finzean Primary School located around two miles away from the nursery base. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children aged between three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service was rural and the building was set within the Ballogie estate. The setting consisted of one main playroom, a general purpose room and a secure outdoor space. Staff had created a cosy room just off the playroom for the children to access.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 07 November 2022. 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:

- made contact with seven parents of children who attended
- spoke with the children, staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children.
- Staff knew the children well and supported their individual needs.
- Staff had developed good relationships with parents, they felt well informed and involved their child's experiences and learning.
- Staff were passionate about their role and were keen to extend their professional development to further improve outcomes for children.
- To support continuous improvement the service should ensure that staff are monitored effectively and given the opportunity for regular appraisals in order to support their wellbeing and professional development.

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?	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? 5 - Very Good

1.1 Nurturing care and support

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.

Children appeared confident and happy. We observed that positive relationships had been formed between staff and the children who had fun together. There was lots of laughter, encouragement and celebrating success. The children were keen to explore the new paper punches donated to the nursery, but some were very stiff. Adults encouraged them to try different ways; there was lots of problem solving and perseverance going on, and the children were delighted when they succeeded, one child said: "it's magic, ta da!".

When speaking to staff it was clear that they knew the children well and were able to discuss their personalities, likes/dislikes and what they were supporting the children to achieve. This allowed experiences, care and support to be tailored to children's individual needs which supported them to feel safe and secure. Parents felt that staff knew the children very well. One parent said: "they know them inside out, it's amazing". They said staff show this by providing activities which inspire the children and are specific to their interests. Parents said staff tailor support to take account of their children's physical and mental needs and are good at keeping them up to date with developments.

Children were free to choose where they wanted to play and had access to a range of resources. Children all appeared to be happy and engaged in their play. Adults sat alongside children and were observed to be taking a genuine interest in the children's play - taking time to chat about what they were doing and offering support to build on their experiences.

Staff were in tune to children and their needs, responding to children's requests and picking up on their cues. Comfort and reassurance was given when needed contributing to positive attachments being formed.

Snack and mealtimes were relaxed, unhurried social experiences. Children could choose when to have snack and whether they wanted to have it indoors or out. This helped ensure their play wasn't interrupted. Food choices provided during mealtimes were nutritious and allowed children to try a variety of foods.

Children were encouraged to help prepare snack and confidently set about accessing utensils and food evidencing this was normal routine for the children. Children prepared the fruit, using knives to cut while practicing their counting skills; when thinking about how much food they needed. Despite having lunch menus staff recognised the importance of giving the children choice and following their interests. For example: one child wanted to make tomato soup so staff planned this alongside children's lunch.

Children had access to fresh water throughout the day with a water station which ensured they stayed hydrated. Although no children slept or rested during our visit, both the indoor and outdoor environments offered comfortable and cosy spaces to support children during times of rest.

Children's wellbeing and progress was supported through personal planning. Plans contained registration details and 'All about Me' information which captured children's likes/dislikes, routines and interests. Personal planning documents were individualised for each child and the wellbeing indicators were made reference to. Including these indicators within the plans would provide a holistic approach to care and support and would allow staff to effectively track progress in health and wellbeing.

The plans were completed with parents which supported effective information sharing and promoted a continuity of care for children. Chronologies were used to capture significant events in the children's lives. These highlighted staff's awareness of potential safeguarding and wellbeing issues arising in children's lives and the appropriate actions that had been carried out. However, some of the information in the chronologies would have been better suited to pastoral notes or a support plan, which we discussed with staff.

There were no children in the setting requiring medication. However, the policy detailed how they would safely manage the administration of medication to ensure children's health and wellbeing.

We did not observe nappy changing. We noted that an appropriate policy was in place. Staff talked us through the procedure which appeared to be a relaxed, nurturing experience for the children, using appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) and a suitable changing unit which we saw. This ensured the risk of infection was minimised.

We found the service supported children and families well. Parents spoke about how they felt well informed about their child's experiences and learning. Staff took time at pick up and through the learning journals app to share information. Parents found this approach useful and valuable. Parents have also appreciated the opportunity to be welcomed back into the setting which has given them a greater insight into what their children do at nursery.

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.

Children were fully engaged in play throughout their day. A range of age appropriate resources, including 'loose parts', and open ended resources, were available to children in both the indoor and outdoor environments. These promoted children's curiosity and encouraged them to be creative, problem solve and use their imagination. Free flow between indoors and outside meant the children had the choice of where they wanted to play.

A child led approach to learning had been implemented which promoted independence and choice. A child wanted to make playdough and was supported by an adult to find the ingredients and utensils. They were given ownership of their play and encouraged to be independent. We saw many more opportunities to encourage independence throughout the nursery. For example: children were being encouraged to choose and mix their own paint using pump bottles. This was also promoting opportunities for them to experiment and explore.

Resources for the sand and water were easily accessible, stored in units for the children to access easily. We saw children confidently making selections from these during their play. This promoted both choice and independence.

Real resources were provided for the children to explore. Lots of children throughout the session spent time cutting carrots and tomatoes with butter knifes in the house corner. They displayed good fine motor skills and appeared confident using real tools. We saw many more opportunities to develop fine motor skills using knives, tongs and punches. We observed the children being fully engaged in these activities, showing perseverance.

Opportunities to explore literacy and numeracy were naturally embedded within the setting. There were resources such as scales, clocks and clipboards for the children to explore in the house corner, books throughout the setting, print and art work all at the children's level. We observed rhymes, songs and stories happening throughout the day in relation to the children's interests. This supported their interest and enriched their play.

Staff used open ended questions during their interactions promoting children's curiosity and encouraging children to be creative and problem solve. We saw many examples of this approach throughout the day. For example: staff encouraged the children to explore the real vegetables by supporting them to smell them and talk about what they saw. Children were supported to try different utensils to cut and move the vegetables around. This encouraged the children's thinking and extended their play.

Although the nursery is in a very rural setting they have connections within and make use of the community. Children have access to wooded areas close by which gave them a different environment to explore. Local farmers knew the children and stopped by to say hello. The Librarian has been to visit to meet the children and tell them about the library. This contributed to the setting being an established part of the community.

Child led planning took into consideration the different areas within the setting and the interests of the children. Staff used a large book to document the learning taking place and to identify individual observations and next steps. The setting used floor books to support their planning and stimulate discussions with the children thus involving them in the planning process. This allowed staff to access what children already knew and identify possible new learning and experiences.

Learning journals documented observations and captured individual learning for children. These contained an overview of child development and observations under each of the curricular areas. Observations took account of the children's voice what was observed. Next steps were identified to support children's progression and plan future learning. Staff told us that families had good engagement with the learning journals and valued these. We saw this within the learning journals where children had asked for photo's to be sent to their families to show them what they did at nursery. This indicated that parents valued these and spent time sharing the journals with their children, contributing to the children feeling valued.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

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 environment was well maintained and secure. Children were observed to move around the setting with confidence choosing where they played. They had the opportunity to play indoors or outdoors, with a free flow system in place.

Indoors was set up thoughtfully using furniture to create enclosures for the children to explore and learn. A variety of resources to support different play experiences were accessible in boxes, labelled with photos and print. Resources such as greenery were added to soften the room. A cosy room was accessible off the main playroom, with soft furnishings where the children could rest and relax if they chose to. These all helped create a welcoming feel to the service.

Outdoors was set up to ensure children were given daily opportunities for outdoor learning experiences in all weathers. There was a wide range of resources to support learning which included open ended resources such as: wooden planks, reels, crates, a digging area, mud kitchen and shelters for the children. A shed had been set up introducing mark making materials to the outdoors.

We saw children and staff play outside in the rain, dressed appropriately, exploring water play. Language and problem solving skills were being developed as a child explored with the hose. The outdoor area was concrete and the staff spoke about developing the outdoors to offer a range of surfaces for the children to explore. They discussed how a grassed area would support the sensory needs of the children, making reference to: 'Realising the Ambition'. This would further extend the opportunities for outdoor play further within the setting.

Robust infection control measures provided a safe environment for children. We observed hand washing being carried out by both staff and children at appropriate times. Daily cleaning carried out by staff ensured the risk of infection was minimised. PPE was worn when required in line with best practice guidance, for example: during personal care, nappy changing and food preparation.

Risk assessments were in place for indoor and outdoor environments to support the safety and wellbeing of the children. These documented potential risks and measures in place to support a safe environment. Staff discussed recent risk benefit assessment training and how this had supported them to change their thinking about supporting risky play. We also saw that children were being encouraged to risk assess activities, for example: bramble picking. Children had considered clothing like gloves, road safety and the eating of berries. These opportunities encouraged the children to think about their own health and safety.

Accidents and incidents were documented well and information was shared with parents. We saw that a recent audit had been carried out which allowed the service to identify preventive measures in order to reduce accident or injury. The local authority was responsible for the upkeep of the building and carried out repair work. Any work or repairs needed was noted in the janitors book and noted in the maintenance log if external work was needed. The maintenance log was kept in the premises.

Children's personal information was stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the setting, which complied with relevant best practice.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

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

A shared vision, values and aims had been developed to include the views and ideas of staff, children and parents. This promoted a shared vision and values for the service and captured what was important to all using the service and those working there. During our visit we were able to see this vision becoming embedded, through the nurturing approaches of the staff and the opportunities for developing curiosity and creativity.

Parents and staff had been given a Microsoft form to complete to gain their views and ideas around the values, visions and aims. We discussed using this approach to gather the views of families in other areas of the nursery. This could then be acted upon to make improvements to the setting and for outcomes for children.

Staff spoke about how they had used self evaluation in the past, asking the families a question in relation to the setting, using lolly sticks to respond. Parents said they were often asked for feedback and felt the service responded well to thoughts and ideas. They found this was a quick effective way to gather views and are planning on getting a board to do this outdoors. This would ensure the families continued to feel included and their views valued.

Children's views were sought to gather their ideas on activities and resources through daily discussions. We saw evidence of this in the children's floor book where children were involved in the planning process and had a voice in their learning.

Due to a number of changes in to those holding the post of EYSP (early years senior practitioner) staff appraisals, staff observations and monitoring had not been carried out for some time. Paperwork had now been issued and meetings were to follow. We discussed with management the importance of regularly evaluating practice and provision to ensure positive outcomes for staff and children **(see area for improvement 1).**

Staff reflected together daily, however, due to working hours it was difficult to set aside regular protected time for everyone to come together. Job share EYLP's (early years lead practitioners) had time built in daily for discussion and reflection and the head teacher joined them regularly. This allowed the service to tailor support and the care delivered to children and families. We discussed how the 'Quality Framework' would support the team to evaluate current provision and practice and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The setting were using an improvement document to support improvement and create action plans. They have been working on improvements for example: their vision, mealtimes and the outdoors. This had influenced positive changes within the service, for example: the updated vision, values and aims. The service should ensure they capture even the small tests of change and evaluate these, ongoing with dates, to show the improvement and the impact on outcomes for children.

The service had recently put a quality assurance calendar in place to have an overview of the procedures, audits and reviews to be undertaken over the year. The staff found that it was useful having this vital information in one place which will ensure quality experiences are a key focus for everyone throughout the year.

Areas for improvement

1. To support continuous improvement to the service as a whole and improve outcomes for children, the provider and manager should ensure that:

a) the quality of work of each member of staff and the service as a whole is monitored effectively.

b) staff are given the opportunity for regular support and supervision in order to support their wellbeing and professional development.

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) and
'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

4.3 Staff deployment

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.

Staff were warm and responsive in their approach. They joined in children's play and followed children's interests. All staff knew the individual needs and interests of the children which allowed them to offer individualised support and care. We found the staff team to be enthusiastic and motivated and our discussions highlighted that they were passionate about their role.

Staff were flexible and moved with children dependant on their interests and needs. Staffing levels throughout the day supported the wellbeing and safety of children using the service. During transitions staff were clear about their role, some being task-focussed, while others spent time with the children supporting their needs. Timings were managed effectively ensuring ratios were still in place and appropriate support given to children, minimising the impact on children's day.

As staff worked part time, while they didn't require a lunch break staff were welcome to join children over lunch time. This ensured staff had the opportunity to relax and refresh and children benefited from the social experience.

Supply staff told us they had been well supported and felt part of the team. They were familiar with the routines and knew the children and their families well. They felt valued with their ideas being welcomed and felt supported by the local authority.

Staff were qualified and had a good knowledge of child development. They were able to discuss how they had identified areas for development and how they were supporting children with developing their social skills and toilet training.

Staff had the opportunity to take part in training and gain qualifications. They were enthusiastic about continuing with their professional development. They were able to discuss the impact this had on their practice and outcomes for children. For example: risk benefit assessment training had changed the staff's mindset and they were now looking for ways to support children with risky play.

Staff felt encouraged and supported to take responsibility for areas within the nursery. Staff spoke to us about taking responsibility for tooth brushing. Having the support from 'Child Smile' colleagues and making some changes to their routine had enhanced the tooth brushing experience for the children.

All parents felt communication with the nursery was very good. They felt well informed about what their children do at nursery and felt the time given to them at pick up by a member of staff was valuable. Newsletters also kept the parents informed about what was happening within the setting.

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?	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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