Priorsford Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Marmion Road
Peebles
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Telephone: 01721 721 236

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
24 March 2023

Service provided by:
Scottish Borders Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001976

Service no:
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About the service

Priorsford Primary School Nursery is situated within the grounds of Priorsford Primary School in the town of Peebles. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 94 children at any one time. Of those no more than 15 are aged two years to under three years.

The children are cared for in a purpose-built building which incorporates a large playroom with kitchen area, toilets, nappy changing room, cloakroom and staff room. Children also have direct access to two outdoor play areas and the school hall.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 21 March 2023 between 09:30 and 16:30. 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:

- spoke with children using the service and gathered the views of seven parents
- spoke with staff, headteacher and deputy headteachers
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- Children experienced care and support which was warm, sensitive and nurturing.

- Staff knew children well and how to meet their individual needs.

- Children's engagement across the whole day could be further improved through continued access to stimulating activities and meaningful interactions with staff.

- Children's play and learning experiences could be further improved outdoors.

- Quality assurance processes, including self-evaluation and improvement planning had a strong focus on improving experiences and outcomes for 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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - 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

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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced care and support which was warm, sensitive and nurturing. Staff were respectful in their interactions with children and their quiet approach helped to create a calm atmosphere within the setting. One parent commented "My child has lovely relationships with their key carer and several of the other staff which has allowed them to feel happy, accepted and safe". Another parent commented "Staff at Priorsford Nursery are amazing, so reactive to issues that pop up and delivered in a caring, kind manner".

Children's personal plans were created in partnership with parents and provided sufficient information to enable staff to effectively plan for children's care and support. A process was in place to review information with parents regularly which enabled staff to respond to any changes in children's care, support and learning needs. The majority of parents felt consulted and well-informed by staff about their child's experiences and development. However, two parents felt they did not receive adequate verbal feedback from their child's key carer about their daily experiences. Management and senior staff should continue to monitor staff practice to ensure information is shared with all parents so that they feel informed and included.

Staff recorded information about significant changes in children's lives within chronology documents. Management reviewed and discussed the chronologies with staff as part of an ongoing monitoring program and tracked changes. This helped staff to analyse the impact of life events and informed decision making. The Care Inspectorate's 'Practice guide to Chronologies' could further support staff and management to further review how information is recorded.

Children's individual needs were supported by staff who knew them well. Individualised plans were developed and included strategies staff could use to support children's development. These plans were reviewed regularly to ensure children's changing needs were recognised and responded to. A few children benefited from one-to-one support provided by identified staff within the setting or from an external support team. This deployment of staff helped to provide children with consistency in their care and build trusting relationships. Staff were clearly committed to ensuring children with additional needs were well-supported within the service. For example, staff were learning some sign language to support children's communication needs.

Children had opportunities at snack and mealtimes to develop their independence and skills. For example, children helped to prepare foods at snack time and served themselves independently. When visiting the school dining hall at lunchtime, they collected their meal by themselves and cleared up afterwards. Staff sat and ate with children which helped to create a social experience for all. However, improvements were needed to staff procedures to enable them to monitor children's food and drink intake and ensure their nutritional needs were met throughout the day. We discussed this with management and they have told us that a new procedure was implemented immediately following our visit.

1.3 Play and learning

Children could freely access a good range of different play experiences and resources to support their learning and development. For example, children were being creative and making independent choices at the craft area and children were being active and developing their physical skills when playing outdoors. Children's wellbeing was promoted through nature walks in their local surroundings.

Staff should continually review the activities available to ensure these are offering challenging experiences and promote children's engagement in play in the setting. At the time of inspection, some children in the afternoon were disengaged and would have benefited from having more meaningful interactions with staff to help them follow their interests. For example, the availability of staff to read stories or to help children join in with activities would mean that all children felt included and were supported to engage with play and learning opportunities throughout the day.

Some staff used effective questioning to extend children's thinking and promote language development. However, this was not consistent and some staff needed to continue to develop this within their professional practice. Some staff should also develop their knowledge and understanding of risky play as at times their directions to children limited their play experiences. Staff training on risky play will enable staff to support children to risk assess their own play and develop their confidence.

Staff implemented effective procedures to plan children's play and learning experiences. Plans included a mix of intentional planning activities identified by staff and experiences which linked to children's interests. Staff involved children in the planning process through the use mindmaps which enabled children to express their ideas. Learning experiences had a strong focus on the core areas of literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing and staff monitored children's progress in these curricular areas. Regular reviews by staff and management meant children's learning progress could be assessed, their achievements recognised and any necessary support identified.

Children's learning experiences and progress were shared with parents at times throughout the year. Staff recorded children's achievements in Learning Diaries and parents could add their comments and share information about their child's achievements at home. Parent consultations provided opportunities for parents to meet with their child's key carer to discuss their learning and development and review their care needs. A parent commented "The use of QR codes to watch videos is excellent. They are also used to share information from home and we have added in some personal experiences for the nursery to be aware of too. Newsletters are also sent out frequently to let us know what is happening and what the children have been learning about".

Children's learning in literacy and numeracy was supported through their play experiences, staff interactions, and focused learning activities which supported children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills. However, more opportunities could be created in the outdoor space to support this learning. Following our visit, the provider informed us that staff had introduced more resources and made improvements to the outdoor environment to further promote children's learning in literacy and numeracy.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a clean and welcoming environment which was furnished to a high standard. The large playroom provided ample space for children to move around and play together. It was well-ventilated and the large windows allowed plenty of natural light into the playroom. A small, enclosed area located within the long playroom provided a cosier space where children could relax. A child told us they liked this area because "it's quiet". Staff and management had recognised the need to create more cosy spaces and were developing a new sensory area which would provide an additional quiet, relaxing space to support children's needs. A parent commented "The facilities, being a large open-plan space, are not ideal for my child, the staff have compensated well for this by creating a quiet area where my child can go when they are overwhelmed".

Infection prevention and control procedures supported a clean and hygienic environment for all. For example, children understood the need to wash their hands at appropriate times. They were confident in practising good handwashing which indicated this practice was embedded within daily routines.

Children had access to resources and equipment which were well-maintained. Procedures were in place to enable staff and management to report and monitor any maintenance and repair tasks they identified. This contributed to ensuring the setting remained safe, secure and well-maintained. During our visit, we discussed with staff and management the local authority plans for improving the security around the outdoor space as this presented an issue for children's security. Children could climb over the fence and adults on the other side could easily interact with children playing in the nursery grounds. Staff needed to be vigilant in their supervision of children playing outdoors which had impacted on their ability to engage with children and support their play and learning through skilled interactions. Following our inspection visit, we received confirmation from the provider that works to heighten the fence were now completed, making the area more secure for children. On the basis of these assurances we are confident this will have a positive impact on children's play and learning experiences as staff should be able to interact and engage more with children when outdoors.

Children had direct access to a large outdoor space where they could be active and enjoy physical play. Improvements were needed to some of the outdoor areas as these were not presented attractively or resourced well enough to provide stimulating play opportunities for children. For example, sand and water play was limited and there was not enough equipment within the outdoor kitchen to promote children's curiosity. Following our inspection visit, the provider immediately developed an action plan and staff carried out improvements to the presentation and play equipment in the outdoor space. These improvements should help to provoke children's play and meet their interests and curiosities.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

A shared vision for the service was promoted by staff and management. Staff had taken time to develop a Practitioners' Charter. This helped to create a shared understanding of the expectations for staff practice and children's experiences, interactions and spaces.

Effective quality assurance processes were having a positive impact on practice and improving outcomes for children. A quality assurance calendar was in place which included monitoring tasks for different aspects of the service. For example, procedures were in place for the monitoring of staff practice by management and senior staff. This led to regular meetings with staff to discuss their practice and identify any areas for professional development.

Staff showed commitment to the continuous development of the service. They took time to reflect together and used quality frameworks to evaluate their procedures and the quality of children's experiences. A meaningful procedure was in place whereby the findings from self- evaluation were recorded in a floorbook, areas for improvement identified and senior staff monitored the progression of improvement actions. To support staff in further developing their improvement planning procedures, we signposted them to our quality improvement bitesize sessions and the Model for Improvement on the Care Inspectorate Hub. The plan, do, study, act cycle could help staff to continue reviewing the improvement actions, ensure these are fully implemented, and lead to positive change to the outcomes for children and families.

Children's learning, care and support needs had been well-considered within the service's improvement plan. Improvement priorities had a strong focus on supporting children's learning in numeracy and literacy. The provider had also developed an action plan to enable staff to develop a shared approach to supporting and meeting the individual needs of children. These priority areas showed that improvement planning was firmly focused on improving outcomes for children.

Children and families' views were sought to support the ongoing development of the service. For example, feedback from a parents' survey had been analysed and ideas followed up by management. A self-evaluation floorbook was readily available to parents so they could add their comments and suggestions when dropping off and collecting their child. During our visit, staff were using this to gather parents' views on children's transition to school. Staff had used a mindmap to gather children's views on the lunchtime experience. We suggested staff could develop further methods of gathering children's views, such as, through their drawings or photographs. This could further enhance the existing opportunities for children and families to be involved in influencing change within the setting.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

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

4.3 Staff deployment
Staff communicated effectively and worked well as a team. New communication methods had been developed to ensure staff with different working patterns felt informed and included.
Staff felt well-supported by senior staff and felt they could approach the management team at any time. This helped to create a positive ethos within the setting.

Staff were deployed in a manner which meant there was a good mix of skills and experience available to support children in the different spaces across the day. Senior staff provided strong leadership for the staff team and modelled good practice.

Staffing levels were sufficient to provide care and support for the number of children in attendance on the day of our visit. Staff breaks were well-managed and had minimum impact on children's experiences. Children's supervision within the large setting had been considered and staff were stationed in different areas in the long playroom and outdoor space. Consideration had been given to the complexity of individual children's needs and staff deployed accordingly to support these. However, further consideration should be given to the wider group and whether staff could move around the setting more flexibly so that all children experience quality interactions throughout the session and staff are available to respond to their interests.

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	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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