Aith Nursery
Day Care of Children

Aith Junior High School
Aith
Shetland
ZE2 9NB

Telephone: 01595 807 400

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 November 2023

Service provided by:
Shetland Islands Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003016125

About the service

Aith Nursery is situated in the village of Aith, on the west mainland of Shetland. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 32 children aged three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The early years service operates from a classroom within Aith Junior High School school. Children have access to shared outdoor areas, the school hall and library.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 06 November 2023 between 09:30 and 16:00 and 07 November 2023 between 09:15 and 15:30.

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 children using the service
- spoke with four families
- reviewed responses to feedback questionnaires from two families
- spoke with staff and the manager
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Interactions between staff and children were warm, nurturing and supportive.
- Staff knew children well and used information from home to help them settle into the service.
- Children were actively and meaningfully involved in leading their own play.
- Children's 'bairns books' promoted child centred learning.
- Children enjoyed attractive, welcoming, well maintained surroundings.
- Children had daily opportunities for physical play.
- While quality assurance processes were effective, some of these were in the early stages.
- Staff deployment needed some adjustments to ensure that children were fully supported during mealtimes.
- Children were cared for by a staff team supported each other and who worked well together.

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?	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? 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

Children benefitted from warm, nurturing, supportive interactions, and parents told us of their confidence in the, "kind, caring and attentive staff." Staff responded to children as individuals, and adapted their approaches to suit each child's needs. This resulted in children experiencing interactions that supported their needs and development.

Children's transitions were managed well, and adapted to suit their needs. Parents spoke positively about the settling in process, and how this had been individualised for their children. A booklet provided parents with information, along with visits to the setting before children started. This helped promote children's emotional resilience and make them feel cared for.

Children's personal care was supported sensitively. Staff helped them to be independent whilst toileting and washing hands at key times of the day. This included before and after eating, and after using the bathroom. Staff's approach to personal care routines supported children to develop independence and life skills.

Children enjoyed unhurried, relaxed mealtimes. They were encouraged to be independent, helping to prepare snacks and serving their own lunch. Whilst all children were supervised while eating, only some had an adult sitting with them. We discussed how this could be improved with changes to staff deployment, to promote a consistently sociable mealtime experience for all children **(see 4.3 - staff deployment)**.

Children were cared for by staff who knew them well. They used personal plans to record information about children's needs and preferences. Some held more detailed information than others to promote staff's knowledge of strategies being used to support individual children. Management agreed to review this to ensure that staff had access to detailed information to support all children.

Children's health and wellbeing needs were met by staff. Medication was stored and administered correctly. We identified small changes needed to the recording of medication, and management agreed to look at this to ensure they followed current guidance. Staff were knowledgeable about children's allergies and used information provided by parents to keep children safe and healthy.

Families experienced a service which valued their involvement. Parents were involved in supporting children during outings and had helped with fundraising, and the development of the outdoor play area. This gave opportunities for parents to influence improvements to the service and to be involved in their children's care.

Quality indicator: 1.3 Play and Learning

Children were actively and meaningfully involved in leading their own play through a balance of planned and spontaneous activities. Staff took their lead from children during games, supporting them to extend their ideas. When asked about their child's learning, one parent commented, "My child learns so much and could not be better cared for."

Planning approaches to support children's learning and development included both planned and spontaneous learning opportunities. Activities followed children's interests, with provocations for learning placed throughout the setting. Staff had been developing their planning format to help ensure a responsive, child centred approach to children's learning.

Children's learning was supported through the use of their 'bairns books.' These recorded children's progress in photos, staff observations and children's artwork and comments. Children proudly showed us their books, and were able talk about activities they had taken part in. Next steps for learning, however, were not specific to each child. Staff began working on improving this during the inspection to help ensure children's progress was planned for individually.

Children experienced opportunities to develop numeracy and literacy skills. These were embedded in the activities available throughout the setting. Children were keen to recognise and write their own names; and counted and practiced numerical concepts during activities. Staff scribed for children in their 'bairns' book' and on notices, often using their own dialect to promote a feeling of value and self-worth.

Children's connection with the local community was promoted through outings, and shared areas with the school. Shared playgrounds allowed children to socialise with and learn from older children, whilst visits to a nearby wooded area and the beach provided further opportunities to explore. These steps helped ensure children felt part of the school and wider community.

How good is our setting? 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 2.2: Children experience high quality facilties.

Children were cared for in bright, airy, well maintained surroundings. The layout had been planned well to provide child centred play spaces, which children enjoyed. Distinct areas had been created to provide provocations for children's play. This included a home area, which was well equipped with real life items, and a tinker table where children were supported to explore loose parts such as beads and other small items to promote open ended play.

Children had daily opportunities for physical play. This included the: 'Play on Pedals' scheme, where children were encouraged to develop their skills on balance bikes. Free flow access to the nursery garden, and regular access to the outdoor 'den' area allowed children to run around and explore. Children were supported to use natural materials in their play, including building a pretend bonfire with branches, to reflect their recent experiences on Guy Fawkes night. This helped promote children's imagination and curiosity.

Children were kept safe through staff's knowledge and practice. Staff carried out risk assessments and discussed safety with the children. When going outside, children were counted in and out of the nursery building. Staff positioned themselves to provide optimal supervision. One member of staff told us, "It is good for the children to learn about safety now so they understand later when they are using these areas in school." These measures helped ensure children's safety whilst they explored outdoors. Staff were not aware of the "SIMOA (Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) - keeping children safe" campaign **(see 3.1- Quality assurance is led well**).

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We found a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh areas for improvement. We therefore assessed this key question as good.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children were cared for in a service with clear vision, values and aims, which were in line with the rest of the school. These had been reviewed with parents and children, and adapted to reflect more age appropriate wording for early years. This helped children's feeling of belonging in the school community.

Children and families views are sought and valued. Parents were asked to complete annual feedback questionnaires, and had opportunities to express their views during daily conversations with staff. Stay and play sessions gave parents opportunities to see and comment on how their children spend their time in the setting. Parents had been involved in fundraising and developing the outdoor area. These measures helped ensure families felt meaningfully involved in the development of the service.

Positive experiences for children were supported by quality assurance measures. These included the monitoring of practice by senior management, and informal support meetings with staff. However, there were no opportunities for more formal conversations with staff to identify any practice issues or individual development needs. Management agreed to implement these to help ensure staff are fully supported in their roles. We suggested further development of peer support and observations to enhance quality assurance practices.

Staff did not always have sufficient knowledge of some guidance to support and ensure best practice. We directed management to the Care Inspectorate Hub, where they accessed guidance on choking prevention and the: 'SIMOA - keeping children safe campaign' to share with staff and increase their knowledge to support their practice in keeping children safe.

Improvements to children's experiences were planned in line with the rest of the school. A comprehensive plan identified areas for improvement, and how these were to be achieved. Evaluation of children's experiences by senior management was well established. Staff had begun to self-evaluate against the Care Inspectorate's "Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged children." Staff spoke positively of the impact that this has had on helping them to identify their strengths and areas for development. These included current plans to develop the outdoor play area. These measures supported staff to ensure that planned developments were outcome focused and provided positive experiences for children.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

We found a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh areas for improvement. We, therefore, assessed this key question as good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children were cared for by a staff team who worked well together. Tasks were planned and delegated, and staff supported each other when necessary. They communicated well when they moved around the setting to help ensure that children were effectively supervised and supported.

Children experienced positive transitions throughout the day. For example, when a group of children were taken outside, staff shared information about the numbers of children and staff in each area. A member of staff was positioned at the door to welcome children into the setting, and at the end of the when handing over to parents. These measures helped to ensure safe transitions and continuity of care.

Consistency of care and play was disrupted for some children during planned activities and staff breaks. Planned story time interrupted play, and we suggested that this be reviewed to allow children to continue playing if they wished. During lunch, some children were supported more fully than others. Staff breaks during this time meant that staff moved between tasks. We discussed the benefits of alternative arrangements to more fully support children at these times. Staff planned to address this by trialling a new lunch routine immediately after the inspection, where more staff were available to support children during lunch.

Staff were well known to families. Staff were introduced in the parents' booklet, and photos were displayed on the notice board at the nursery entrance. Parents commented on the staff team's commitment to providing a high quality service, with one telling us, "The staff are incredible; a really lovely team."

New staff were supported well to help them understand their roles in caring for children. A comprehensive induction included online learning, and assessment of their knowledge. Newer staff spoke positively of the support that they received in feeling confident in their roles and responsibilities in supporting children.

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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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