Ballachulish Primary Nursery Class
Day Care of Children

Ballachulish Primary School
Ballachulish
PH49 4JQ

Telephone: 01855 811 373

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 March 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017173

About the service

Ballachulish Primary Nursery Class is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children aged from 3 years to those not yet attending primary school.

The nursery operates from its own dedicated space within the Primary School located in the village of Ballachulish. The nursery has a separate entrance away from the main school reception. The premises consist of a playroom with kitchen facilities, toilets and reception area. The children have lunch in the main school canteen. The playroom has direct access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery also makes good use of resources in the local community.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 7 March 2023 between 9:45 and 15:45. 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 attending the service
- reviewed feedback from five parents
- spoke with five staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefitted from a nurturing, inspiring environment.
- Children were developing their curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills through high quality play experiences.
- Children were very happy and engaged and having fun taking part in various activities, both indoors and outdoors.
- Children experienced very warm, caring and nurturing support from staff who knew them very well.
- Staff worked well as a team and were committed to providing children with a service of a very high standard.
- Positive relationships with families supported continuity of care and effective partnerships.
- The service had established good working relationships with other agencies to support children's care and support needs.
- The manager and staff were committed to the ongoing development of the service.

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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were very happy, settled and having fun as they played alongside or with friends. We observed that positive attachments had been formed between staff and the children which contributed to children developing a sense of belonging. Children experienced responsive, kind nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. This contributed to children feeling happy and secure. There was a great deal of chatter and laughter between the children and the staff. We saw staff being very nurturing, taking time to listen to and respond to children, and offering comfort, cuddles and reassurance when needed.

Staff were welcoming and friendly with an enabling attitude and knew children very well. To support children to be happy and confident, staff had effectively used several documents, including 'Being me' personal plans, learning journals and support plans, to ensure children's needs were captured and considered. These documents ensured that everyone had a clear understanding of children's individual needs and how to support them to reach their full potential. This meant that all children were respected and valued as individuals. We reminded the service to ensure that they regularly reviewed and updated personal plans in partnership with children and their families.

Children and families benefitted from a service that valued the importance of establishing strong working relationships with families to support children. Staff worked in partnership with families when developing personal plans and support strategies. This ensured that children received appropriate levels of consistent care and support. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time, via an online platform and there were opportunities for parents to spend time in the nursery.

Parent were very positive in their comments about how welcoming and caring all the staff were and how much they appreciated the feedback they received. Comments made included "I have great feedback from staff", "always communicate development and very supportive with any additional needs" and "amazing feedback from nursery".

The service had also established very good working relationships with other professionals to support children with additional support needs. Staff used the expertise of others, such as speech and language therapists, to inform their approach to children's care. Several parents told us of how the nursey staff had worked closely with other agencies to meet their child's individual needs.

Children experienced positive snack and lunchtime experiences which were relaxed, sociable and unhurried. Staff were aware of any allergies or dietary needs which helped them to keep children safe. Lunches were served in the school dining hall where we saw children were comfortable with this routine. Staff had arranged the tables and chairs to make the experience more homely and sociable. Children were supported to develop important independence skills when pouring drinks and self serving food. Staff sat with children, chatting and modelling healthy eating, creating opportunities for children to develop their language and social skills.

1.3 Play and learning

The children were very happy and engaged in their play and actively led their play and learning throughout the day. They moved freely between the indoor and outdoor environments to explore and develop their imaginations. Being outdoors was particularly popular with the children. They enjoyed digging and building in the sand and construction areas, making potions in the mud kitchen as well as painting. A balance of spontaneous and planned quality experiences promoted children's choice and independence. Children benefited from a high quality play and learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, where they could access a very good range of age appropriate resources. These inspired children to be curious and encouraged them to be creative, problem solve and use their imagination. Play and learning opportunities impacted positively on children's development, health, wellbeing and happiness. For the majority of the time, children benefitted from uninterrupted play, allowing them to become absorbed in their play and have fun. This increased children's happiness and engagement.

Numeracy and literacy were naturally incorporated into most play areas within the nursery. Children had the opportunity to develop their numeracy and literacy skills and mathematical language while taking part in cooking activities, playing with real life resources in the home corner or investigating outdoors. Books were available throughout the nursery.

Planning approaches were child led and followed children's interests and needs. Play spaces were well resourced and promoted learning through real life experiences. There was a good mix of natural and planned experiences. Children were offered rich, stimulating and interesting experiences which promoted curiosity, imagination, problem solving and collaborative play. Staff were adding further value to children's play and learning through their carefully considered interactions. Staff were skilful in their interactions and engaged effectively with children to extend their learning. Questioning by staff encouraged children to think independently and to reflect, as a result children were respected, valued and achieving.

We recognised high quality play, learning and development was taking place throughout the inspection. Staff ensured that parents were well informed of children's learning and progression. Regular updates, observations and photographs were posted on the online platform and shared with parents. These updated were very much appreciated by parents.

Staff made use of large floor books to record the learning which was already taking place and to identify possible future learning experiences. Children were actively involved in completing the books with the staff and engaging in discussion about what they would like to learn about next. Children could tell us about the photos and drawings in the books and took pride in their achievements.

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.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefited from a setting that was calm, warm and welcoming. The playroom was a comfortable and well maintained space that had plenty of natural light for children to play, learn and relax. The playroom was well resourced and organised to support free flow play indoors. Homely touches and natural resources helped children to feel nurtured and comfortable.

Wall displays were attractive and contained interesting information about children's learning and included many of the children's comments. This gave children a sense of ownership in the space.

There was a system to report any repairs and damaged items were promptly replaced. Suitable infection control procedures were in place such as embedded handwashing before mealtimes and after outdoor play. A secure entry system and close monitoring of visitors by staff contributed to children remaining safe. There were appropriate risk assessments in place which promoted the safety of the children as well as daily checks of the premises. As a result, children's health and wellbeing needs were prioritised.

Staff had created a very positive learning environment. We saw children who explored happily and were engaged in their play. Consideration had been given to the variety of activities and experiences on offer to spark the children's curiosity and imagination. Children very much led their play and were able to independently select resources of their choice. Areas within the indoor play space had been set up to reflect the children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate materials, including natural, real-life and open ended resources, to support learning and offer challenge.

The playroom opened directly onto the outdoor play area which offered children a fun and stimulating space where they could comfortably engage with a variety of creative, open ended and natural resources. The development of the outdoor space was an ongoing project which was very much led by the children and their interests and ideas. The outdoor play area supported children to develop their gross and fine motor skills as well as explore risky play. The children had taken part in planting and growing activities. Although a very chilly day, the children all enthusiastically enjoyed spending time outdoors. They were fully engaged in a range of activities, either on their own or with their friends. Children were having fun playing imaginatively in the large sandpit, while others were engaged in active and energetic play together. We observed children taking turns, sharing, talking, negotiating and problem solving. Staff supported children to direct their own play and activities in the way they chose.

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.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There was strong leadership and a positive culture of improvement as all staff were involved in ongoing self evaluation. Effective policies, procedures and quality assurance processes were in place to support the development and improvement of the service. The management team and staff were all enthusiastic and committed to the continuous improvement of the service to secure high quality outcomes for the children. They also recognised the importance of including all stakeholders in the process.

Evaluation within the service was underpinned by best practice guidance and supported high quality care and support. Management and staff had a good understanding of 'How good is our early learning and childcare' and 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare' and used this to support assessment and evaluation within the service.

There were robust quality assurance systems in place. The service had developed a quality assurance calendar to review aspects of practice and parental engagement throughout the year. There was an improvement plan in place which highlighted clear focus areas and identified priority action points. This helped to set improvements which were achievable, to support positive outcomes for children.

The improvement plan was widely shared and informed everyone why change was needed and what this change would involve.

Staff were keen to develop their practice and were very much involved in the evaluation process. There were regular team meetings where all staff were supported to reflect on the service provided, evaluate learning opportunities and resources available. They could also share any feedback or suggestions they might have about the service during the regular visits to the nursery by the headteacher or the principal teacher. Staff felt listened to and their contributions valued by the management.

The service highlighted the importance of involving children and parents in the evaluation process. Involving children and their families meaningfully in the continuous improvement of the service contributed to them feeling included. Parents confirmed that they were encouraged to give any feedback or suggestions they might have. They felt that the staff and headteacher listened to them and took account of their feedback. One parent stated "The nursery staff are very supportive and responsive. The head and principle teacher also very active and prioritise practical needs and caring of the children to ensure health and well-being of children is priority".

Regular communication with families took place through a variety of methods including email, online platforms, questionnaires and face to face discussion. Parents were also very welcome to spend time in the nursery. The service used parental feedback to develop experiences for children. This helped to promote a shared partnership in the delivery of high quality care for children.

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.

4.3 Staff deployment

The staff were skilled, dedicated and nurturing. They were enthusiastic and motivated to provide a positive experience for the children in their care. Staff were respectful and very supportive of each other. They were very warm, caring and sensitive in their approach and demonstrated positive team working which promoted a happy and secure environment for children. They were responsive and respectful of children during interactions and play which supported children to feel safe and secure. Staff told us they felt well supported and enjoyed being part of the team.

Children experienced continuity of care as staff deployed themselves effectively to ensure high quality experiences throughout the day. They were flexible in their deployment, which supported children to lead their play and engage in free flow opportunities whilst remaining safe. Staff worked very well together as a team and their differing skills and knowledge complemented one another and resulted in quality interactions with children. They communicated well with each other and worked together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. Transitions were seamless and well planned, with children being comfortable about what was happening next. Children were encouraged to feel included, respected and valued as they understood the routines of the day.

The staff knew the children and their families very well and worked to ensure every family was welcomed and valued. Parents appreciated having the opportunity to visit the nursery and see round. Staff had regular communication with parents and had established positive, trusting relationships which enhanced children's experiences and promoted a partnership approach.

Having good communication with families contributed to parents feeling included in their child's learning at nursery and assisted staff when identifying how best to meet children's needs. Parents were all very positive in their comments about staff, their approachability and their commitment to provide a positive and fun experience for every child who attended nursery. Comments made included "open and friendly staff", "great relationship with the children", "the staff very clearly care and work hard", "they communicate well and ask for feedback". Staff in turn acknowledged the level of support the service received from the families.

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

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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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