Balloch Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Culloden Road
Balloch
Inverness
IV2 7HQ

Telephone: 01463 790287

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 October 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017174

About the service

Balloch Primary School Nursery is operated by The Highland Council and is based in the grounds of Balloch Primary School, Inverness. Balloch Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a day care service to a maximum of 46 children from the age of 3 years to those not yet attending primary school. A maximum of 20 children in the smaller room and 26 children in the larger room.

The accommodation provided is within two main rooms with direct access to a spacious outdoor play area. The outdoor play area contains a range of loose parts and open ended resources which extend and enrich the children's imaginative play and learning experiences.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection visit which took place on 9 and 10 October 2024. 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;
- reviewed email communication from parents and carers;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefited from warm and nurturing care from the staff team.
- Positive, trusting attachments had been formed between the children and staff.
- Children were happy, confident and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
- Children enjoyed a lovely calming mealtime experience.
- The views of children and families were actively sought to inform the development of the service.
- Effective staff deployment supported positive 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?	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? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support
The staff provided a very good service to promote positive outcomes for all children and had a lot of knowledge and understanding of the individual care needs of each of the children. Staff were kind, caring and very nurturing in their approach. Children experienced warm, nurturing and caring approaches from staff which supported their overall wellbeing. Children were given praise, reassurance and physical comfort when they needed it and this supported them to feel settled and secure. One parent commented: "staff are excellent I am regularly updated about my child's day and the staff know the children really well".

Effective personal planning supported children to meet their potential. Staff spoke knowledgably and confidently about children's individual care needs and what they did to support them. We saw staff responding throughout the day, offering kindness, reassurance and cuddles. As a result, individual children experienced care and support that was right for them. Staff were proactive in seeking additional support when children needed it, working with other professionals such as the speech and language therapist to identify appropriate strategies and support. As a result, children received the care and support that was right for them.

Mealtimes was a lovely, calm and positive experience in the nursery. The management team and staff had been working on improving lunchtimes as a key improvement area. They had introduced some positive changes to support children's different needs and levels of independence. The options for snack and lunch took account of current nutritional guidance as well as any allergies or dietary needs children attending may have. This was a relaxing part of the day and we saw the staff sitting with the children and chatting to them to create a positive social experience. This helped the children to feel included and support speech and language development.

Medication was stored securely and administered in line with best practice. We found that staff and management knew their responsibility regarding safe medication administration. This helped keep children safe.

Staff understood their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe and protected from harm. They could confidently tell us how they would respond if they had any child protection concerns. This contributed to keeping children safe.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and Learning
Children were engaged in their play throughout the session. We saw children chatting and laughing as they took part in a wide range of activities, including messy play, painting, role play and arts and crafts. Play experiences provided challenge and fun and supported children to develop language, creativity and numeracy skills. For example, some children were making different shapes and textures from playdough. As a result of this responsive approach by staff, children were able to develop lifelong skills, feel valued and secure.

Opportunities for emerging language, literacy and numeracy were naturally woven into daily experiences. Children were supported to develop their language and numeracy skills through conversations

with the staff team. For example, children were having fun counting down numbers during an activity with a member of staff as well as engaging in story time in the cosy corner. They were all highly engaged in this activity that supported them to develop their numeracy, literacy and emotional skills. This experience contributed to children understanding the importance of recognising and reproducing words, which also builds children's vocabulary and communication skills.

Personal learning journals were in place for all children which captured some of their achievements and progress. These contained observations and photographs demonstrating children's breadth of learning experiences. The service had identified this as an area for improvement. Staff were currently being supported by the local authority to develop their skills in writing quality observations. This is to ensure the information supports planning of
relevant play and learning experiences. This would enable provision of activities tailored to the needs and abilities of individual children and support them to be successful learners.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to their own and wider communities. These included trips to the woodland area, local park and natural spaces. This supported children to feel part of their community.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2:2: Children experience high quality facilities
Children experienced a welcoming and homely nursery with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. It was a clean, tidy and well-maintained space for children to play, learn and relax in. Children had direct access to the outdoor garden space, giving them good opportunities for free flow play between indoors and outdoors. The service had not long introduced a free flow from the two playrooms. It was clearly seen that children benefited from this significantly and were seen as confident moving between the rooms throughout the day.

Children's safety, emotional security and wellbeing were supported through sensitive arrangements for rest and relaxation. Staff supported children in the quiet area which they currently developed where children enjoyed stories and relaxed on the soft seating and cushions. The quiet area provided a space for children to rest and read stories, if required.

Staff recognised the benefits of outdoor play and provided children with good opportunities to be outside. Children told us that they enjoyed playing outside which promoted physical energetic play to keep them active and healthy. We saw nice interactions between staff and children, with staff responsive to the individual needs of each child. For example, children were happily engaged in the water play in the garden. This experience provided opportunities to promote mathematical thinking, imagination and creativity.

Arrangements for security within the setting were well considered. Following the last inspection the service has now moved the security exit button up to a higher level so children cannot access this. Staff monitored the children throughout the day as well as pick up time while in the cloakroom. This helped keep children safe and secure in the service.

Infection prevention control procedures followed best practice guidance. Children were supported to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before snack and mealtimes. The setting was kept clean and tidy which contributed to reducing the potential spread of infection.

Children's personal information was stored securely in a lockable cabinet and any digital information was password sensitive. This ensured families' privacy and confidentiality.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well
Children benefitted from a management and staff team who were committed to providing a quality service. This resulted in a shared vision for the development of the service. Staff were enthusiastic as they worked together to enable change. They demonstrated the awareness of the importance of self evaluation to support the delivery of high quality care and learning tailored towards children and families and will continue to encourage parents to contribute to improve the service.

Management and staff had plans in place to involve children, families and staff to ensure everyone was included and had a shared understanding. Staff have started to demonstrate the awareness of the importance of self evaluation to support the delivery of high quality care and learning tailored towards children and families. This was seen on their daily floor books and staff were keen to continue this while encouraging parents to contribute to continually improve the service.

Quality assurance processes had been developed to support the continuous improvement of the service. Families had some opportunities to become involved in the development of the service through questionnaires. A quality assurance calendar was in place and had identified priorities to support developments. The staff team were reflective and carried out regular evaluations of the service using appropriate best practice documents as well self evaluating block play training that they recently attended. This approach supported them to identify and take forward any areas for improvement. It was evident within the service that areas for improvement were being taken forward to improve outcomes and experiences for children.

Quality assurance processes, such as regular monitoring and self-evaluation ensured any issues were identified and plans for this were on the management QA calendar. The management team worked alongside staff to role-model good practice and reflect on the environment, children's experiences, and staff practice. This ensured positive outcomes for children and families.

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.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment
Staff communicated very well across the team and worked together to support children's individual planned experiences and preferences. Staff empowered children to reach their full potential, to achieve, grow and

belong in their community. As a result, we could see children felt safe, secure and nurtured through positive and responsive relationships.

Staff knew children well and secure relationships between them had been established. We witnessed children being supported by staff in ways which were appropriate to meet their needs. This meant that children felt safe, secure and happy in a service where a caring staff team nurtured and supported them. Busier times of the day, such as pickups/drops off were well managed. Staff were fully aware of the measures in place to keep children safe at these times.

A shared approach by the staff team ensured children and families were supported to achieve their potential. Strong connections with staff meant children and families felt confident and relaxed in the service. The care and support they received had a positive impact on their overall wellbeing. Parents told us about the positive aspects of the staff in the service which included, 'The adults are very kind and friendly, there's lots to play with and they help me learn'. Another parent commented, ' A warm welcome to children and families every day, always met with a smile'.

Regular meetings gave staff opportunities to talk about individual children's needs and self evaluating the service. Staff reflected together on training undertaken and evaluated how it could be used to impact positively on outcomes for children. This was clearly seen in the environment where staff developed the cosy areas and introduced a free flow from the two nursery rooms. This resulted in a positive ethos across the team, which supported children to reach their full potential.

Staff had clear roles, were flexible and moved with children dependant on their interests and needs, for example, when children wanted to go outdoors and members of staff went out with them. Staff placed themselves thoughtfully during busier times to ensure all children's individual needs were well considered. As a result, children benefitted from a very calm and positive experience.

Effective arrangements were in place in the event of absence, with staff and management within the setting providing support. This meant that children and families experienced continuity and consistency of care. Staff breaks were well planned to ensure that children were supported at key times of the day.

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

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