Bualnaluib Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Aultbea
Achnasheen
IV22 2JH

Telephone: 01445 731 254

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
3 May 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017180

About the service

Bualnaluib Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary. The nursery is operated by The Highland Council and operates term time only. The head teacher is the registered manager of the nursery.

The service is provided from premises in the rural village of Aultbea in Wester Ross. The nursery premises consists of a large dedicated playroom, kitchen, reception, toilet and storage facilities. Entry to the premises is secure. The children have access to an enclosed outside play area which is used on a daily basis, weather permitting. The service also makes use of resources in the local community on a regular basis, including the adjacent play park.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 3 May 2023. The Care Inspectorate has a duty to provide assurance and protection for people who use services, their families and the wider public. 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 feedback provided by parents and carers
- spoke with 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 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?	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

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. Children received nurturing care and support from kind, caring and friendly staff who knew them extremely well. Staff valued children's voice and sensitively listened to their requests, which told us that their views and opinions mattered. Children were effectively supported through well timed and thoughtful interactions, which contributed to their sense of security and promoted their overall wellbeing. We observed staff who skilfully provided reassurance, praised children and offered cuddles and love when needed. They had high aspirations for the children they cared for. This resulted in children that had formed strong and trusting relationships with staff, which developed their sense of worth and enabled them to thrive.

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.

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. 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. The manager and staff discussed the continued development of the snack and lunchtime experiences.

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 pit, using tweezers to find different sized 'worms' in some compost and taking part in water play.

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 wide 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.

Language, literacy and numeracy were naturally incorporated into most play areas within the nursery. Children's vocabulary and communication skills were being promoted and they were gaining confidence and making progress. They 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. For example, staff used open-ended questions and provocation to support children at the water play to explore mathematical concepts around height, speed and time. At the 'worm' activity, staff effectively supported children to explore numbers, length and colour.

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 naturally engaged effectively with children, showed interest and supported their interests and curiosities which extended 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. Families were meaningfully engaged in their child's play, learning and development. Staff ensured that parents were well informed of children's learning, progression and next steps and were encouraged to give their feedback. Weekly updates and photographs were posted on the online platform and shared with parents. These updates were very much appreciated by parents. In response to parental feedback, children continued to have their own learning journey folders which they all took pride in. The folders were routinely shared with parents who added their comments.

Staff empowered children to be successful and lead their own play and learning. This was demonstrated in the large floor books which were used 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.

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. There was a wealth of interesting resources and real life experiences which were well 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 outdoor play area supported children to develop their gross and fine motor skills as well as explore risky play. 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.

The development of the outdoor space was an ongoing project which was very much led by the children and their interests and ideas. Families were also invited to give their ideas and suggestions as to how they would like to see the garden developed.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths taken together outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant impact on children's experiences.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There had been some changes to the management team for the nursery. The current manager was a temporary acting head. The main priority for the manager was the wellbeing of children and staff and they acknowledged that they had yet to start carrying out formal quality assurance and improvement planning tasks. However, they were a regular visitor to the service to see the children and routinely meet with staff to discuss the ongoing development of the service.

The manager and staff fully engaged in the inspection process, demonstrated their commitment to the service and were motivated to make improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children. To help with the improvement agenda, the manager and staff should continue to use best practice guidance and may find the bitesize sessions about self-evaluation in the Care Inspectorate Hub beneficial. This will support reflective practice and
enable continuous improvement as staff develop confidence in evaluation

We discussed with the manager the importance of using self evaluation tools robustly and routinely to support the ongoing improvement of the service. More formal monitoring and auditing should be carried out to support evaluation and drive forward improvement.

Routine auditing should include detailed audits of accident and incidents to minimise risk, regular audits of the administration of medication records to ensure policy and procedures are being followed, and the regular audit of personal plans to ensure children's wellbeing and individual needs are known and being supported. Monitoring of the nursery, including the environment and staff practice should continue to evolve with a focus on improvements and enhancing outcomes for children (see area for improvement 1).

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 and promoted a shared partnership. Parents confirmed that they were encouraged to give any feedback or suggestions they might have. They felt that the staff listened to them and took account of their feedback. We were able to see examples of where the service had invited parents to give their comments and suggestions, including the ongoing development of the outdoor space.

Areas for improvement

1. To support service improvement, the manager and staff should continue to develop robust and routine quality assurance systems to ensure that the quality of the service is monitored and assessed effectively.

This should include, but is not limited to:

a) have an effective quality assurance calendar in place which informs the monitoring of all areas of the service to embed quality

b) monitor staff practice and provide staff with constructive feedback to support them in meeting children's needs

c) carry out regular and effective monitoring and auditing of records and personal plans to ensure detailed and relevant information is gathered to support children's needs

d) ensure children and their parents and carers are encouraged and supported to provide feedback which is used to inform the improvement of the service

e) encourage all staff to be actively involved in the ongoing self evaluation and improvement of the service.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provide and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality theme as very good.

4.3 Staff deployment

The staff were skilled, dedicated and nurturing. They were motivated and committed to providing a happy and supportive environment for children. 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 where children were encouraged to lead their own play and learning. They were responsive and respectful of children during interactions and play which supported children to feel safe, secure and happy.

Staff worked well together as a team and their differing skills and knowledge complemented one another and resulted in quality interactions with children. Children experienced continuity of care as staff deployed themselves effectively to ensure quality experiences. Deployment of staff across the setting and throughout the day supported children to lead their play and engage in free flow opportunities whilst remaining safe.

Staff communicated extremely well with each other and worked together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. They communicated sensitively with each other should a task take them away from their duties, for example when they had to support children with personal care and accessing toilet facilities. 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 well and secure relationships between them were evident in the kind and compassionate interactions we observed. Staff had regular communication with parents and had established positive 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 experiences at nursery and assisted staff when identifying how best to meet children's needs. Parents were very positive in their comments about staff, their friendliness and how welcoming they were to both the children and their 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

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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