Dornoch Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Dornoch Primary School
Evelix Road
Dornoch
IV25 3HR

Telephone: 01862 812 901

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 February 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017201

About the service

Dornoch Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 44 children at any one time aged three years to an age to attend primary school. The nursery is attached to Dornoch Primary School. The deputy head teacher for the Dornoch Campus manages the nursery. The nursery operates term-time only.

The nursery premises consist of two playrooms, one with a kitchen area, reception area and toilet facilities. The playroom opens directly onto an enclosed outdoor play area. The school grounds and gym hall are also used for energetic physical play.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 February 2024, between 8.45am and 4.00pm. 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 seven children using the service;
- reviewed feedback received from seven families;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents; and
- spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Children benefited from nurturing care and support which contributed to them feeling safe and secure.
- Staff were responsive to children's interests, supporting their developing skills.
- The environment was designed to offer ample space for children to play and learn in.
- Effective quality assurance and self-evaluation processes were leading to improved outcomes for children and their families.
- Staff deployment ensured consistency of care 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?	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? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support

Staff supported children's care and learning routines with kindness and compassion which contributed to the development of strong and trusting relationships. Staff were very responsive to children's individual needs by offering reassurance, praise and physical comfort to children when needed. This supported children to feel safe, confident, and secure within the nursery environment.

Personal planning information was effectively used to support children's overall wellbeing. Parents and carers were regularly involved in updating children's personal information with staff, which ensured continuity of care routines and development. Staff recorded strategies in place to support children with specific needs . We observed staff using strategies to support children, for example, explaining what was happening next to a child, to prepare them for transition. Staff spoke with confidence about the care needs of children. As a result, all children received well-planned care and support to meet their individual needs.

Snack was a calm, sociable and relaxed experienced for children. Staff were sitting with children, supporting them as they self-selected dishes and cutlery, and prepared their own snack. Staff also used this opportunity to develop close attachments, and support children's developing language skills. Food choices at snack and lunchtime were nutritious and children had access to fresh water throughout the day to support hydration.

Children's lunchtime experience, including the transition to lunch, had been an area of development since the previous inspection. Children now benefited from a gradual transition to lunch, with children continuing to play while others were getting ready to go to the lunch hall. Staff communicated clearly with each other during this time to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. The atmosphere in the lunch hall was calm and relaxed. Children had some opportunities to take responsibility which supported them to develop key life skills.

Children were able to rest and relax in cosy, comfortable spaces. Staff understood the importance of sleep and rest for children's overall wellbeing. Some children made use of these spaces when they felt tired or overwhelmed, which supported their emotional security.

Staff worked closely with other professionals to identify appropriate strategies to support children's development, such as, speech and language therapists, and social work. We spoke with a visiting professional on the day of inspection, who told us that staff were supporting children, and their families, by using the strategies put in place. This meant that children were being supported to reach their potential.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children were actively leading their play, benefiting from long periods free from interruptions. They were having fun as they explored and experimented with the range of resources on offer, enjoying play experiences that developed a wide range of skills. Staff offered individualised support to children during their play, being aware of when to engage and when to step back.

Staff used skilled interactions to support children's developing numeracy and language, and communication skills. For example, staff introduced mathematical language, such as more and less, taller or shorter to children's block play, encouraging children to contrast and compare sizes and amounts. They labelled items and added descriptive words, using the opportunity provided by play materials to introduce new words. This supported children's developing vocabulary. We discussed with the manger and staff, adding a wider variety of books, throughout the setting, to encourage children's connection to their play and real life experiences.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests, and continued to be an area of development. Staff were developing floor books recording children's interests which showed how interests were extended and developed. Alongside a balance of intentional planning, this contributed to children developing a broad range of skills.

Overall, staff had a good understanding of child development and how children learn. They used this knowledge to identify when children needed additional support, such as in language and communication, implementing appropriate strategies to support children to progress. They had undertaken additional training in quality interactions and were using this to support quality play and learning experiences . However, written observations of children's individual learning were inconsistent, often descriptive rather than about the skills being developed. The service had identified the need to continue to build staff confidence in observations, and identifying and planning next steps in learning for children to ensure they are sufficiently challenged at an appropriate level.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

There was ample indoor space for staff and children to move freely. The addition of another playroom offered free flow play between two playrooms. Both playrooms were clean and tidy, offering plenty of natural light. Some consideration had been given to adding homely items, such as plants and soft furnishings, which was beginning to create a more homely feel to the environment. The service should continue to develop the indoor environment, to create a warm and welcoming space for children.

Children benefited from spaces and resources that reflected their interests. They were confident to move resources around the playroom, for example, adding mathematical resources to the home kitchen area, sorting items into different bowls. The recent addition of large block play resources was providing children with increased opportunities to develop their problem solving and creativity skills.

Children made regular use of the outdoor environment, both in the nursery garden and the wider school grounds. Staff recognised the importance of physical exercise in supporting children's overall health and wellbeing, and in the development of gross motor skills. Areas to climb, run and explore provided opportunities for children to have fun and develop their movement and coordination skills.

Staff were working together to ensure children were safely accounted for at all times. The use of two way radios strengthened communication between staff in different areas of the setting. This supported staff to move between areas, and contributed to keeping children safe while not compromising their experiences.

Effective arrangements were in place to ensure children and families' personal information was stored securely. Paperwork was stored within a locked filling cabinet in the office areas. This ensured confidentiality was maintained, and complied with best practice guidance.

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The setting's visions, values and aims had been reviewed to reflect the setting, with parents and carers invited to give feedback. This supported a shared vision for the setting and meant that parents and carers knew what they could expect for their children.

Since the last inspection on 23 March 2023, the management team had been developing nursery improvement planning in response to feedback, which was resulting in positive changes for children and their families. Effective quality assurance measures were driving forward improvement. The management team were undertaking regular audits and observations of children's experiences, learning journeys and personal planning. Areas for continued improvement had been identified and action plans developed.

Regular team meetings gave staff the opportunity to come together to reflect and discuss individual children's needs, also to identify the strengths and areas for development within the service. Staff were reflecting on their practice and self-evaluating against national guidance, such as 'How good is our early learning and childcare' and 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged children'. As a result, children were experiencing quality care and support based on current thinking and best practice.

Staff received regular support and supervision from the management team. This enabled them to discuss wellbeing, identify priorities for training, and receive feedback. Staff told us they felt supported by the management team. This further enhanced positive relationships.

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The setting was staffed appropriately to meet children's needs. Since the previous inspection, additional staffing had been put in place. This contributed to staff being able to offer children the right care and support, at the right time.

Children were cared for by staff who were warm, compassionate and nurturing. Staff provided individualised support by effectively engaging with children throughout the inspection. They demonstrated an awareness of when and how to effectively intervene, anticipating children's needs, as they knew them well. Parents commented, "The warmth, compassion and kindness of all the staff within ELC, they have been incredibly supportive and flexible meeting my child's needs" and "I cannot praise the staff enough. They are kind, capable and supportive". This resulted in children who felt respected within the service.

Staff were skilled, dedicated and nurturing. They were motivated and committed to providing a happy and supportive environment for children. Staff were respectful and supportive of each other. They were warm, caring and sensitive in their approach and demonstrated positive team working. This promoted a happy and secure environment where children were encouraged to lead their own play and learning.

Staff worked well as a team and their differing skills and knowledge complemented one another, resulting in quality interactions with children. For the majority of the time, staff were positioned well within the nursery, ensuring children were supervised and supported. Staff communicated extremely well with each other, the use of two way radios throughout the setting had strengthened communication. As a result, children benefited from effective supervision and quality engagement across the day.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 2 June 2023, the provider must ensure that children are effectively supported by staff who have the right skills and qualities. They must, as a minimum:

a) review the skill mix of staff across the setting

b) review and make appropriate changes to staff deployment to improve experiences for children.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14).

This requirement was made on 23 March 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

The provider had reviewed staffing across the setting, and additional staff had been recruited. The management team had reviewed staff deployment throughout the setting to consider the mix of skills, experience and knowledge throughout the setting. As a result, the setting was staffed appropriately to meet children's needs. This requirement has been met.

Met - within timescales

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To effectively meet children's individual needs and support their wellbeing, development and progress, children's personal plans should be further developed and streamlined. This should include but is not limited to:

- ensuring information is accessible to staff and can be clearly shared;
- plans being reviewed and updated as children's needs, challenges and achievements change, or at least every six months in line with legislation; and
- all staff being knowledgeable about each child's health and wellbeing needs and that tailored care and support strategies are provided and used effectively to meet those needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices" (HSCS 1.15) and "My care and support meets my needs and is right for me" (HSCS 1.19).

This area for improvement was made on 23 March 2023.

Action taken since then

Personal planning information contained relevant and current information to support staff to provide the right care and support for children. Information was updated regularly with parents, at a minimum, every six months. Staff had access to the relevant information, and demonstrated a good understanding of children's individual needs and how to meet them. This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's wellbeing, the provider, manager and staff should review and improve the mealtime experiences. This should include but is not limited to:

- reviewing the transition to lunch; and
- reviewing the delivery of food provision and implementing changes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible" (HSCS 1.35).

This area for improvement was made on 23 March 2023.

Action taken since then

The transition to lunch had been reviewed, and adapted, to ensure a smoother transition for children. Children went to the lunch hall in small groups, with staff ensuring disruption to children's play was kept to a minimum.

Delivery of lunch remained in the school canteen, however, the timing of children arriving meant that the lunch hall was calm and quiet. Children were served promptly. Familiar staff were available to support children, who benefited from a positive social experience. This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure staff access training appropriate to their role, and apply their training in practice. This should include, but is not limited to, training in child-led play, effective interactions and child-led planning .

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes." (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 23 March 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff had received training relevant to their role, including quality interactions and child led planning. This had led to children experiencing positive interactions and being supported to follow their interests. The management team and staff were continuing to evaluate approaches to observation and assessment, identifying where improvements could still be made. This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To enable all children to be cared for in an appropriate environment that meets their needs and supports them to reach their full potential, the manager and staff should review the environment. This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring all children experience an environment that is welcoming, well-furnished, comfortable and homely.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment and can use a comfortable area with soft furnishings to relax" (HSCS 5.6).

This area for improvement was made on 23 March 2023.

Action taken since then

Steps had been taken to make the environment feel more welcoming and comfortable. Children had comfortable areas to rest and relax in and some homely decorations had been added. Some additional loose parts and natural resources had been added, supporting children's developing imagination and problem solving skills. The service was committed to continuing to review resources and make changes. This area for improvement has been met.

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?	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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