Marybank Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Marybank Primary School
Ord Road
Marybank
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Telephone: 01997 433 320

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 June 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003017242

About the service

Marybank Primary School Nursery is situated in the small, rural village of Marybank within the Ross and Cromarty area of the Highlands.

The nursery is located in a de-mountable building in the grounds of Marybank Primary School. Accommodation comprises of a shared reception area, large bright playroom, kitchen, walk in storage area and toilet provision. There is a playground and school garden area that the nursery shares with the school.

The service is provided by Highland Council and managed by the primary school head teacher. It is registered to provide a childcare service to 17 children from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 31 May 2023. 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 and two of their families;
- reviewed questionnaire feedback from five families;
- reviewed questionnaire feedback from two staff;
- spoke with three staff and management;
- observed practice and children's experiences; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff.
- Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their own play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned play experiences.
- The service had identified the need to develop planning processes further.
- The continuous provision indoors had been well considered to include a variety of open ended and natural resources, enabling children to explore opportunities which promoted their curiosity and imagination.
- Children benefitted from free-flow play between the indoor and outdoor area which enabled them to have choice, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy.
- Families commented positively about communication with the service.
- Effective systems were in place to quality assure and monitor the work of the service.
- The staff team worked very well together to ensure 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 key question 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

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff throughout the session. We observed staff sensitively listening and responding to children at appropriate times, offering comfort and reassurance when needed. This supported children's well-being and helped them to feel secure, valued and loved. When children needed support with personal care, interactions throughout were warm and responsive and nurtured children's security, confidence and positive relationships with staff.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. This was carried out in collaboration with families and partners to promote consistency and continuity in care. Staff spoke confidently and knowledgeably about the individual care needs of children and effectively implemented strategies to support their development and progress. For example, appropriate strategies had been identified and put in place to support children with managing transitions and change. As a result, all children received well-planned care and support to meet their individual needs.

Snack time was a positive, relaxing, and sociable time for children where they were provided with a range of opportunities to develop their independence. Children helped to prepare and serve the snack fruit items, they spread their own crumpet toppings, poured their own milk and water and cleared away and cleaned their own plates and dishes. As a result, children had opportunities to take responsibility and learn key life skills. Staff sat with children which provided opportunities to promote close attachments and develop their language skills. Food choices at snack and lunchtime were nutritious and children had access to fresh water throughout the day to support hydration. However, at lunchtime the environment did not always support opportunities for children to take responsibility and be independent. We discussed with the management team how they could further develop the lunchtime experience to be more nurturing and homely and offer more opportunities for children to develop their independence skills, for example serving their own meal accompaniments (see area for improvement 1). We signposted the Care Inspectorate best practice note: 'Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC)' to support the service with their review of their lunchtime experience.

Medication was stored appropriately and delivered in a safe and sensitive manner for children when required. Appropriate information was recorded which ensured it was administered in line with best practice guidance. Staff were knowledgeable about children's medical needs and could confidently share how they would support children in an emergency situation. This supported children's overall health, well-being and safety.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their own play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned experiences which offered opportunities for them to investigate and be creative. For example, the outdoor space was a popular area for children to play and we observed periods of sustained, purposeful play where children used loose parts to create imaginary role play experiences. This enabled children to be creative and solve problems together which enriched their play and learning.

Children were engaged in their play and learning throughout the day and play experiences promoted children's curiosity, enquiry and creativity. Staff scaffolded learning experiences, supporting children's development in language, literacy and numeracy. For example, during small world play staff extended children's interactions with new words and vocabulary which related to their home and life experiences. Outdoors, staff encouraged children to explore size, perspective and shape through their movements and through the use of loose parts such as hula hoops, ribbons and cylindrical tubes. As a result, children were supported to develop key language, literacy and numeracy skills through play.

Staff used sensitive and well timed interactions to support children's learning and development. We observed staff using a range of communication techniques to support children at different developmental stages. These included using open questions to extend play and learning as well as modelling new language to support other children. This enabled children to widen their skills and consolidate their learning through play.

Planning approaches within the nursery were child centred and responsive to the children's interests. Children's words, pictures and ideas were captured within floor books which demonstrated their involvement in the planning process. However, the recording of key learning and meaningful next steps for children was not yet consistent across all planning information. The staff had recently implemented a new approach to planning and profiling children's learning. Staff commented this was working well and felt it was more responsive to the children's needs. Some families commented that this new approach to planning provided them with more opportunities to understand what their children were learning and contribute comments and ideas to promote their child's development. One parent commented: "Folders are sent home every month which is wonderful for us parents to see, to keep updated on my child's learning and time in the nursery. I have noticed that the teachers are very good at helping with things that are being worked on at home. Anything I write in the comments always seems to be worked on in the following month. I think it's wonderful that the teachers are taking on board what parents are saying and helping and supporting them with different aspects of their life.". This supported families to be valued and respected as partners in their children's learning.

Observations of children's individual development and learning were recorded and regularly shared with families through profile folders. Most observations highlighted children's learning through the early level curriculum and included some next steps for development. The service had identified the need to build staff confidence in identifying and planning next steps in learning for children to ensure they are sufficiently challenged at an appropriate level.

Areas for improvement

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

a) promoting opportunities for developing children's independence; and
b) reviewing and improving the lunchtime environment.

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); and
'I take part in daily routines, such as setting up activities and mealtimes, if this is what I want.' (HSCS 2.21).

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The indoor nursery play space was homely, calming and comfortable, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. This provided a welcoming space for children and families. As part of their ongoing improvement work, the staff team had used best practice guidance to carefully consider the experiences and spaces available within the indoor learning environment. As a result, the playroom was set out in a manner which enabled children to access resources easily and lead their own play. This demonstrated the value of children's ownership and autonomy within the service and gave a strong message to children that they matter.

Within the indoor space, children had access to resources that were clean, well-presented, and encouraged exploration, enquiry and fun. The continuous provision indoors had been well considered to include a wide variety of open ended and natural resources, enabling children to explore opportunities which promoted their curiosity and imagination. For example, the construction area provided a variety of opportunities for children to build, create structures and test out their ideas using blocks and loose parts. One area of the nursery contained resources and provocations to extend children's interest in small animal life cycles. Children confidently talked about their learning in this area explaining in detail about caterpillars and their transformation into butterflies. Children commented: "they turned into butterflies", "wings look like a rainbow" and "we released one". As a result, children were engaged in play experiences within an environment which reflected their interest and curiosities.

Children benefitted from free-flow play between the indoor and outdoor area. This enabled children to have choice, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Children had access to a range of loose parts including, crates, plastic pipes and sticks which they used to support imaginary play experiences. In the outside space there were opportunities for children to take part in more physical play experiences. Areas to climb, run and explore provided opportunities for children to have fun and develop their movement and coordination skills.

There were cosy and quiet areas for children to rest and relax which supported their emotional needs. Staff and children also used these areas for reading and sharing stories together. We observed nurturing attachments between staff and children during these experiences. This supported children's language development as well as their sense of well-being within the nursery.

The system in place for nappy changing did not support effective infection prevention and control or children's dignity. Nappy changing took place on a mat on the floor within a designated nappy changing cubicle. This space was also used for storage of resources which impacted the ability for the area to be effectively cleaned. This had the potential to increase the risk of the spread of infection and does not currently meet best practice guidance reflected in 'Space to Grow' and 'Nappy changing facilities for early learning and childcare services: information to support improvement' (see area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children receiving personal care are effectively supported, the provider must, at a minimum ensure:

a) personal care routines promote children's dignity; and
b) effective infection prevention and control practices are in place.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected' (HSCS 1.4); and
'If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed' (HSCS 5.4).

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question 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

The manager recognised the need to review the current service vision, values and aims to reflect the aspirations of their children, families, partners and the wider community. This review had started to be implemented to help the service identify, and understand more fully, what is important for children and their families as the service moves forward.

The views of families were actively sought to support the development of the service. Through surveys and regular stay and play sessions, families have had the opportunity to contribute their ideas towards changes. For example, families have participated in the development of the vision, values and aims and provided feedback for the changes made to the indoor play space and the new planning approaches. Families spoke positively about communication with the service. One parented commented: "All teachers are very friendly and motivated. The head teacher always finds time to say hello to parents and children in the playground. Communication is very good, I enjoy receiving weekly emails to keep updated with everything going on within the school and nursery. My child seems happy and settled and enjoys her time at this setting.". We

found this promoted inclusion and allowed families regular opportunities to be involved and contribute towards change within the nursery.

Effective systems were in place to quality assure and monitor the work of the service. An improvement plan had been developed in collaboration with staff, which identified key areas for improvement, to ensure there was a shared vision and understanding of the identified areas for action. Some progress had been made in addressing actions within the improvement plan to support positive outcomes for children and families. For example, a review of the indoor environment supported staff to improve the quality, layout and availability of resources within the indoor spaces. This resulted in children having more choice, independence and opportunities for creative play within the nursery. As well as this, monitoring of children's profiles had identified the need to develop staff confidence in planning next steps in learning for children. The service had identified the need to further review the impact of the new planning approach to identify areas which are working well and areas which require further development. This supported a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement and promoted positive outcomes for children.

Effective self-evaluation processes supported the ongoing development of the service. Staff were familiar with current improvements and could describe the positive difference they were making for children and families. Planned improvements were realistic, with a focus on promoting positive outcomes for children and supported by best practice guidance. For example, changes made indoors to develop cosy spaces for children resulted in a nurturing, quiet area being created which provided more opportunities for children to rest and relax within the nursery. Changes to the resources indoors resulted in children being more confident and engaged in imaginary play within the setting. Staff had developed a self-evaluation floorbook to document their improvement journey and review aspects of practice. This floorbook included the views and feedback from children, staff and families which demonstrated the voice of all partners was valued and included within the improvement process.

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

The staff were caring and nurturing and committed to providing a positive experience for all children. They were warm and friendly in their approach which promoted a happy and inclusive environment where children could play and have fun. Families commented: "Friendly caring staff in a fantastic setting" and "We've only ever had positive things to say about the staff team" and "**** obviously loves it at Marybank Nursery, coming home every day with stories of what she's learnt or what she's been playing."

The service was appropriately staffed to meet adult-child ratios and the staff team worked well to ensure all areas of the service were appropriately supervised and supported. The staff team communicated well with each other when a task took them away from their designated area. They informed each other when leaving an area or when attending to a child's needs. The ethos between team members was positive and interactions between staff were kind and respectful. This helped to create a positive atmosphere for both staff and children to feel comfortable and secure in.

At lunchtime, staff breaks were well planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. Continuity of care for children was consistent throughout the day with minimal changes to staffing. This ensured positive transitions for children and very good communication with families at pick up and drop off times.

New staff had received an induction, which covered important information needed to care for children as well as important policies and procedures. Good practice guidance including 'Early Learning and Childcare - The National Induction Resource' was used to support staff who were new to the setting. Professional review and development meetings had taken place annually for all staff. These meetings provided opportunities to celebrate individual staff achievements and agree areas for future development. More experienced staff used their skills and expertise to provide helpful guidance to newer staff which contributed to a supportive and inclusive ethos and ensured children's needs were 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?	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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