Obsdale Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Obsdale Primary School
Obsdale Park
Alness
IV17 0TP

Telephone: 01349 882 860

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 August 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017253

About the service

Obsdale Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 32 children aged three years to not yet attending primary school at any one time. The nursery is operated by The Highland Council. The head teacher is the registered manager of the nursery. The service operates term time only.

Obsdale Primary School Nursery is situated in Ross and Cromarty and provides nursery care for the children of Alness. The newly erected standalone building is located in the grounds of Obsdale Primary School.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 and 25 August 2023. Feedback was provided on 28 August 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
- reviewed four online questionnaires from parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to support their wellbeing.
- Snack was a positive, relaxing and sociable time for children.
- Children benefited from a good range of open-ended, natural child-centred resources, enabling them to explore their creativity, imagination and problem solving skills.
- Planning approaches needed further development to support breadth and depth in children's learning.
- Some parents told us they would like more information on how their children were progressing.
- Children were offered developmentally appropriate play spaces, both indoors and outdoors.
- Continuous improvement was supported by good quality assurance systems.
- Staff were motivated and committed to providing a happy and supportive environment 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?	4 - 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 made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to support their wellbeing. Staff were proactive in supporting children with comfort and reassurance when needed which contributed to children feeling secure in their experience.

Staff knew children well and were responsive to their individual needs. Staff cuddled and comforted children to support transition and were quick to respond if a child became upset. Staff were very good at following cues from children and recognised when a child needed support. This resulted in strong relationships between children and staff. However, due to competing demands placed on staff, there were occasions when staff could not respond to individuals to consistently meet their needs at the right time.

Children's wellbeing was supported through personal planning which was reviewed regularly with families and children. Staff knew children well and were aware of their individual needs. They spoke knowledgably about the children, describing their individual characteristics and any sensitivities they may have had. We saw staff responding with kindness throughout the day. This contributed positively to children's self-esteem and sense of wellbeing. As a result, they were confident in approaching staff for help or reassurance.

The service had good links with outside agencies and worked effectively with them to provide responsive care and support. Children's health and wellbeing was well supported by staff who used identified strategies based on children's individual needs. This supported children to be included and contribute to nursery life.

Snack was a positive, relaxing and sociable time for children. Children were fully involved in the preparation and delivery of snack. For example, children were supported to serve their own food and drinks. This promoted children's independence and skills for life. Staff engaged in conversations with children during their snack experience which encouraged language and communication skills.

Mealtimes had been a key area for improvement within the service. They had worked hard to make changes to ensure lunchtime did not impact on children's play experiences. Children no longer had lunch in the playroom and ate in the school canteen. They were responsible for collecting their own plates and cutlery, which encouraged some opportunities for independence. The service should continue to review the lunchtime experience. Consideration should be given to creating a nurturing, family experience and improving the transition to and from the school canteen.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children received good quality play experiences which impacted positively on their health and wellbeing. They were well-supported to learn and develop through play. We saw them leading their own play experiences and independently selecting resources of their choice. They engaged meaningfully with the experiences offered to them. As a result, children presented as happy and confident individuals.

Staff understood their role in supporting children's development. Interactions between staff and children were carefully considered and were respectful of children's rights, wishes and choices. Staff confidently scaffolded their learning experiences, supporting children's development in language, literacy and numeracy. For example, whilst children were playing with loose parts staff developed their role play. This extended their interests, encouraging conversation and new vocabulary.

Staff facilitated opportunities for sharing stories with children. This supported children's enjoyment of literacy and the development of their talking and listening skills. A range of mark making resources, available indoors and outdoors, supported children to engage in early writing through their play experiences.

Children were offered good experiences to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning. For example, in the garden children enjoyed exploring in the mud kitchen, with real life resources. One child told us they were "making pasta." During water play, staff used effective questions, encouraging children to explore, test and develop ideas. This contributed to the development of specific language around pouring, measuring, volume and capacity.

Planning approaches did not yet support depth and breadth in children's learning. Additionally, the quality of learning observations within children's learning journeys were inconsistent. They did not always detail the individual learning or skills that were being developed. This made it difficult to track children's progress and identify where additional support or challenge was needed. Some parents told us they would like more information on how their children were progressing. The service was aware of this and had identified this as an area for improvement.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were offered developmentally appropriate play spaces, both indoors and outdoors. The playroom and outdoor garden space were well thought out to maximise children's play and learning experiences. Children benefited from a good range of open-ended, natural child-centred resources, enabling them to explore their creativity, imagination and problem solving skills. For example, children played with everyday items which sustained their interest for prolonged periods of time, contributing to the fun they had while playing and learning.

The indoor playroom was decorated in neutral colours which promoted a natural, calm environment. This fostered a welcoming atmosphere for the children. Positioning of furniture had been carefully considered to maximise the use of space and promote children's choice and independence. The addition of homely touches softened the environment, creating a more homely feel.

The service had developed effective systems to keep children safe. Staff had good knowledge and understanding of our SIMOA (safety, inspect, monitor, observe, act) keeping children safe campaign, and how this supported them to ensure children were accounted for at all times. Staff communicated well with each other regarding numbers of children and which area they had chosen to play in. This created a safe and secure environment where children could enjoy a variety of play experiences supported by effective staff practice.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager and staff promoted a shared vision for the nursery that reflected the needs of children, families, staff and wider community. They were approachable and had high aspirations for their children and families attending their service.

Continuous improvement was supported by good quality assurance systems. An improvement plan was in place with identified priorities to support the service's improvement agenda. Self-evaluation was effective with formal and informal monitoring taking place. Staff contributed effectively to the ongoing improvements within the nursery, as they were encouraged to critically review their own practice, identifying strengths and next steps. This demonstrated a reflective and considered approach to the development of the service.

Children's voices were valued in the service. Opportunities for children to share their ideas and influence their learning was part of daily experiences. Through observations of play and daily discussions, staff responded to children's interests and suggestions. Children were supported to share and record their ideas in floor books and mind maps. This resulted in children being empowered, valued and allowed them to drive change.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

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. This 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.

Overall, the deployment and levels of staff within the nursery were effective. For the majority of the time, a good staff to child ratio allowed staff to be responsive to individual needs. However, during busier times of the day, there were occasions when the staffing arrangements did not meet children's needs at the right time.

The differing skills and knowledge of staff complemented one another, resulting in good interactions with children. Staff positioned themselves well within the nursery and outdoor area, ensuring children were effectively supervised.

Staff communicated extremely well with each other and worked together to ensure quality engagement with children across the day. They communicated sensitively with each other when a task took them away from their duties.

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 ensure improved outcomes for children and families using the service, the provider should ensure robust quality assurance processes are developed and implemented. This should include, but is not limited to developing a shared vision which focusses on improvements and implementing effective self-evaluation processes.

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

This area for improvement was made on 23 August 2022.

Action taken since then

Quality assurance processes had been developed and implemented. This ensured aspects of the service were being reviewed and monitored in a focussed and meaningful way. We saw these to be outcome focussed and they detailed the impact they had for children. This meant that areas for improvement had been identified, shared with staff and actions taken to make positive changes to children's experiences. For example, the indoor environment. This resulted in improved outcomes for children.

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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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