Shieldaig Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Shieldaig Primary School
Shieldaig
STRATHCARRON
IV54 8XN

Telephone: 01520 755 269

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 January 2024

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003017264

About the service

Shieldaig Primary School Nursery is based within Shieldaig Primary School, in the village of Shieldaig within the Wester Ross area of the Highlands. The indoor nursery accommodation comprises of a small reception area and a main classroom with toilet and kitchen facilities. The children have access to the 'Rainbow Room' which is adjacent to the main playroom. Children also have access to an enclosed outdoor space and regularly access the school astro-pitch and outdoor play spaces as well as areas within the local woodland.

The service is provided by the Highland Council and registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 19 children at any one time aged from two years of age to an age to attend primary school of whom no more than five may be age two to three years.

Adult : Child ratios will be a minimum of :
2 years to under 3 years - 1:5
3 years and over - 1:8 if children attend more than 4 hours per day.

The manager is also the manager of Auchtertyre Primary School Nursery CS2003017168.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 January 2024 between 08:45 and 12:00 and 29 January 2024 between 09:00 and 13:30. 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 five children using the service and three of their families;
- reviewed online questionnaire feedback from two families;
- reviewed online questionnaire feedback from four staff;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff supported children's individual care and learning routines with kind and com-passionate interactions which contributed to the development of strong and trusting relationships.
- Play experiences provided opportunities to develop children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy.
- Opportunities for children's play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to the local community.
- Children benefited from regular outdoor play experiences which supported them to be active and healthy.
- The service had identified the need to develop aspects of the indoor and outdoor provision further.
- Families were actively involved in delivering learning opportunities within the nursery and supporting the development of the service.
- More formalised quality assurance processes had been introduced to support the development and improvement of the service.
- Effective staff deployment promoted 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

Staff supported children's individual care and learning routines with kind and compassionate interactions which contributed to the development of strong and trusting relationships. Practice by staff reflected the personal preferences of families and promoted children's independence. For example, the service worked closely with families when developing children's independence with toileting. All parents who responded to our survey strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: 'I am confident staff are nurturing and responsive to my child's needs'. As a result, children were well supported throughout their daily experiences.

Children's overall wellbeing was promoted through effective personal planning. This was carried out in collaboration with families and partners to promote consistency and continuity in care. One parent commented: "When issues with our son's development have appeared, the nursery staff have been quick to talk to us, and helpful in finding ways to better accommodate." Personal planning information contained relevant information and strategies which were used by staff to support the development needs of children. Staff spoke confidently and knowledgeably about the care needs of children and implemented strategies to support them. 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. For example, children helped to prepare and serve the snack fruit items, they spread their own rice cake topping, poured their own milk and cleared their own plates and dishes. As a result, children had opportunities to take responsibility and learn key life skills. At snack and lunchtimes, staff sat with children which provided opportunities to promote close attachments and develop their language skills. We discussed with the manager how they could further develop the lunch time experience to offer more opportunities for children to develop their independence skills, for example serving meal accompaniments and drinks. 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 the development of the lunchtime experience further.

Staff worked in partnership with outside professionals to improve outcomes for children when they needed additional help. Appropriate strategies had been identified and put in place to support children, for example with developing social skills and their communication and language. As a result, children were supported to reach their potential.

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 were fun and interesting and offered opportunities for children to investigate and be creative. For example, we observed staff responding to children's interest in cars by providing loose parts such as hollow blocks and planks of wood which children used to create ramps and pathways for vehicles. This encouraged children's exploration of forces and motion and provided opportunities for them to solve problems and work together.

Play experiences provided opportunities to develop children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Staff interactions helped to extend children's vocabulary. We observed staff explaining the meaning of unfamiliar words to children as well as adding information and ideas in conversations to develop their understanding of words further. Children were also encouraged to explore and sort objects by identifying and talking about characteristics such as shape and colour. As a result, children were supported to develop key language, literacy and numeracy skills through their play experiences.

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. The service were in the early stages of implementing 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. The service had identified the need to continue to reflect and review the new planning approach to ensure key learning and meaningful next steps for children are clear.

Observations of children's individual development and learning were recorded and shared with families through profile folders. All families who responded to our survey strongly agreed with the statement: 'I am fully involved and informed about my child's learning and development'. 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 continue to develop the consistency of observations in order to support the identification of children's progress and next steps.

Opportunities for children's play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to the local community. The nursery children took part in weekly play sessions with the local playgroup in the village hall. At planned times, grandparents and older members of the community joined these sessions which helped to strengthen intergenerational links within the community and support new children with their transition into the service. As well as this, children benefited from participating in Forest School sessions in the local woodland. They also took part in celebrations of learning through art, and other seasonal events and performances, with families in the village hall. As a result, children were supported to develop an understanding of their community, sense of place and develop skills for life.

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 nursery playroom was clean, bright and comfortable with plenty of natural light and ventilation. This provided a welcoming environment for both children and families. The nursery layout enabled children to access resources independently and provided ample space for exploration and play.

Within the indoor space, children had access to resources that encouraged exploration, enquiry and fun. The continuous provision indoors had been considered to include some open ended and natural resources, enabling children to explore opportunities which promoted their curiosity and imagination. We observed children following their own interests in the role play space using small tools to repair the kitchen area, make imaginary food and be creative. Children commented as they played: "I need a hammer." and "We're playing baby builders!" Children's individual interests had also been considered within the environment with one child's interest in complex jigsaws reflected in the resources and objects available for them to play

with. This supported children to feel engaged and included in the nursery space. The service had identified the need to develop aspects of the indoor provision further including improving spaces for children to rest and relax and the resources and materials available within other areas of the nursery to support the development of children's imaginative and creative play.

Children benefited 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 loose parts outdoors including, sand, water, plastic pipes and sticks which they used to support imaginary play experiences. Children commented as they played: "I'm making a lake.", "We need two lorry." and "Where the water go?". Outdoors there were opportunities for children to take part in more physical play experiences. Areas to climb, run and explore provided spaces for children to have fun and develop their movement and coordination skills. A recent period of windy weather had resulted in some damage to storage resources in the outdoor space and some parental comments received indicated that they would like to see the outdoor area tidied up. At the time of the inspection, new outdoor storage units had been ordered to replace damaged items and the service had started the process of tidying the outdoor area and removing damaged resources.

We were satisfied that the service had appropriate infection control procedures in place to support a safe environment for children and staff. During food preparation and serving, staff followed best practice guidance and carried out effective cleaning of tables before and after snack. We observed children being supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing at necessary times. This contributed to minimising risks of infection for both the staff team and children.

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 vision, values and aims of the service were shared in a joined up approach with the wider school community. The service values of, kindness, creativity, initiative and resilience, had recently been updated with the views of children and staff included in this process. The manager was using the new service values to support the development of the curriculum and inform practice across the nursery and wider school community.

The views of families were actively sought to support the development of the service. Through questionnaires and informally at pick up and drop off times, families have had the opportunity to feedback ideas for change, which have included developing more varied food options at lunchtime. As a result, children have access to an improved choice of lunches. Families have been actively involved in delivering learning opportunities within the nursery through Forest School sessions and Art week. They have also provided time and resources to support the development of the outdoor space and fundraised to facilitate nursery trips. All families who responded to our survey strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: 'My child and I are involved in a meaningful way to help develop this setting and our ideas and suggestions are used to influence change'. We found this promoted inclusion and allowed families regular opportunities to be involved and contribute towards change within the nursery.

The current manager had been in post for just over four months and had begun to take forward and develop a more formalised approach to quality assurance and improvement planning. Quality assurance processes had been established to ensure aspects of the service such as reviewing personal planning information and moderating of children's learning were carried out and routinely monitored. The nursery were included as part of the whole school improvement planning process which identified key areas for change. Current priorities included developing planning and assessment approaches. This supported a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement and promoted positive outcomes for children.

Regular staff meetings and visits to nursery from the management team were supporting effective self-evaluation. The service had used best practice guidance to implement changes and review aspects of provision together which had included implementing refreshed approaches to planning children's learning. The manager and staff team were in the early stages of reviewing progress made in this area and additional time would be necessary to evaluate the impact of the changes more fully.

The staff team worked well together, and staff welcomed feedback and suggestions for improvement. Staff were encouraged to be part of the service development, contribute ideas, reflect on practice together and take part in relevant professional learning opportunities. For example, one staff member was undertaking a series of professional learning sessions to strengthen their skills, implementing best practice guidance 'Realising the Ambition'. As a result, the staff member reported increased confidence when planning to support children's development and progress. This demonstrated the commitment of staff to the ongoing development of the service and improving outcomes for children.

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. One parent commented: "Nursery in Shieldaig is relaxed, informal and has a lovely warm atmosphere. My little girl skips in every morning and looks forward to seeing her friends, but the staff especially."

The service was appropriately staffed to meet adult-child ratios and the staff team worked together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. For example, the staff team communicated well when a task took them away from a specific area or the needs of children changed. 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.

Arrangements for unplanned absence were supported by effective systems to ensure children's needs were met. For example, the service tried to use members of the existing staff team for supply work to ensure consistency in care and minimise disruption to children's routines. Clear personal plans and other key information was available to all staff. This ensured that staff working in the service understood the needs of individual children and how to support them.

New staff had received an induction, which covered important information needed to care for children as well as important policies and procedures. Staff commented that they felt supported in their role and enjoyed working in the nursery. Staff development reviews were conducted in a collaborative way and were linked to the service priorities as well as the personal development goals of staff. 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	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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