Whalsay School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Whalsay School
Symbister
Whalsay
Shetland
ZE2 9AQ

Telephone: 01595 743 800

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 May 2024

Service provided by:
Shetland Islands Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003051773

HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

About the service

Whalsay School Nursery is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children at any one time, aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is provided from a purpose-built unit within the grounds of Whalsay primary and secondary school. Located in Symbister, Whalsay, an island off the east coast of mainland Shetland. The children have direct access from the playroom to an enclosed outdoor play area and are close to the local shop, leisure centre and play park.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 May 2024 between 08:30 and 15:45 and 28 May 2024 between 09:15 and 10:30.

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

- Spent time with children using the service and spoke to three of their parents/carers
- Received 11 responses to our request for feedback from parents via MS Forms
- Spoke with staff and management
- Received four responses to our request for feedback from staff via MS Forms
- Observed practice and children's experiences
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

• Children were supported with kindness, care, and nurturing approaches that supported their overall wellbeing.

• Children were having fun leading their own play and learning.

• Children experienced an environment which was comfortable and promoted independence.

• Staff valued the contribution of families and recognised the importance of them being involved in their child's learning.

• Management and staff should continue to develop and embed self-evaluation and quality assurance systems, which inform the service improvement plan.

• Staff were well deployed and worked well together to meet children's needs.

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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind and compassionate care. Staff interactions were nurturing, respectful and responsive to children's individual needs and preferences. This supported children's wellbeing and helped them to develop positive relationships. One child told us, "I love playing with my friends and teachers." A parent commented, "Staff are very friendly, reassuring and approachable." As a result, children were happy and settled.

Children and their families were warmly welcomed, helping to build positive and trusting relationships. Parents were kept informed through discussion at drop-off and pick-up times, regular meetings, emails and the online learning blog. This supported working together and a continuity of care. Families commented positively about the care their children received. One parent told us, "Nursery feels like a little family," and another said, "The staff know our child well."

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. Plans included information on children's needs and how these would be met. Families were included in developing and reviewing these to ensure information was current and relevant. Staff had a good knowledge of children's plans, sought advice from professionals and welcomed multi-agency working. This meant children received individualised care and support.

Children's privacy and dignity was supported during personal care. This included promoting independence during visits to the toilet and providing encouragement and reassurance when children needed changed.

Children enjoyed snack and mealtimes which were relaxed and unhurried. There were opportunities to develop their independence and life skills through involvement in the preparation and serving of their food. Children's choice and preferences were respected by allowing children to choose where they sat. Staff promoted a nurturing social experience by sitting with children and promoting conversation. This enabled opportunities for language development and ensured children were supported well and kept safe when eating.

Children's safety was promoted through staff's understanding of their role in identifying, recording and reporting any safeguarding concerns. Staff attended regular child protection training and a policy was in place to further support staff in the processes should they identify a concern.

1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun as they participated in a variety of experiences which were developmentally appropriate and relevant to their interests. They had a sense of purpose as they busily played. This included dressing up in the role play area and cooking in the mud kitchen. One child told us, "I love making food." Parents commented positively on the range of play stating, "My child is always keen to tell me about their day at nursery" and "experiences are engaging and relevant."

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were naturally woven into daily experiences. For example, mathematical language was used as children and staff made playdough and counted items for snack. Early mark making and reading skills were promoted through the recognition of environmental print and books. Children enjoyed reading stories with staff in the comfortable and attractive reading area and when visiting the school library. The nursery rhyme pack lending library further supported family engagement and children's literacy and numeracy skills.

Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's interests. Children's comments, photos and ideas were captured within floorbooks along with possible lines of development. Children's observations and progression of learning were shared regularly with families through learning journals. These were developed in partnership with families and reflected children's experiences both at home and at nursery. The inclusion of Shetland dialect further enhanced children's sense of identity. This meant families felt valued and included in their child's learning and development.

Children were happy and relaxed in the daily nursery routines. They confidently explored the inviting play spaces available to them and benefitted from free flow indoor-outdoor play opportunities. This enabled children to run around, play games, and explore outside whilst providing others with opportunities for quieter play inside.

Meaningful links within the local community had been established and included visits to the local playpark, pond, school library and fire station. Children's recent interest in animals had been extended by a visit from some lambs. These types of visits enhanced children's experiences and promoted a sense of belonging within their local environment.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

Children benefitted from an environment that was well furnished, comfortable and homely. The layout of spaces had been well considered to meet children's needs and ensure they could move freely, encouraging independence and choice. Spaces were interesting and well resourced, promoting curiosity and creativity. Children had fun playing in the home corner and exploring the sensory experiences on offer. The addition of interesting real life resources, such as measuring scales, crockery and cookery books, helped sustain their play and extend their ideas.

Attractive displays within the environment showcased children's work, achievements and aspirations. As a result children felt valued and were able to share their learning with friends and family.

Cosy spaces were available across the setting which supported children's wellbeing. Comfortable seating, cushions, lamps and fairy lights created homely areas where children could play or rest during a busy nursery day.

Risk assessments were in place for the environment and resources. These identified possible hazards and how to reduce the level of risk to children. Children were encouraged to assess day to day risks contributing to their safety. For example, when riding bikes down the ramp outdoors and using tools at the woodworking bench. This supported their understanding of how to manage risk.

Children's safety was promoted by the secure entry system which was monitored by staff. Staff positioned themselves well and had a good awareness of where children were. This ensured children were effectively supervised during play. A system for reporting accidents and incidents was in place and shared with parents. These were audited to identify any areas of risk and any changes required to support a safe environment for children.

Children experienced an environment that was clean, which helped support their wellbeing. Staff and children washed hands at key times, such as before eating, which minimised the spread of infection. However, there were a few occasions where children did not wash their hands effectively. Staff should ensure appropriate systems are in place to supervise handwashing which would support children and help reduce the spread of infection.

Children's personal information was stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet and any digital information was password sensitive. This ensured families privacy and confidentiality.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

A shared vision, values and aims had been updated following consultation with children, families and staff. The vision was reflective of the needs and aspirations of children and families, supporting staff to get it right for them. This was displayed at the service entrance to ensure all visitors were aware.

Staff told us they felt very well supported by management who were knowledgeable and motivated to continually improving the service provided. Staff engaged in regular self-evaluation of their practice and improvement priorities through ongoing reflective discussions. They used guidance documents 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare' and 'A Quality Framework for the Daycare of Children, Childminding and School Aged Daycare.' This had supported them to identify further areas for development which supported reflection and ongoing improvement.

The manager and staff recognised the importance of consultation with children and their families to support improvement. Children's views were regularly sought through the use of floorbooks and discussion. Parental views were gathered using emails, questionnaires and opportunities at drop off and pick up for parents to come into the setting. This promoted children's rights and partnership working.

An improvement plan identified relevant areas for development following the previous inspection which included staff deployment and the environment. This was regularly reviewed and evaluated. Staff had worked hard to improve the indoor environment and were committed to developing their outdoor spaces with support from families. A positive ethos helped to ensure that staff were working towards the same goals and progress was clearly seen, contributing to improved experiences for children and families.

Quality assurance systems helped maintain and supported the delivery of good quality care for children. Regular audits were completed and included monitoring of the environment, mealtime experience, personal plans and learning observations. Management undertook some informal monitoring of staff practice. We discussed with management formalising this process and identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This has the potential to support with continued progress of the service.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

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

Staff were friendly, caring, kind and committed to their roles. They communicated respectfully, supporting each other when required. Staff interacted with children and each other in a respectful considerate manner. This promoted a relaxed and happy atmosphere for children to enjoy. Parents described staff as "calming, caring and professional" One parent commented, "Staff are very easy to speak to, I always feel at ease my child is in good hands."

The service continued to encounter staffing challenges and the staff team had experienced several changes since our last inspection. Staff were flexible to cover vacancies and meet the needs of the service by adapting their working hours and taking on additional responsibility. Clear roles and routines supported staff to know what was expected each day. Their flexible approach supported continuity of care and enabled them to deploy themselves effectively across all areas of the setting.

There were sufficient numbers of staff in place to meet the needs of children in attendance, with a mix of skills and experience across the team. Modelling of practice from management helped ensure children's experiences across the day were positive. Staff communicated and worked well together when utilising other parts of the school environment with groups of children or attending to tasks. This contributed towards children's safety as they were effectively supervised and offered a variety of experiences.

Staff were supported in their wellbeing from a caring leadership team. They were positive about the support they received, which included regular team and one to one meetings with management. This created a positive environment where staff wellbeing was well supported, contributing to good outcomes for children. One staff member commented, "I feel very supported by my colleagues and line manager while at work" and another shared, "We are friends as well as colleagues."

Staff had attended a variety of training to support their learning, development, and practice. We could see the impact of training emerging in the environment, interactions and play experiences offered to children. This included training on interactions which the manager advised was ongoing. We would encourage the team to continue to reflect on their practice and continuous professional development to support positive outcomes for children and their families.

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 children are supported to develop their play and learning, the manager should ensure staff understand their role within play.

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 area for improvement was made on 18 September 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff sat alongside children, supporting children to follow their own interests. They praised children's achievements, made play suggestions and helped them find resources they needed. Some staff used effective questioning to extend children's thinking, widen their skills and consolidate learning. Modelling of practice from management helped ensure children's experiences across the day were positive. Staff had attended training on interactions and the manager advised high quality interactions would be a continued area for development on the service improvement plan.

Therefore 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	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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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