Portree (Gaelic) Nursery
Day Care of Children

Bun Sgoil Ghaidhlig Phort Righ
Struan Road
Portree
IV51 9EG

Telephone: 01478 613 130

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 December 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
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CS2006136422

About the service

Portree (Gaelic) Nursery is located within Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Port-Righ in the town of Portree on the Isle of Skye. The nursery has its own separate entrance and reception area as well as two large playrooms each with their own kitchen facilities and shared toilet facilities. Both playrooms open directly onto a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

Portree (Gaelic) Nursery is registered to provide day care for up to 60 children aged three to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery provides Gaelic Medium Education for all of the children attending.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 4 December 2023 between 08:45 and 16:00 and 5 December 2023 between 08:45 and 12:30. 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 children using the service and six of their families;
- reviewed online questionnaire feedback from 25 families;
- reviewed online questionnaire feedback from nine staff;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Overall, children experienced warm, nurturing and caring approaches from staff which supported them to feel safe, happy and included.
- Staff had considered how to incorporate Gaelic language, literacy and numeracy into planned and spontaneous play experiences.
- Free-flow play between the indoor and outdoor areas enabled children to have choice, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy.
- Some spaces reflected children's interests and provided opportunities to promote children's curiosity and imagination.
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes supported the ongoing development of the service.
- The views of children and families were actively sought to inform the development of the service.
- Effective staff deployment supported 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

Overall, children experienced warm and caring approaches from staff which supported them to feel safe, happy and included. Children were given praise, reassurance and physical comfort when they needed it and this supported them to feel settled and secure. One parent commented: "This setting has been fantastic for both of my children. I have found staff to be incredibly friendly and nurturing to my child". Children's personal care needs were carried out in a respectful way and fostered opportunities for children to be independent. These experiences nurtured children's security, confidence and positive relationships with staff.

Children benefitted from quality snack and lunchtime experiences which promoted opportunities to develop their independence and skills for life. For example, children were involved in preparing snack, setting tables and clearing away dishes. They poured their own water and milk, served their own snack and meal accompaniments and had choice around where they sat as well as healthy and nutritious foods to eat. Staff had used best practice guidance to review their mealtime provision and implemented changes to improve experiences for children. This included developing aspects of the lunchtime environment to make the experience more nurturing for children. The addition of tablecloths and real crockery and cutlery supported a homely and relaxed atmosphere. At most snack and lunchtimes, staff sat and ate together with the children which provided opportunities to promote close attachments and develop their Gaelic language skills.

Children's 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 developing independence skills and following simple routines. As a result, children received well-planned care and support to meet their individual needs.

Staff worked in partnership with outside professionals to improve outcomes for children when they needed additional help. For example, multi-agency planning for some children identified strategies which were implemented to support them to develop their communication and understanding of their daily experiences. As a result, children were more fully included within the nursery environment and 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 play experiences, which were interesting and offered opportunities for children 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, and in other spaces, staff built learning around children's interest in freezing water and melting ice. This enabled children to be creative and solve problems together which enriched their play and learning experiences.

Staff had considered how to incorporate Gaelic language, literacy and numeracy into planned and spontaneous play experiences. Developing children's use of oral Gaelic language had been identified by the service as an area for development. Staff used stories and songs to promote children's understanding of Gaelic language and recorded some of these to share with families. They created natural opportunities to develop and consolidate Gaelic language during day to day routines and play experiences by adding words and repeating key phrases to describe and clarify what was happening for children. As a result, children were gaining confidence understanding and using simple Gaelic words and phrases. We observed some children using blocks in the construction area to create structures. Staff scaffolded learning at these times by modelling new mathematical language to extend learning around measure. This supported children to learn new concepts at a pace which was right for them.

Learning within the nursery was provided through both intentional and responsive planning approaches which aimed to be child centred and follow the children's interests. Some of the 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 the planning information. The service had identified the need to continue to further reflect and review their planning approaches.

Observations of children's individual development and learning were recorded and regularly shared with families through profile folders and an online platform. Almost all families who responded to our survey strongly agreed or 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 build staff confidence in identifying and planning next steps in learning for children to ensure they are sufficiently challenged at an appropriate level.

Opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their community. The nursery had established regular visits to the local library to share and enjoy books and take part in Bookbug sessions. Links to local businesses had supported the development of the outdoor space and visits from the local Police and Ambulance service helped the children to learn more about the roles of people in the community and how to keep safe. The nursery had strong links with the school kitchen who had worked with the children to grow, harvest and eat their own vegetables. This supported children to understand more about where food comes from and how to make healthy food choices.

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 playrooms were homely, calming and comfortable, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. This provided welcoming spaces for children and families. The layout of the indoor spaces enabled children to access resources independently and lead their own play. This demonstrated the value of children's ownership and autonomy within the service.

There were cosy and quiet areas for children to rest and relax indoors and outdoors 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 Gaelic language development as well as their sense of well-being within the nursery.

Some spaces reflected children's interest and provided opportunities to promote children's curiosity and imagination. Indoors, we observed children having fun creating imaginary play experiences with small world animals and resources related to cold places. However, other areas of the indoor playroom were not as well resourced. For example, the home corner resources were limited and did not have enough objects to engage children in dramatic play. Children had some opportunities to engage with multi-sensory resources such as paint. However, there were limited opportunities for children to access sand, water, and materials to support arts and crafts which limited their choice, creativity and individual expression. Some loose parts were available in the indoor playrooms but many of these were presented in a manner where they were difficult for children to see and consequently were not used very often to support play (see area for improvement 1).

Children benefitted from free-flow play between the indoor and outdoor areas. This enabled children to have choice, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Outdoors, children had access to loose parts including, tyres, plastic pipes and wooden blocks which they used to support imaginary play experiences. In the outside space children took part in more physical play experiences. Areas to climb, run and explore offered children opportunities to have fun and develop their movement and coordination skills.

There were infection prevention and control procedures in place which supported a safe environment. For example, the service was clean and well maintained. 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.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to access well-resourced play areas and experiences which support and extend learning, the manager and staff should review the play and learning resources available to children indoors. This should include, but is not limited to developing the environment to include:

a) a range of resources which support children's imagination and curiosity which include loose parts and natural and open-ended play resources; and
b) a review of the core provision to ensure all areas are resourced to support children's play and learning needs.

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

'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.' (HSCS 2.27).

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 vision 'Ni clachan beaga tric, carn mor uaireigin' (little stones will often build a mighty cairn eventually) was evident in the strong approach to teamwork within the service, the opportunities for leadership and how the view of children, families and staff were valued and respected.

The views of families were actively sought to support the development of the service. Their views were gathered through surveys, during stay and play sessions and more informally at drop off and pick up times. There was also a range of opportunities for families to get involved in fundraising and community events and some families had provided resources to support the development of the provision outdoors. Families spoke positively about the leadership and communication within the service. Parents commented: "Well managed with plenty of opportunities to go in and through your child's work.", "The leadership is absolutely brilliant." and "Jennifer is so welcoming at the door and we see her every day. We can email the headteacher or deputy and get prompt responses. The communication is great.". Most 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 the 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 in the nursery. A few families commented they would like to receive more individual information about their child's day and we discussed this with the management team during the inspection.

Quality assurance processes were in place to ensure aspects of the service were routinely monitored. There was a quality assurance calendar in place which enabled monitoring of key aspects of the service such as regular personal planning reviews and medication audits. The nursery were part of the whole school improvement plan which identified key areas for change that included developing talking and listening and numeracy. We spoke to the manager about strengthening the inclusion of the nursery within the specific actions for measurable change within the improvement plan as this was not always clear. Aspects of monitoring were taking place which were supporting the identification of areas of development for staff. For example, monitoring of key learning observations highlighted areas of development for staff in identifying significant learning and next steps for children. This supported a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement and promoted positive outcomes for children.

Regular staff meetings were supporting self-evaluation processes. The service had used best practice guidance to implement changes and review aspects of provision together, which had included improving the outdoor space for play and learning, as well as the snack and lunchtime experiences for children. As a result, children's opportunities for quality outdoor play and mealtimes experiences had improved.

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 and reflect on their practice together. Some staff commented: "We have regular staff meetings where we discuss our planning and talk about our day to day work, this is attended by all staff and management and we regularly use this meeting for self-evaluation and looking at documents together." and "Jennifer, Flora and Shona are always available when we have questions or in need of any help. They work so well together and communicate everything to us on a daily basis". Opportunities to look outwards and reflect on practice with colleagues from other settings provided staff with valuable time for professional dialogue and peer support. 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. Parents said: "I can't praise the staff enough. My daughter feels safe and the updates on the Google Classroom are excellent as they give us a wee insight into their day.", "Each one of the SA staff are very approachable, friendly and accommodating. They take time to get to know the children and my son loves them all." and "I am extremely happy with the care and learning provided by Sgoil Araich at Bun Sgoil Ghaidhlig Phort Righ. The staff are helpful & caring. My child loves going and even asks to go at weekends and in the holidays!".

The service was appropriately staffed to meet adult-child ratios and the staff team worked 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.

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

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 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. 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. The senior early years practitioner and more established members of the staff team used their skills and expertise to provide helpful guidance to newly qualified 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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