Lochcarron Nursery
Day Care of Children

Lochcarron Primary School
Lochcarron
STRATHCARRON
IV54 8YS

Telephone: 01520 722 993

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 May 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2019376845

About the service

Lochcarron Primary School Nursery is situated in the small, rural village of Lochcarron within the Wester Ross area of the Highlands.

The nursery is located in a de-mountable building in the grounds of Lochcarron Primary School. Accommodation comprises of a large, bright playroom, kitchen and walk in storage area, toilet provision and a small, enclosed outdoor area. The nursery also has access to a large 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 care service to a maximum of 20 children aged two to those not yet attending primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 May 2023 from 09:00 until 16:15. 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;
- spoke with four staff and management;
- observed practice and children's experiences; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff.
- Play experiences promoted children's curiosity, enquiry and creativity.
- Planning approaches within the nursery were child centred and responsive to the children's interests.
- Children had access to outdoor play experiences throughout their day which supported them to be active and healthy.
- Effective quality assurance processes were supporting the ongoing improvement of the service.
- Regular staff meetings and visits to nursery from the manager and nursery support teacher supported effective self-evaluation.

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.

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 and offering comfort and reassurance when needed. This supported children's well-being and helped them to feel secure, valued and loved. Children's personal care needs were carried out in a respectful way and fostered opportunities for children to be independent. For example, children were supported to apply their own sun cream in a safe way. This contributed to daily experiences which nurtured children's security, confidence and positive relationships with staff.

Children's overall well-being was supported through effective personal planning for each child. 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, the strategies in place to support them and their next steps. As a result, all children received well-planned care and support to meet their individual needs.

Snack and lunchtime experiences provided some opportunities for children to be independent. For example, children had been involved in the planning of food choices for snack, they helped to prepare and serve the snack, fruit items and poured their own milk and water. As a result, children had opportunities to take responsibility and learn key life skills. Lunchtime was a sociable, relaxed and unhurried experience for children. Staff sat with children which provided opportunities to promote close attachments and develop their language skills. However, the lunch choice on the day did not reflect the information shared with families. No meal accompaniment was offered and some key food items, such as chicken and garlic bread, were missing from the main meal offering. This did not ensure that all food choices were available and had the potential to impact on children's nutrition and dietary needs (see area for improvement 1).

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 speech and language development. As a result, children were supported to reach their potential.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children's play and learning was carefully supported during the inspection. Children were able to participate in planned and spontaneous play experiences that were interesting and offered opportunities for children to investigate and be creative. For example, children were able to follow their interests outdoors. We observed children collecting, organising and sorting leaves, flowers, branches, grass and other natural materials. They used many of these materials to create a café where they prepared and served food to customers. Children commented as they played 'I made a unicorn cake' and 'flowers, leave and grass!'. These experiences successfully captured children's imagination and enriched their play and learning. Across the service, staff were responsive to the needs of children during play. This supported children to be empowered and lead their learning.

Children were engaged in their play and learning throughout the day. Staff scaffolded learning experiences, supporting children's development in language, literacy and numeracy. For example, staff provided containers and boxes to support children's interest in collecting leaves. They encouraged children to identify, explore, count and compare the shapes and sizes of these within a natural context. As a result, children were supported to progress and achieve their potential.

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. 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 should review and improve the lunchtime experience. This should include, but is not limited to:

a) ensuring lunchtime choices reflect the information shared with families; and
b) ensuring lunchtime choices are nutritionally balanced and meet children's dietary needs.

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

'I can choose suitably presented and healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables, and participate in menu planning.' (HSCS 1.33) and
'My meals meet my cultural and dietary needs, beliefs and preferences.' (HSCS 1.37).

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. Consideration had been given to the variety of activities and experiences on offer within the indoor space to stimulate the children's curiosity and imagination. Children benefited from cosy spaces to rest and relax which supported their overall well-being. A quiet space with soft furnishings and cushions was used by children to read books and rest. This gave the message to children that they mattered. The service had identified the need to develop the outdoor space adjacent to the nursery playroom to provide a wider range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for children.

Staff recognised the benefits of outdoor play and provided children with daily opportunities for free flow access between the indoor and outdoor nursery areas. This enabled children to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. 'Mini-mornings' two days per week provided children with access to the larger outdoor play space shared with the school. This outdoor area was an interesting and exciting space for children and provided a range of play opportunities to extend learning, follow interests and be immersed in nature. Outdoors, children had access to a selection of loose parts including, tarpaulin, bark chips and sticks. Children used the outdoor space with confidence and experienced enjoyment, challenge and fun using the wooden playground equipment. Areas to climb, run, scoot and balance also provided opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills.

Children benefitted from play experiences within a developmentally appropriate environment which promoted their curiosity and imagination. For example, staff provided plastic tarpaulin and various wheeled toys to support children's interest in exploring movement, speed and balance. Small world resources were added to the bark chip area to extend children's interests in digging and vehicles. Children commented as they played 'This be the roof' and 'Hi, hi digger!'. As a result, children were engaged in play experiences within an environment which reflected their interests and curiosities. The service had identified the need to review and develop the outside space further, including improving the upper garden area to make it a more inviting, engaging and purposeful space for children's play and learning.

We were satisfied that the service had appropriate infection control procedures in place to minimise the potential spread of infection. We observed children being supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing at necessary times.

Risk assessments were in place and implemented effectively by staff to ensure that the environment was safe for the children attending. For example, the outdoor space shared with the school and community was checked by staff before children could enter it. This ensured children experienced care in an environment which was safe.

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. For example, through termly questionnaires and regular stay and play sessions, families had the opportunity to feedback ideas for change. These ideas have included; developing opportunities for Gaelic language, having more information about children's experiences at lunchtimes and improving communication. Some of these suggestions have resulted in change within the service. For example, a private social media group was set up to improve communication with families and to share general updates and information about children's learning. We found this promoted inclusion and allowed families regular opportunities to be involved and share in their children's successes and achievements.

A collaborative approach towards self-evaluation and improvement was a priority for the management team. Regular staff meetings and visits to nursery from the nursery support teacher and manager supported self-evaluation. Time was provided for staff to come together, reflect on practice and be involved in the identification of areas for improvement and review progress in meeting these. For example, the staff team had worked collaboratively to review and improve planning approaches and quality interactions. This resulted in children being supported by adults who were more attuned to their needs and better skilled to provide developmentally appropriate care and learning experiences that offered challenge, fun and enjoyment.

Quality assurance processes were in place to ensure aspects of the service were routinely monitored. Since the last inspection, an improvement plan had been developed which identified key areas for change. Good progress had been made in addressing actions within the improvement plan to support positive outcomes for children and families. This included improving the continuous provision within the indoor play space and developing opportunities for family engagement with the service. Regular monitoring of staff practice linked to the service improvement priorities was being effectively implemented by the nursery support teacher. Monitoring of observations and planning as well as adult-child interactions had taken place. Constructive feedback was given to staff to highlight areas of strength and aspects of their practice which could be further developed. This supported a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement and promoted positive outcomes for children.

The responsibilities of managing and leading the service were shared in partnership between the manager and nursery support teacher. Staff spoke positively regarding the impact of the level of support received by the nursery support teacher. It is important, for the continued development of the service, that the provider ensures that the positive impact of the partnership approach by the management team is continued. This will enable improvements to be sustained and fully embedded.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

Children were supported throughout the day by staff who were caring, nurturing and who worked well together to support the children's needs. Staffing levels were observed to be good with sufficient numbers of staff to meet children's needs. 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 effective communication with families at pick up and drop of times.

The staff team communicated well with each other when a task took them away from their designated area. They informed each other when leaving the outside space 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.

The management team had effective induction procedures in place to support new staff members. Staff commented that they felt supported in their role and enjoyed working in the nursery. Professional development reviews were conducted in a collaborative way and were linked to the service areas for development as well as the personal development goals of staff. For example, staff members had recently taken part in professional learning around developing quality interactions with children. This resulted in the staff team gaining more confidence to extend and facilitate quality play experiences for children.

During some periods of the day, it was more challenging for nursery staff to supervise and support play and learning for children. For example, the school children joined the nursery for morning break. While children benefitted from this positive social experience, this made supervision of the nursery children more difficult for staff. The manager recognised the need to review the deployment of staff at these times to better meet children's needs.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 7 October 2022, the provider must ensure improved outcomes for children by implementing regular, effective, and robust systems of quality assurance. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

a) Regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented.

b) Regular and effective monitoring of staff practice and quality of children's play and learning experiences.

c) Staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self-evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service.

d) Clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service.

e) Staff, children, and families are consulted, and their feedback used to inform, plan and action improvements for the service.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19); and in order to comply with the - Regulation 3 Principles and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210). (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, SSI 2011/210.

This requirement was made on 19 May 2022.

Action taken on previous requirement

The staff team benefitted from effective support and supervision from the nursery management team. Annual appraisals and a further formalised support meeting had been implemented this session. These meetings provided opportunities for staff to discuss their practice, strengths and areas for development with the manager. New members of the team were supported through the service and local authority induction programme. This ensured that new staff were given the support they needed to effectively meet children's needs.

Regular monitoring of staff practice linked to the service improvement priorities was being effectively implemented by the nursery support teacher. Monitoring of observations and planning as well as adult-child interactions had taken place. Constructive feedback was given to staff to highlight areas of strength and aspects of their practice which could be further developed. 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 manager and nursery support teacher promoted effective self-evaluation. Staff reported they felt supported by the management team. They could talk confidently about the changes they had implemented around planning approaches and developing quality interactions and the positive impact this had on children's experiences.

The service had clear and effective plans in place to maintain and improve the work of the service. Good progress had been made in addressing actions within the improvement plan to support positive outcomes for children and families.

Opportunities to involve families in the development of the service had been taken forward. Families reported that the addition of the private social media group had improved communication. We discussed with the manager the importance of continuing to involve and use the feedback from families to support future improvement work.

Met - outwith timescales

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 support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure staff access training appropriate to their role, and apply their training in practice. This should include but is not limited to:

- Training in child led play
- Effective questioning, and high-quality interactions

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards 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 19 May 2022.

Action taken since then

Professional learning opportunities have been provided to staff to support the development of their skills, knowledge and understanding around responsive planning approaches which support child led play. The nursery support teacher has provided weekly input to review progress with the new planning approach, identify further development needs and support staff to sustain and embed the changes. As a result, children are experiencing more child led learning experiences and are more engaged in their play.

As part of the service development priorities for this session, staff have taken part in a series of training opportunities to develop high quality interactions to better support children's play and learning. Effective monitoring of practice has taken place to support staff to develop their confidence and skills using the 'Words Up' key messages to improve the quality of adult-child interactions. This has resulted in children's learning, wellbeing and development being better supported.

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
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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