Durness Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Durness Primary School
Durine
Durness
Lairg
IV27 4PN

Telephone: 01971 511 237

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 May 2023

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2019377766

About the service

Durness Primary School Nursery is located within the primary school building. The nursery has access to a large playroom with kitchen facilities and a smaller playroom/storage room. The children have lunch in the main school canteen along with the primary aged children. The playroom opens directly onto a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The children also have access to the bigger main school playground. Both areas offered good space and had a very good range of open-ended and natural resources. The children receive visits from the local ranger and enjoy going out into the local community and learning about the animals, insects, plants and sea creatures and how they can help to protect them.

The service has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since August 2020 and can provide a service to a maximum of 10 children aged from 2 years to not yet attending primary school at any one time.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 17 May 2023. The Care Inspectorate has a duty to provide assurance and protection for people who use services, their families and the wider public. 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 feedback provided by parents and carers
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing care and support.
- Children were happy and confident in the setting and the daily routines.
- Children benefitted from leading their own play and learning.
- The use of open-ended materials and real life resources could be extended further across the playroom to offer more creative learning and imaginative play experiences.
- Play opportunities outdoors supported children's curiosity, enquiry, and creativity.
- Quality assurance processes need to be embedded to secure sustained improvements across the service.
- At the time of the inspection, there was not a consistent staff team which impacted on the continuity of care 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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning? 3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality theme where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm and nurturing care from staff who were kind and caring and respected each child as an individual. We found children were content and happy and it was evident that they enjoyed being in the setting. As a small service, staff knew the children well and established trusting and respectful relationships with them. This contributed to children feeling safe and secure.

Following the previous inspection, a requirement was made in relation to personal plans. The service had actioned this requirement and there were now completed personal plans in place for each of the children. Parents had been actively involved in the developing their child's plan. Staff effectively used personal plans to enhance individualised care, support and learning opportunities. The permanent member of staff spoke confidently about what strategies they had identified and used to support the children.

The staff had established good working relationships with families and other professionals to support positive outcomes for children. There was daily informal communication and information sharing with families at drop-off and collection time, as well as online updates. The manager and staff had also reintroduced stay and play sessions. Good links with outside agencies had been established and staff worked with them to provide responsive care and support to children. Some children's health and wellbeing needs were supported by staff who used identified strategies based on children's individual needs

Children enjoyed calm, relaxed, unhurried mealtimes. Nursery children joined the primary school children and they all sat together to have lunch. They were able to have lunch at a pace which was right for them. Staff sat and ate with the children to encourage them to eat well and safely. Children were supported by staff who were focussed on their wellbeing as they ate. Children enjoyed sociable conversations with staff.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were able to have fun and experience a variety of play and learning opportunities throughout the session. Some of the children confidently led their own play, choosing from a variety of indoor and outdoor resources and activities which encouraged their creativity and imagination. Since the previous inspection, the manager and staff had reviewed the layout and resources available for the children. For example, there was a larger homely and cosy area where children could read books or just relax, there was greater use being made of loose parts and real life resources and resources were better organised and easier for children to access independently.

Following the previous inspection, an area for improvement was made in relation to children being given more opportunities to lead their own play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences, children's choice being promoted and their learning and development extended through skilful staff interactions. There was evidence of the service following a more responsive child led approach to planning which offered greater opportunities for spontaneous activities which reflected the children's interests and ideas. Parents stated that their children were able to lead their own play and described how this had positively impacted on their experiences, play and learning. We saw some staff effectively

extending and building on children's play and learning. However, we identified missed opportunities when skilled and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills, and promote development of imagination. Therefore, this area for improvement will remain in place. **(See area for improvement 1.)**

During the last inspection, we identified that only limited evaluation of children's progression and achievements was undertaken. Further develop was still needed to improve the quality of observations and how these were being used to plan appropriately to meet children's individual needs, show progression in learning, and identify next steps. The manager should support staff to develop their skills and understanding in relation to quality observations, monitoring and tracking children's learning, progression and achievements. This would support children to reach their potential in learning and development. **(See area for improvement 2.)**

Areas for improvement

1. To improve the quality of children's experiences, staff should ensure that children are meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences. Children's choice should be promoted and their learning and development extended through skilful staff interactions.

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 to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning, and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

2. To effectively deliver high quality play and learning experiences, the manager should support staff to access training appropriate to their role and apply the training to their practice. This should include but is not limited to:

a. how to complete meaningful high quality observations
b. reporting and recording children's progress
c. using best practice guidance to support high quality play experiences
d. using children's interests to plan experiences.

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

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from an environment that was welcoming, comfortable and homely. The service had created a quiet, cosy area which children could access to rest and relax, sleep and support their emotional development.

Ensuring a healthy and safe environment for the children was important to the manager and the staff team. There was a system to report any repairs and damaged items were promptly replaced. Infection prevention and control practices minimised the potential spread of infection. A secure entry system and close monitoring of visitors by staff contributed to children remaining safe.

During the previous inspection, a requirement was made to ensure that children experienced care in an appropriate and safe environment. In response to the requirement, staff had developed and completed appropriate risk assessments and had completed written records. Daily checks of the playroom were completed and the outdoor area was also checked before the children went out to play to ensure that all gates were securely shut. The children were included in completing risk assessments, safety checks and discussions around keeping themselves and their friends safe. Children were becoming responsible as they developed an awareness of how to keep themselves safe. The manager explained that the newest permanent member of staff would complete risk assessment training in the near future.

Following the previous inspection, an area for improvement had been made in relation to the development of the environment to to ensure that children are able to experience a high quality environment which was well resourced. The service had reviewed the layout of the play room, the outdoor play area and the range of resources available to the children. Staff had created a positive learning environment. We saw children who explored happily and were engaged in their play. Consideration had been given to the variety of activities and experiences on offer to spark the children's curiosity and imagination. Good use was being made of natural, real life and open-ended resources to extend children's learning and play experiences. The service had also created a quiet, cosy area where children could relax and spend time alone or with their friends.

There were some examples of opportunities and experiences to promote children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy, for example, children could access books in different areas of the playroom. However, the breadth and balance of resources did not sufficiently meet children's stages of development or encourage the development of these skills.

Children particularly enjoyed spending time outdoors where they were able to be independent, direct their own play, be active and healthy. Effective use of open-ended materials provided children with opportunities to develop their skills in understanding, investigation and problem-solving. Feedback from parents was positive in relation to the outdoor space. Parents appreciated their children having daily access to active play and physical exercise.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There were identified vision, values, and aims for the service which recognised the importance of the ongoing development of the service and the promotion of positive outcomes for children. The manager

promoted a positive approach to improvement and recognised the importance of including others in developing a shared vision.

There was an improvement plan in place for the North West Sutherland ELC Settings which included Durness Primary School Nursery. It identified the priority action points the manager and staff would be working on. These included helping to improve the leadership and management of the settings, helping staff with self-evaluation to improve the settings, and involving families in our settings more. The manager advised that not having a consistent staff team continued to negatively impact on the pace of change to meet the identified action points.

Involving children and their families meaningfully in the continuous improvement of the service contributed to them feeling included. Since the last inspection, the service had began to introduce more opportunities to share information with families and to actively seek their views to inform the development of the setting. The staff had built positive working relationships with families and provided regular communication opportunities through daily informal feedback and online platforms. Encouraging parents back into the nursery was a priority. Overall, parents were happy with the service their children experienced and the opportunities for play and learning.

Following the previous inspection, an area for improvement had been made in relation to developing robust and routine quality assurance systems to ensure that the quality of the service was monitored and assessed effectively. The manager and staff had continued to develop the quality assurance systems to ensure that the quality of the service was monitored and assessed effectively. However, they were not yet firmly embedded and leading to sustained improvements across the service. The area for improvement will therefore be continued. **(See area for improvement 1.)**

Areas for improvement

1. To support service improvement, management and staff should continue to develop robust and routine quality assurance systems to ensure that the quality of the service is monitored and assessed effectively.

This should include but is not limited to:

a)have an effective quality assurance calendar in place which informs the monitoring of all areas of the service to embed quality;
b)monitor staff practice and provide staff with constructive feedback to support them in meeting children's needs;
c)develop staff reflective practice and ensure staff undertake training to support children's outcomes;
d) carry out regular and effective monitoring and auditing of records and personal plans to ensure detailed and relevant information is gathered to support children's needs;
e)ensure children and their parents and carers are encouraged and supported to provide feedback which is used to inform the improvement of the service;
f) encourage all staff to be actively involved in the ongoing self evaluation and improvement of the service.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards that state: '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 has not been met and remains in place.

How good is our staff team? 3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

4.3 Staff deployment

Since the last inspection there had been a significant number of changes to the staff team which had had an adverse effect on staff deployment. This had led to children not always experiencing consistent care and the quality of play and learning the children experienced had also been impacted.

As part of the inspection process, parents were invited to provide feedback via a Microsoft forms questionnaire. Parents expressed their concerns in relation to staffing, the number of changes to the staff team and how this impacted on their children's experiences and continuity of care.

The manager acknowledged that again there was not a consistent nursery staff team which impacted on continuity of care and children's experiences and outcomes. They explained that having a consistent and qualified staff team had been difficult to achieve, in part due to the location of the service on the West coast. The manager advised that staffing ratios had been met but this had been challenging at times with staff flexibility and supply staff availability key to this being achieved. On occasions the manager was having to work directly with children to ensure that the service was sufficiently staffed to allow for it to operate safely.

Staff present on the day told us they enjoyed working in the service. They were caring and nurturing and were committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. They were warm and friendly which promoted a happy and secure environment where children felt valued, loved and secure. Staff were flexible in their approach and supported each other to work as a team to benefit children. Staff communicated well with each other to ensure effective supervision of the children for the majority of the day.

Staff supervised children to the best of their ability, however, the layout indoor and outdoors, routines of the day and needs of the children, meant that staff levels were not always enough to support high quality care. This impacted on opportunities for high quality interactions. For example, staff could not meaningfully be engaged with children's play as they had to respond to other tasks and needs of children.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 22 December 2022, the provider must ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

a) Ensure personal plans set out children's current needs and how they will be met.

b) Ensure all staff are aware of and understand the information within the personal plans and use this to effectively meet each child's needs.
c) Ensure personal plans are regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with parents.

This is to comply with Regulation 5(2)(b) and (c) (Personal plans) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices.' (HSCS 1.15)

This requirement was made on 18 November 2022.

Action taken on previous requirement
The service had fully actioned this requirement.

There were completed personal plans in place for each of the children. Parents had been actively involved in the developing and reviewing their child's plan. Staff effectively used personal plans to enhance individualised care, support and learning opportunities.

Met - within timescales

Requirement 2

By 11 November 2022, the provider must ensure that children experience care in an appropriate and safe environment. At a minimum, the provider must ensure that:

a) The outdoor play areas used are safe and secure.
b) Staff are confident and competent in assessing and addressing risks.
c) Risk assessments, including those for outings in the local community, are up-to-date and take account of children's individual needs.
d) Staff understand and effectively implement the risk assessments that are in place.

This is in order to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance the quality of my life' (HSCS 2.24); and 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19).

This requirement was made on 18 November 2022.

Action taken on previous requirement

In response to the requirement, staff had developed and completed appropriate risk assessments and had completed written records. Daily checks of the playroom were completed and the outdoor area was also checked before the children went out to play to ensure that all gates were securely shut. The children were included in completing risk assessments, safety checks and discussions around keeping themselves and their friends safe. Children were becoming responsible as they developed an awareness of how to keep themselves safe. The manager explained that the newest permanent member of staff would complete risk assessment training in the near future.

Met - within 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 improve the quality of children's experiences, staff should ensure that children are meaningfully involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences. Children's choice should be promoted and their learning and development extended through skilful staff interactions.

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 to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning, and creativity.' (HSCS 2.27)

This area for improvement was made on 18 November 2022.

Action taken since then

Since the last inspection, planning was more responsive and child led. Children were able to lead their own play and follow their ideas and interests. There were greater opportunities for spontaneous experiences.

We saw some staff effectively extending and building on children's play and learning. However, we identified missed opportunities when skilled and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills, and promote development of imagination.

This area for improvement has not been fully met and will therefore remain in place.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's creativity, play, and learning the manager and staff should review and develop the environment, both indoors and outdoors, to ensure that children are able to experience a high quality environment which is well resourced.

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 to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning, and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 18 November 2022.

Action taken since then

The service had reviewed the layout of the playroom, the outdoor play area and the range of resources available to the children. Staff had created a positive learning environment. We saw children who explored happily and were engaged in their play. Consideration had been given to the variety of activities and experiences on offer to spark the children's curiosity and imagination. Good use was being made of natural, real life and open-ended resources to extend children's learning and play experiences. The service had also created a quiet, cosy area where children could relax and spend time alone or with their friends.

The area for improvement had been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support service improvement, management and staff should continue to develop robust and routine quality assurance systems to ensure that the quality of the service is monitored and assessed effectively.

This should include but is not limited to:

a) have an effective quality assurance calendar in place which informs the monitoring of all areas of the service to embed quality;
b) monitor staff practice and provide staff with constructive feedback to support them in meeting children's needs;
c) develop staff reflective practice and ensure staff undertake training to support children's outcomes;
d) carry out regular and effective monitoring and auditing of records and personal plans to ensure detailed and relevant information is gathered to support children's needs;
e) ensure children and their parents and carers are encouraged and supported to provide feedback which is used to inform the improvement of the service;
f) encourage all staff to be actively involved in the ongoing self evaluation and improvement of the service.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards that state: '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 18 November 2022.

Action taken since then

Since the previous inspection, the manager and staff have continued to develop the quality assurance systems to ensure that the quality of the service is monitored and assessed effectively. However, they were not yet firmly embedded and leading to sustained improvements across the service.

Some aspects of the service continued to be reviewed and monitored in a focussed and meaningful way. For example, the indoor environment had been reviewed which resulted in improved outcomes for children. The manager continued to be a regular visitor to the nursery and met with staff. However, due to the ongoing staffing issues and staff's work patterns, it was not possible for all staff to meet together.

We discussed how more views could be gathered from the children and their families to assess progress with identified priorities and to inform future improvement plans, for example, inviting parents to give

feedback during stay and play sessions.

While we recognise that the service had made progress in this area, we still found gaps in key areas of practice covered by quality assurance. For example, formal monitoring of individual staff members and the service as a whole were yet to be fully implemented. The manager acknowledged the importance of continuing to develop and embed their quality assurance system and ensure it is having an impact on all areas of practice. This would contribute to improved outcomes for all.

This area for improvement has not been fully met and will therefore remain in place.

Previous area for improvement 4

To ensure positive outcomes for children, the provider should ensure effective staff training and development programmes are in place that reflect best practice guidance. This should include systems to provide induction and support to new and unqualified staff.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states 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 November 2022.

Action taken since then

The manager explained that there was a system in place to provide induction and support for new staff. This was confirmed by the staff we spoke with. Staff were being supported to identify training needs and access relevant training courses. Staff were also able to meet with staff in other nursery settings which offered an opportunity to share ideas and discuss the ongoing development of the service.

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?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate

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?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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