

Strontian Primary Nursery Class Day Care of Children

Ardnamurchan High School
Strontian
Acharacle
PH36 4JA

Telephone: 01967 402 363

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 September 2022

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2003015984

About the service

Strontian Primary Nursery Class is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 10 children not yet of an age to attend primary school at any one time, where no more than 5 children are aged 2 to under 3 years.

The nursery is part of the 3 - 18 year old campus located at Ardnamurchan High School at Strontian. The nursery consists of a large playroom, a smaller quiet room, kitchen, toilets and office. The playroom opened directly onto a fully enclosed outdoor play area which was very well used by the service. The children had access to the school polytunnel where they took part in gardening activities. They also routinely visited woodland next to the school campus where they took part in outdoor learning activities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 6th September 2022 between 11:00 and 16:45. 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 10 people using the service
- spoke with 4 staff and management
- reviewed feedback from parents
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced extremely warm, caring and nurturing support from staff.
- Children were all very happy and were engaged and having fun taking part in various activities both indoors and outdoors.
- Children choices were supported well through a balance of planned and spontaneous play experiences and resources.
- Positive relationships with families supported continuity of care and effective partnerships.
- There were very clear personal plans in place which reflected children's individual care and wellbeing needs.
- The indoor and outdoor environments were clean, bright and welcoming and of a high quality.
- Staff were highly motivated to provide a service of a very high standard.
- Staff were flexible and supported each other and worked well as a team.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very 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?

5 - Very Good

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

1.1 - Nurturing care & support

Children were very happy, settled and enjoyed their time at nursery. They experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. This contributed to children feeling safe and secure. Children had developed strong bonds with staff members. We saw staff being very nurturing, taking time to listen to and respond to children, and offering hugs, cuddles and reassurance when needed. Children felt secure, valued and loved.

To support children to be happy and confident, staff had effectively used personal plans to enhance individualised care, support and learning opportunities. Personal plans provided detailed information, including strategies and next steps to support individual children. This information was used consistently and effectively by staff. Staff knew the children's individual care and support needs, personalities and preferences very well. Activities and experiences were responsive and planned to meet the needs and interests of the individual children and young people.

There was a strong commitment to work in partnership with families when developing personal plans and support strategies. This ensured that children received the appropriate levels of care and support. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time as well as online updates. Parents were all very positive about levels of communication, information sharing and being involved in developing and reviewing their child's personal plan.

Children experienced a positive lunchtime experience which was very calm, relaxed and sociable. Children were encouraged to be independent and make choices. The children poured their own drinks, collected their own lunch, selected vegetables and cleared their own plates after lunch. Staff sat with the children. This promoted close attachments and supported early language and communication skills.

1.3 Play and Learning

All the children were engaged in their play. They were leading their play and learning throughout the day. They benefited from a high-quality play and learning environment, both indoors and outdoors. They were provided with play and learning opportunities that impacted positively on their development, health, wellbeing and happiness. For the majority of the time children benefitted from uninterrupted play allowing them to become absorbed and have fun. This increased children's happiness and engagement.

Children were supported to learn and develop through their play. Planning approaches were child led and responsive. Children experienced both spontaneous and planned opportunities. They were offered exciting, stimulating and interesting experiences which promoted curiosity, imagination and collaborative play. One parent commented 'I love how much care goes into planning so many engaging and imaginative activities for our little ones. The nursery is always clean and full of opportunity for adventure at every corner, and the activities indoors and outdoors change regularly which is fantastic. Many are activities are chosen to help build important skills too and my child feels safe and excited and has such a genuinely wonderful time'.

The children presented as happy, confident individuals. For example, we saw a group of children playing together indoors at the new Clevertouch screen while others played at the mud kitchen outdoors. Both activities were effectively and skilfully supported by staff to promote children's learning and develop skills in language, literacy and numeracy. The children's successes and achievements were recognised and celebrated, helping them develop a sense of pride, build resilience and support their self-esteem.

Staff completed quality observations and assessments which were used effectively to track children's development, progress and achievements. Children's learning and progression was recorded by staff and shared with families both via the child's digital profiles and during informal feedback at the end of the day. All parents were either very happy or happy with the quality of information they received about their child's day.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children and young people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a clean, bright and welcoming nursery. The playroom was comfortable and homely with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. Ensuring a healthy and safe environment for the children was a priority for 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. There were appropriate risk assessments in place which promoted the safety of the children as well as daily checks of the premises.

Children benefitted from access to a well-resourced and carefully set out indoor play space. 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 stimulate the children's curiosity and imagination. Children were able to independently select resources of their choice and lead their own play. We saw that some areas within the indoor play space had been set up to reflect the children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate materials, including open ended resources to support learning. Parents provided us with comments from their children about what they liked at nursery and what would make it better. They included:

'I love building little houses'.

'I like choosing what to do and it's always lots of fun'.

'I love hiding when I just want to be alone'.

'I love drawing and making'.

'Playing is best'.

'I love Mairi or Laura when they read to us, and I love lunchtime'.

'I think being dressed as a cat would make it better'.

'If there was a dressing up box, and if there were swings inside nursery - 20 swings!'

Children had opportunities to rest and relax in a safe, cosy area. This enabled children to seek out a calm area where they could have some individual time if needed. This supported children's emotional wellbeing. Staff and children also used this area for reading stories. We observed nurturing attachments between staff during these experiences. This contributed to children's vocabulary and language development. One parent commented that it would be beneficial if there was more capacity to support the younger children who

might still require a nap.

Children enjoyed free flow access between the indoor and outdoor area. This enabled them to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. Parents highlighted the quality of the outdoor learning environment. The outdoor area had been well thought out and offered children a stimulating space where they could comfortably engage with a variety of creative, open ended and natural resources and benefit from taking risk in their play. The outdoor space, supported children to develop their gross and fine motor skills.

The day of the inspection was warm and sunny and the children all enjoyed spending much of their time outdoors. They were fully engaged in a range of activities, either on their own or with their friends. Children were having fun playing imaginatively in the well resourced mud kitchen, playing hide and seek, reading books in the shelter or sitting on the ground painting. We observed children taking turns, sharing, cooperating, talking and negotiating. Staff supported children to direct their own play and activities in the way they chose.

The nursery children regularly visited the local woods and took part in outdoor learning activities with the younger primary pupils. This was very popular and involved the children learning about risk and problem-solving while still having lots of fun. They also had a plot in the school polytunnel and had taken part in various planting activities and learning about how to grow various vegetables and fruit. This promoted good discussion between the children and staff.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people, with very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There were clear visions, values and aims for the service which was shared by the manager, staff and the families. Children benefitted from a culture of continuous improvement. Effective policies, procedures and quality assurance processes were in place to support the development and improvement of the service. The manager and staff were all enthusiastic and committed to the ongoing development of the service to secure positive outcomes for the children.

Regular communication with families took place through a variety of methods, including email, online journals, 'Classdojo', telephone and face to face discussion. This helped to promote a shared partnership in the delivery of high quality care for children.

Consulting and listening to the children and their families was a priority for the manager and staff. They recognised the benefits of involving them in the ongoing evaluation process. Involving children and their families meaningfully in the continuous improvement of the service contributed to them feeling included. As well as being able to give daily informal feedback, families were also invited to give their views, comments and suggestions via online jam boards and questionnaires.

Staff were also very much involved in the evaluation process. They were supported to reflect on the service provided, evaluate learning opportunities and resources available. This resulted in children experiencing a rich learning environment which encouraged them to be creative and curious. There were weekly staff meetings and staff were able to give any feedback or suggestions they might have about the service and

outcomes for children.

The principal teacher who directly supported the nursery was very visible within the session, worked with staff and offered good levels of support. Effective communication and positive relationships between staff and the principal teacher and the manager meant all staff were kept informed about what was happening in the service. Staff felt they were very well supported and this contributed to them feeling confident and valued.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people, with very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good. and outcomes for children and young people.

4.3 Staff deployment

The staff were very caring and nurturing. They were enthusiastic and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. They were warm, friendly and sensitive in their approach and demonstrated positive team working which promoted a happy and secure environment for children. Staff respected children's rights, they encouraged children to have a voice and showed them that their views were valued and important.

Staff were appropriately deployed throughout the day which ensured they met the needs of children at the right time. Staff were flexible in their deployment which supported children to lead their play and engage in free flow opportunities whilst remaining safe. Staff worked well together as a team and their differing skills and knowledge complimented one another and resulted in quality interactions with children. They communicated well with each other and worked together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. For example, a staff member, accompanied by two children, explained to their colleague when they were leaving the playroom to collect the lunch from the school kitchen. Transitions were seamless and well planned with children being comfortable about what was happening next.

Building positive, trusting relationships with families was a priority for staff. They worked to ensure they had regular communication with parents and build positive relationships which enhanced children's experiences and promoted a partnership approach. Families were kept informed about the nursery and their children's experiences through daily conversations at drop off and collection times and regular online sharing of information and photographs. Having good communication with families contributed to parents feeling included in their child's experiences at nursery and assisted staff when identifying how best to meet children's needs.

Parents and carers who responded to our questionnaire were extremely positive about the staff, and feedback we received included:

'The staff are excellent.'

'These ladies are absolutely superb at what they do, and I am delighted that my child will most certainly benefit and thrive from such good quality care.'

'These ladies genuinely care about our children and it shows.'

'Strontian nursery staff are a credit and should be extremely proud for providing such a fantastic service.'

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

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1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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