

Firth Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Firth Primary School
Finstown
Orkney
KW17 2ES

Telephone: 01856 761 212

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 November 2022

Service provided by:
Orkney Islands Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001951

Service no:
CS2003016057

About the service

Firth Primary School Nursery is registered to provide an early learning and childcare service to a maximum of 30 children, not more than five of whom are under the age of three years. The age range of the children will be from two years to those not yet attending primary school.

Other conditions unique to the service include to comply with the following minimum staffing ratio:

- two to three years - one adult : five children
- three years and over - one adult : ten children

At all times, the number of suitably qualified and experienced staff will be sufficient to meet the needs of the children and shall not fall below the minimum ratio.

The manager is also the manager of Evie Primary School Nursery.

Firth nursery forms part of Firth Primary School, Finstown, Orkney. The nursery occupies two adjoining playrooms with integral toilets and a kitchen area. There is direct access to an enclosed outdoor area with a paved courtyard and storage/play shed and adjoining large grassed park. The nursery can also make use of the extensive school grounds and well equipped play park.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 2 November 2022. 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, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

We carried out this inspection following an incident where a child left the service unobserved by staff. The parents/carers of the child have been informed. As part of our inspection, we assessed the actions taken by the service which led to the incident and what they have done since.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with the children using the service
- contacted nine of their family
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were supported by kind and caring staff.
- Children's health and wellbeing was well supported through the use of effective personal planning.
- Children would benefit from changes to the lunch routines to ensure a positive experience in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.
- High quality play and learning was inconsistent to support children's progression and development.
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments were structured to support children's age and stage of development.
- Self evaluation and improvement plans were in place to support continuous improvement of the service.

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?	4 - Good

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

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were supported with kindness, care, and nurturing approaches. Staff were patient, calm, and good listeners who were responsive to the needs of the children. Children were well supported to follow nursery routines and received cuddles when they were upset. Parents told us they felt confident staff knew their children well and provided them with the care and support they needed.

Children and families had formed positive relationship with staff and felt welcomed and included in the setting. Parents told us they would feel confident in approaching staff if they had any concerns and one parent described staff as "exceptional" and "going above and beyond".

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. Parents provided key information about their personalities and interests, and staff demonstrated a good knowledge of the children. The service had worked collaboratively with other agencies to develop clear strategies to help meet the individual needs of children. Where necessary, individual risk assessments had been developed to help keep children safe and protected. This meant staff were well informed to provide children with the compassionate care needed to keep them feel safe, secure, and happy.

Children were encouraged to self serve and enjoyed chatting with staff and their friends during snack. Two children helped prepare the fruit and vegetables and benefited from the opportunity to be responsible and learn new skills. We discussed the potential for snack as a learning opportunity for literacy and numeracy development and staff agreed to consider ways to take this forward.

Children ate lunch in the school dining hall which was not conducive to their needs. Children were well supervised and staff helped children cut up their food, if needed. However, the dining hall looked uninviting and was very cold. Some portion sizes were too large for young children and we suggested ways to encourage children to self serve and eat more vegetables with their meal. During feedback the service agreed to review the procedures for lunch and to consider serving meals in the nursery playroom.

Children were able to choose to sleep and rest. One child accessed the sensory room within the school and experienced a calming and soothing environment. This helped them feel less overwhelmed and more able to cope in the playroom. Small inviting spaces had been created in the playroom for quiet and relaxing play and sleep mats were available to ensure children's comfort and safety. A few younger children would benefit from encouragement to rest and recuperate after lunch and we discussed ways to support this.

Children were kept safe and protected by knowledgeable and well trained staff. The safe administration of medication was well managed and safeguarding systems and procedures were followed to protect children from harm or abuse. Chronologies were used effectively to ensure children and their families were provided with they support and care they needed.

1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun and were happy and enthusiastic learners. Children could choose if they wanted to play inside or outside and were really proud to show us around their environment. We were invited to join their play and were served tea in the well resourced role play area. Some children were engaged in water play and had fun filling and pouring containers. Some children created a tower using wooden blocks which was not tidied away before lunch, enabling children to return and make changes to their design.

Children benefited from opportunities to play outdoors despite the inclement weather. This supported children's emotional health and promoted a calming and soothing atmosphere.

Children were happy and confident learners. Staff knew the children well and used their interests and life experiences when planning to meet their learning needs. However, some observations of the children at play were not always reflective of children's learning and next steps were not always appropriate to support their progression and development. This meant not all children experienced learning that was personalised or challenging for their age and stage of development (**see area for improvement 1**).

Daily routines did not support children's choice and group activities and tidy up times meant children were interrupted in their play and were less able to fully develop their ideas and thinking. A few children did not benefit from all-together group activities and were not engaged or learning. One parent told us they felt group time was unnecessary and did not benefit their child (**see area for improvement 1**).

Staff interactions were inconsistent to extend children's thinking and promote their creativity and curiosity. They were kind and enjoyed being with the children and most children had fun. However, children would benefit from more effective questioning and skilled interactions to help sustain their play and extend their ideas (**see area for improvement 1**).

Literacy and numeracy development was embedded in some play experiences. Children listened to stories and rhymes which supported early language and numeracy development. A variety of fiction and illustrative non-fiction books were attractively displayed and available for children to read independently. Number recognition and opportunities to measure were available through play using construction materials.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to achieve their full potential, the manager must ensure children experience high quality play, learning, and development opportunities.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) More effective use of observations of children to record and plan their progress and achievements.
- b) Fewer interruptions to children's play and learning.
- c) Ensuring staff are skilled and competent in using effective questioning and positive interactions to sustain children's play and extend their thinking.

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 have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation, and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling' (HSCS 1.30).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

The nursery looked attractive and was furnished to a high standard. We were advised new vinyl flooring was easier to clean and had improved the opportunities for safe messy and wet play. Since the previous inspection, new high-quality furniture had been purchased and used to help zone the learning environment. This promoted children's choice as well as creating a welcoming environment.

The service had been very proactive to ensure children were kept safe within the grounds of the school. A risk assessment had been completed to help identify any possible hazards and the Care Inspectorate campaign to keep children safe within the setting had been shared with staff. The service was waiting for new fences and interim measures were in place to keep children safe.

The play room was well set out with spaces for quiet play and other spaces for construction and messy play. There were loose parts and natural resources to support children's imaginative and creative play. The role play corner looked inviting with babies, dolls, and accessories to support children's learning through real life experiences. Children and fun pretend cooking and making tea. At times, the playroom looked very messy and we discussed encouraging children to tidy up and care for their environment.

Children had fun playing outdoors. There were opportunities to play in the sandpit and run around outside. The manager advised developing outdoor learning opportunities was ongoing and part of the nursery improvement plan.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

The service had undergone changes to the leadership team which had resulted in some instability within the setting. Children and families now benefitted from a stable staff team and parents spoke positively about their friendly and approachable manner. Staff told us there were improved team-working skills and a more positive ethos in the setting.

The visions, values, and aims of the service were under review. Whilst it was recognised some specific and focussed aims for the nursery would be beneficial, the shared vision and aims of the school and nursery supported staff and families to know what was important for the service to meet the needs of the children and families.

The importance of using views of parents, children, and other stakeholders to inform the planning and development of the service was recognised. Parents told us newsletters and emails helped keep them informed but they had not been asked to provide any formal feedback. To support an ethos of continuous improvement and working together, increased opportunities for parental involvement and accessing the nursery environment were planned.

Staff were encouraged to initiate well informed change and share responsibility for improvement. Training days provided opportunities for staff to collaborate with other services and share good practice. Guidance including 'How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare' and 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding, and school aged children', were used to identify what was working well and what needed to improve. This led to positive outcomes for children delivered by enthusiastic staff who felt valued for their contributions for change. Changes to positively impact on provision for children were detailed in the service improvement plan.

The manager had been supported in the quality assurance of the service by the early years team from Orkney Islands Council. Some aspects, such as monitoring staff practice, children's personal plans, and learning journals, were in the early stages of implementation. Regular audits of medication stored on the premises and accidents and incidents were in place to help keep children safe and well. We discussed developing a quality assurance calendar to help ensure ongoing continuous improvement.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

Children's care, wellbeing, and learning was supported by skilled and knowledgeable staff. Staff were encouraged to attend training relevant to their strengths and experience. For example, staff described the benefits of attending refresher training after returning to work after a period of absence. Staff demonstrated a good knowledge of safeguarding children and in infection prevention and control procedures.

Staff deployment worked well to supervise and keep children safe. There were enough staff to support children's choice of playing inside or outside and to provide individualised care, if needed. Children's care needs, wellbeing, and safety were well supported at key times during the day, for example at lunch. Further consideration should be given to the mix of staff skills and experience to ensure high quality play and learning at all times.

Children were supported by a team who worked well together. Good communication between staff members ensured children were still provided with the support they needed when staff were engaged in other activities. This meant children were effectively supervised and their care needs were well met.

Children's needs were well met by a familiar and consistent staff team.

Staff absences were well managed to support children's experience and ensure their wellbeing needs were met. Temporary staff were welcomed and supported by the existing staff team who shared their skills and experience.

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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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