

Summarised inspection findings

Tongue Primary School Nursery Class

The Highland Council

6 June 2023

Key contextual information

Tongue Primary School Nursery Class is situated within the grounds of Tongue Primary School, which is in Tongue on the northwest coast of Sutherland. Tongue Primary School and Nursery Class are part of the North Coast Campus. Tongue Nursery was established in 2020 and is registered for 14 children aged from two to five years. At the time of inspection there were no two-year-olds in attendance. The nursery is open term time and children attend Monday to Thursday 8.50 am to 3.25 pm and Friday 8.50 am to 12.30 pm. Staffing comprises of two full time early years practitioners and one part-time support worker. There have been challenges with recruitment and changes have taken place during the past few years. The expansion to 1140 hrs was introduced in 2020. The 0.5 depute headteacher (DHT) has overall responsibility for the nursery.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Tongue Nursery is an integral part of Tongue Primary School. Children in the nursery engage regularly in a range of shared experiences across the calendar year. The school and nursery are in the process of reviewing and refreshing their vision, values and aims. Staff have consulted with parents in the nursery to review and comment on a draft mission statement. Staff gathered children's views and will use this information to inform the overall vision, values and aims. Staff should ensure that the revised vision, values and aims are relevant and meaningful to all children.
- The recently developed team work well together to ensure they get it right for all children. They engage well in professional learning to improve their knowledge and skills. This is having a positive impact on outcomes for children. For example, increasing children's vocabulary through a language intervention. Practitioners share key information very effectively on their information board.
- The DHT has overall responsibility for the nursery. She meets regularly with the team to review individual children's needs, reflect on practice, and engage in professional dialogue. The DHT leads monthly staff meetings, which focus helpfully on the wellbeing of children and staff, alongside current issues, and future plans. Staff engage well in moderation and training across the joint campus, including visits to the neighbouring early years settings. They should continue to engage in moderation to support them review their practice and introduce well-considered change.
- The DHT oversees and monitors the quality of learning and teaching, guided by a detailed quality assurance calendar. The campus improvement plan has an identified priority for the nursery, which is relevant and meaningful. Senior leaders consult with staff to identify priorities for improvement. The nursery has also identified a specific Tongue priority, to which all staff contribute. Increased leadership roles for staff and children are an area for improvement

moving forward. This would allow staff and children to develop a sense of ownership and achievement as they lead specific areas and improvements.

- Staff engage in ongoing self-evaluation, which documents their reflections on current practice and next steps effectively. The DHT monitors and reviews this area of work regularly, to ensure areas identified are actioned. Staff should continue to engage in this approach and ensure the pace of change is appropriate and manageable.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- There is a warm, welcoming ethos in the nursery. As a result, children feel valued and secure. Relationships between staff and children are nurturing across the nursery. Staff respect children's voice and seek their thoughts and views throughout the day. Almost all children are caring and kind to each other and play well together.
- Most children lead and are engaged in their learning as they choose from the wide range of resources available. Staff have developed recently the indoor environment and should continue to review and reflect on the quantity and quality of resources available. They should continue to develop further the availability of loose parts and natural materials to promote children's curiosity and inquiry. Children have daily opportunities to be outdoors, which allow them to develop their resilience and independence well. Children engage very well in their outdoor environment, for example, building a bridge over the water to re-enact the Three Billy Goat's Gruff story.
- Staff continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Staff interactions are sensitive and supportive. As a result, all children are developing their confidence and self-esteem. Skilled questioning between staff and children extends learning well. Staff listen actively to children and allow them time and space to develop their learning. There is a range of resources, which supports children to engage in digital learning well.
- Staff use online learning journals to record observations of children's engagement in learning experiences and track individual progress. These include photographs and descriptions of children's learning. Staff should continue to strengthen their observations and capture effectively significant learning for all children. Children enjoy sharing their learning and reflect on past experiences well. Parents share in children's progress regularly through online learning journals and daily informal chats.
- Children are involved fully in planning for learning as staff use mind maps and floorbooks well to capture their interests. Staff use responsive planning well to take forward children's learning and next steps. Staff capture children's next steps on the 'Next Steps Car Park' and revisit this regularly with children. Staff use Highland Council developmental overviews to track children's progress. They are at the initial stages of creating an additional online progression tool for literacy and numeracy. Staff have attended recently 'Tracking a Child training', which they plan to implement with the support of the DHT. Staff should continue to review their approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring. They need to ensure they fully capture children's progress in learning and that processes do not become overly burdensome.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Staff provide a curriculum that is based firmly on play. In addition, they plan regular opportunities for children to access experiences such as Bookbug. Children have opportunities to explore their vast outdoor environment, developing their sense of curiosity through engagement with loose parts and natural materials.
- All staff take responsibility for developing early numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum. Staff track coverage of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes, which they link to the learning experiences on offer. They should continue to revisit the curriculum design principles, with a focus on curiosity, enquiry and breadth in learning. Staff would benefit from support from senior leaders to consider what their curriculum offer is, capturing fully the uniqueness of their nursery.
- Flexible transitions into the nursery meet the individual needs of children and families well. Transitions from the nursery and on to school are a strength. Staff and teachers across the early level work very well together across the year to support successful transitions. As a result, almost all children settle quickly into the school environment.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Staff use a range of approaches to communicate well with parents throughout the week. Parents value the discussions at the start and end of each day. The use of an online platform supports staff to share regular updates on children’s engagement in learning experiences. This allows parents the opportunity to share and discuss their child’s learning at home.
- Opportunities to engage in the life of the nursery allow parents to join in their child’s learning experiences. Parents had the opportunity to watch the Christmas show, which was very successful. They are invited in to the nursery to share their culture and beliefs and support children to learn about other countries.
- Consultation with parents allows opportunities, for example, to review policies and contribute to a new vision, values and aims. Parents are also welcome to join in the Bookbug sessions. Staff should continue to engage with parents to identify key opportunities for shared experiences indoors and outdoors.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Positive relationships between staff, children and parents are evident. As a result, most children settle quickly and feel secure. Staff model positive relationships, which result in a culture of caring and respect. Children are developing friendships and show respect for their peers and adults. The wellbeing of all is a key focus in the nursery, which results in timely interventions for children when necessary.
- Children are continuing to develop their knowledge of the wellbeing indicators in an age-appropriate manner. An attractive display supports children to engage with the language of wellbeing, using characters as an aid. Staff and children use the language in their everyday experiences, for example, staying safe using scissors. Staff should explore further the wellbeing indicators with parents, using them as a home learning opportunity. Staff are beginning to involve children in learning about their rights. They should continue to support children to be aware of their rights by promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Children access an engaging outdoor environment daily. This includes their own dedicated garden area, shared play space with the primary school and the forest beside the nursery. Staff support children well to take risks in the woodland, investigate the depth of a large puddle and climb up hills with their friends. As a result, children develop their confidence, independence, and resilience well.
- Leadership opportunities are developing well for children, for example, through the snack routine. Most children are capable of extending leadership roles. Children prepare snack enthusiastically and are becoming independent as they cut up fruit and vegetables and collect their crockery. Children choose to have snack together and enjoy the social aspect of sitting with their friends and engaging in conversation. Lunchtime is an enjoyable experience for children, where they can eat with their friends in an unhurried manner.
- All staff understand their statutory duties and take part in regular training. All children have a care plan, which contains helpful information from home. This ensures staff provide consistency and continuity for all children through sharing key information. Regular reviews and updates to care plans ensure information is current and relevant. Senior leaders should continue to monitor and review staff to child ratios at all points of the day.
- Staff promote inclusion and equality well throughout the nursery. Children, families, staff and visitors are treated with respect. Staff welcome diversity and challenge discrimination. Parents from other countries support children's engagement in learning, in relation to culture and beliefs. Staff identify and support children who may need additional support with their learning well.

3.2 Securing children's progress

good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success.

The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Children are making good progress in communication and language. Most children can talk confidently about their ideas and experiences to adults and their peers. Most children show a keen interest in books and enjoy listening to and reading stories. Opportunities to mark make are readily available. Children access a range of materials to draw detailed pictures and explore writing letters. Staff should continue to develop opportunities for children to develop their literacy skills across a range of contexts.
- Children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Opportunities for counting through daily routines and counting games supports children well. Most children recognise and count numbers to ten, with a few children counting upwards to 20. Children explore measurement through floating and sinking experiences. Children recognise numbers, shapes and colours well within their environment. Staff should continue to develop opportunities for children to develop further their numeracy skills through real life contexts.
- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is good. Children can discuss how they are feeling with adults. The outdoor space and resources provide opportunities for children to develop their physical skills well as they negotiate different terrains, surfaces and gradients. Children continue to develop their fine motor skills and coordination through engagement in a range of experiences. Children engage in discussion about healthy food choices when eating snack and are aware of the importance of tooth brushing. Staff should continue to explore opportunities for children to share and discuss their feelings.
- Most children are making good progress in their learning. Staff use a range of data to capture children's progress over time, including the developmental overviews and online journals. Staff should continue to develop their approaches to capturing and recording children's progress over time. This will help them to show the progress children make as a result of their nursery experience more effectively.
- Staff recognise and celebrate children's successes and achievements well through praise and encouragement. Children also do this in their play with each other. Staff should continue to encourage parents to share achievements from home.
- All staff have a good understanding and knowledge of the needs of children and families. They are aware of and understand the unique challenges within their local community. Staff use visuals well to help meet the needs of children who may require support to communicate. Staff

are aware of children who require further support in specific areas of learning and support them well on an individual basis.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, settled and enjoyed their time at nursery. They experienced warm, caring, and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. Staff recognised children as individuals and responded effectively to their needs and wishes which provided them with responsive care throughout the day. They communicated with children at their level in a quiet and sensitive way. These supportive interactions developed close bonds between staff and children, contributing to them feeling safe and secure. For example, children who were unsettled were comforted and provided with reassurance throughout the day. This impacted positively on their self-esteem and sense of wellbeing. As a result, children were confident in approaching all staff for help or reassurance.

There was an inclusive ethos which was enhanced through positive working relationships with families. Children's wellbeing was effectively supported through personal planning which was reviewed regularly in partnership with parents. Staff knew children very well. Information recorded in children's personal plans reflected the care and support they offered which contributed to continuity and consistency in care. Parents highlighted this as a key strength of the service. They spoke very positively about the individualised care their children received.

Approaches to transition placed children and families at the heart of decision making. This allowed children to adjust and feel secure as they transitioned into the service. As a result, children's security and wellbeing was well supported.

Mealtimes were sociable and unhurried experiences. Children were encouraged to participate in these daily routines which provided them with a range of opportunities to be responsible and independent. For example, children took on the role of snack helper and prepared the food for snack. Staff joined children at mealtimes, promoting meaningful conversations. This contributed to the sociable experience for children and provided opportunities for emerging language skills to be developed.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children were well supported to learn and develop through play. We saw children leading their own play experiences and independently selecting resources of their choice. They engaged meaningfully with the activities and experiences offered to them. As a result, children presented as happy, confident individuals.

Staff were skilled and thoughtful in their interactions. They considered children's understanding and adapted their interactions to support children's age and stage of development. We heard them using effective questioning to extend children's thinking and learning which supported them to develop skills in early language, literacy, and numeracy.

During the inspection children were able to explore a natural environment in a stimulating woodland area. This area offered good experiences for children to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning. We asked the service to consider how this area could be developed to increase children's access to a rich learning environment.

Planning approaches were mostly based around children's ideas which resulted in staff providing experiences that were child centred. This impacted positively on children's emotional wellbeing and development. However, there was scope to develop this further to support depth and breadth in children's learning. We also identified the need to strengthen processes for evaluating children's progress and achievements. There were limited systems in place to record progression for children under three years old. The service had recognised that they were not able to effectively assess and plan for individual learning and development needs. They were currently implementing new processes to improve this. As a result, children were not yet being fully supported to develop a broad range of lifelong learning skills.

Parents benefitted from good communication and sharing of information. This contributed to families feeling included in their child's care, play and learning. Online profiles provided parents with an overview of their children's play experiences. The service should continue to develop the use of online profiles to include more detailed observations with a clearer focus on the skills achieved and the outcomes of children's play experiences.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

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. The outdoor environment provided good play opportunities to promote curiosity and enquiry. Effective use of open-ended materials provided children with opportunities to develop their skills in understanding and problem solving. For example, we saw children investigating in a big puddle and being effectively supported to walk across a bridge they had created from 'loose parts'. This encouraged opportunities for children to assess and manage risk and build self-confidence. However, the same opportunities were not available within the indoor environment. There were some open ended, natural resources to promote curiosity and enquiry. There was still an over reliance on plastic play resources with limited real-life items. This reduced opportunities to develop children's creative potential. The service should consider introducing more open-ended resources and ensure they are well presented to readily provoke interest or curiosity. The indoor environment was cluttered, this had potential to distract and overwhelm children. The service should review provision within the indoor environment. Consideration should be given to ensuring children access relevant and meaningful resources to support their learning and development.

There were some areas for children to access soft furnishings and cosy spaces which supported their well-being. These spaces helped children relax, self-regulate, and feel safe. However, these were limited, and the playroom lacked homely touches and comfortable furnishings. As a result, the setting was not warm and welcoming for children. The service should review and develop the playroom to ensure it reflects a more comfortable and homely feel to support nurture and wellbeing. **See area for improvement one.**

Staff demonstrated good practice in infection prevention and control. For example, they modelled good hand hygiene, children were regularly reminded to wash hands at appropriate times such as before and after eating which encouraged them to develop healthy habits.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

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 motivated and committed to the ongoing development of the service to secure positive outcomes for the children.

Good use of quality assurance processes ensured some aspects of the service were being reviewed and monitored in a focused and meaningful way. We saw these to be outcome focused and detailed the impact they had on children. This meant that areas for improvement had been identified, shared with staff and actions taken to make positive changes to children's experience. For example, staff interactions to extend children's play and learning. This resulted in improved outcomes for children. However, the service should now accelerate the pace of change in relation to the indoor environment and review staff deployment to make improvements.

Staff were very much involved in self-evaluation processes. They were supported to reflect on the service provided, evaluate learning opportunities and resources available. As a result, improvements were being made to children's play and learning experiences. Regular staff meetings provided time for staff to come together. This allowed them to reflect on practice, be involved in the identification of areas for improvement and review progress in meeting these. This contributed to staff feeling supported and confident to implement positive changes with a shared responsibility.

The management team and staff should continue to embed systems in place to ensure they are robust and allow for a steady pace of change and sustained improvements, ensuring improved outcomes for children and their families.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff were caring and nurturing. They understood the importance of developing close attachments with children and responding to them with compassionate care. All staff were confident in supporting children to resolve issues and manage their emotions.

The manager strived to provide consistency of care within the staff team. Arrangements for unplanned absence were supported by effective systems. For example, the manager tried to use the same supply staff to minimise disruption to children's routines. Detailed personal plans and a folder with 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 told us that they felt well supported in their role through effective induction procedures. There were robust processes in place for mentoring and supporting new staff. As a result, they were clear about their roles and responsibilities which supported children's experiences.

Overall staff worked well together to benefit children in their care. However, at times communication and team working between staff was limited. This resulted in gaps in interactions across the day. Consequently, the quality of children's experiences was compromised.

For the majority of the time a good staff to child ratio allowed staff to be responsive to individual needs. However, consideration had not been given to the layout of the environment, use of spaces and busier times of the day. There were occasions when staff were not deployed effectively. This

resulted in inadequate supervision levels and reduced opportunities for high quality interaction. This had potential to put children at risk of harm. **See area for improvement two.**

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.