

Summarised inspection findings

Glaitness Nursery

Orkney Islands Council

19 September 2023

Key contextual information

Glaitness Nursery is located in the west side of the town of Kirkwall. The service is registered to provide Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to a maximum of 90 children aged from two years to those not yet attending school. At the time of the inspection the roll was 89 children including eight eligible two year olds. The setting offers 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare and is open for 47 weeks per year from 8.30 am – 5.00 pm. This is delivered flexibly, through a combination of sessions and families can purchase additional hours.

The nursery has recently been extended and refurbished and has been in full use since August 2022. The provision consists of seven rooms of varying sizes and a secure outdoor area. In addition, the two year old children can access a central, enclosed play area used by the school.

There have been recent staff absences and vacancies that are an ongoing challenge. The management structure consists of a manager, a senior practitioner who deputises as required, and two lead practitioners.

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

Children aged under three years

- Children benefit from nurturing and responsive interactions with all adults who care for them. They are content and secure within the indoor and outdoor environments and engage well with the developmentally appropriate range of learning experiences. They enjoy time spent with the rest of the children in the setting both indoors and outdoors. Most children are learning to share toys and take turns. Most practitioners responsively plan learning experiences appropriate to children's developmental stage. They plan for wellbeing, communication and promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity. As planned, these processes should develop further in line with national guidance documents. This will ensure children's learning and assessment supports and challenges all children.

Children aged three to five years

- Most children are confident within the setting. All practitioners deliver the nursery's vision of children learning through play in a nurturing way. They engage well with open-ended, natural resources provided indoors and outdoors. Children explore the wider community, a garden area and a forest experience which broadens their learning and development. The forest experience provides groups of children with an opportunity to develop their appreciation of nature and sense of place.
- Children and practitioners have very positive, warm and caring relationships. Children feel safe, secure and are motivated to learn and explore. Practitioners listen to children's views and interests as they consult with them to make decisions about what they would like to learn more

about. Most practitioners engage in conversation with children and make commentary about learning experiences during play. Most practitioners now need to develop further their questioning techniques to support and extend children's thinking.

- Practitioners use digital devices to research outdoor learning ideas, questions and resources. Practitioners share experiences and ideas with families through the use of a digital communication tool. The use of digital technology to enhance learning is an area that needs to continue to develop.
- Practitioners know children well as individuals. They observe children during play and group activities. All practitioners and senior managers analyse information gathered at weekly meetings. This is supporting practitioners to develop further their approaches and pedagogy.
- Practitioners share children's learning journals with families. Families share photographs and comments about what children do at home using a digital communication tool. Children would now benefit from more planned opportunities to discuss their learning and next steps. This will help them to become more aware of themselves as learners and support increased depth and challenge in learning.
- Children are supported effectively as they move from one stage of the nursery to another and onto school. They have opportunities to visit the setting before they start the nursery and this includes home visits. Most parents feel that their child is well supported by staff at points of vertical and horizontal transition.
- Practitioners plan learning effectively in a variety of ways. This includes white boards linking learning to what children have been saying and doing, areas in the setting, outdoor learning and key group time. Practitioners plan using Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes. The Glaitness nursery planning cycle supports practitioners well to develop further their inclusion of observations when planning for spaces and key group experiences. Senior managers and practitioners should keep routines including tidying-up times under review. This will ensure children's right to play is not restricted and supports high-quality child-led learning.
- The manager and practitioners meet three times per year to have tracking conversations to discuss children's progress. The meetings discuss key questions including progress in developmental milestones, communication and literacy, numeracy and mathematics and wellbeing. Moving forward, there is a need to consistently and clearly identify children's individual next steps linked to CfE experiences and outcomes.
- Children who require additional support with their learning have relevant individual support plans. These plans effectively identify children's needs and the strategies to support them. This results in children making good progress appropriate to their developmental stage.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The setting 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

Progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing

- Information from observations, assessment, trackers and overviews demonstrates that overall, children are making good progress in their learning since starting nursery.

Children aged under three years

- Children are developing their confidence and independence well. They quickly learn the nursery routines and enthusiastically make snack, brush their teeth and take care of the resources. They are developing their gross and fine motor skills well. They explore mathematical concepts such as shape, size and amount appropriate to their stage of development through their play. Children use a range of materials to explore early mark making such as sticks, paint and glue.

Children aged three to five years

- Most children are making good progress in their communication and early language. They engage readily in conversation and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings clearly. Children listen well in small group activities and join in with familiar stories and songs. Most children recognise their name and are developing their understanding of letters and sounds. Most children are developing an interest in early writing skills. They understand that marks have meaning and a few can write their name. A few children show a keen interest in early writing and enjoy the challenge of copying words. Across early literacy, children would benefit from more experiences linked to real life contexts to develop and apply their mark making skills. This will develop further children's understanding that text has meaning.
- The majority of children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They can count in sequence and are beginning to recognise number symbols. A few children can order numerals confidently to ten. Children use their developing skills to sort, order and compare objects in different ways. They understand positional language and use it in their play. The majority of children are not yet using mathematical concepts such as money, time, measure and pattern consistently through their play, routines and real-life experiences.
- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. Most children have well-developed balance and coordination. They confidently use their bodies in different ways to roll, jump, climb and ride two-wheeled bikes when playing outdoors. They play cooperatively with friends and take turns during games and small group experiences. Children make healthy choices at mealtimes and most serve themselves independently and clear up afterwards. Most

children understand the importance of keeping themselves safe, for example as they use woodwork tools and risk assess the forest school space. They fully engage with their environment and can name a wide range of plants, insects and animals.

Children's progress over time

- Overall, most children are making good progress appropriate to their stage of development. Information from observations, assessment and trackers demonstrates that overall, children are making good progress in their learning since starting nursery.

Overall quality of children's achievement

- Children's achievements are recorded within their learning journals. These show that they are making good progress in their learning. Parents are encouraged to add their children's achievements to an online communication tool. Children are developing their confidence, team working and sense of responsibility. As planned, practitioners should now work together to develop further ways to track and build upon children's individual achievements at nursery and from home. This will provide a more holistic record of the child and identify more clearly any children who are at risk of missing out.

Ensuring equity for all children

- The nursery has a strong sense of community where children and their families are valued and included. Practitioners know children and their families well and have a sound knowledge of the socio-economic context. They use this knowledge to provide valuable support to children and families experiencing challenges and potential barriers to progress. Children increasingly use songs, rhymes and stories to develop further their early language development. Senior leaders and practitioners have identified the need for nurture to continue as an area of priority for a few children. The team should develop further their use of data to evaluate the impact of existing targeted interventions and to help inform any group or individual work to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring interactions to support their overall wellbeing. They were supported by staff who knew their individual needs, preferences and wishes well. A nurturing ethos drove forward the care of children and, as a result staff provided children with kindness and respect.

Children received well planned additional support in their life when needed. A staged approach created clear ways in which this was being provided. Staff had a good understanding of the varied needs of children and the support that was available. Staff worked closely with other agencies when appropriate to further meet the needs of children. Information was shared sensitively to ensure the wellbeing of children was maintained.

Children benefited from staff who took the time to know them and their families well. A key worker approach helped to build relationships with children and parents. Key worker staff knew their children very well and key group times allowed dedicated time to spend together. Staff visited children at home when joining the nursery. This allowed families and staff to build relationships and share information prior to children starting nursery, supporting positive transitions.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the use of personal plans. They contained information that supported staff to plan how children's needs would be met. They considered the wellbeing indicators and identified children's strengths and areas of support. We highlighted how plans could at times be improved to show clear strategies on how children were to be supported to make progress in their wellbeing and learning.

Mealtimes provided children with healthy options and opportunities to develop social skills in an unhurried and relaxed manner. Children were supported to make choices of what they would like to eat each day from a menu. Snack time was rolling throughout the morning and afternoon which gave children independence to choose when to eat and recognise when they were hungry. Children enjoyed eating and being together in their key groups during lunch time. Staff supported children during mealtimes to develop skills in pouring, eating well and talking to others. Children were well supervised at mealtimes, helping to keep them safe.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun as they experienced play and learning. Children were engaged in a variety of activities throughout their time in nursery. They were involved in leading their own play throughout the day and used the learning environment well. Children could choose where and what they would like to play with ease. Many had formed close friendships and enjoyed time playing and laughing together.

Planned key group times did not always extend children's learning and interest in a way that was innovative and challenging. Some groups of children had clear learning interests that were taken forward by staff while others did not. The link between children's interest and activities was not always consistent. At the end of the day children were gathered into key groups with their coats and bags. This restricted children's play and learning. We asked that leaders review this area of practice as part of ongoing improvements.

Planning approaches were child centred and children were progressing well throughout. Staff had an understanding of child development and used this to plan activities and possible lines of interest for the children. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of the different needs of the younger children and planned activities that were meaningful and age appropriate.

Opportunities for children to develop in their literacy and numeracy skills were embedded throughout play. Some children had an interest in mark making and letter sounds and could identify letters in their name. A recent focus area had been on maths skills. Children were learning counting skills through a variety of resources and games set up around the indoor spaces. Children's learning and progress in literacy and numeracy should continue to be an area for improvement.

Staff were not consistent when using skilled questioning to extend children's learning during play. As a result a few opportunities for extending children's ideas and interests were missed. Children's progress was observed and recorded by staff. Observations were of good quality, however, next steps and how these are carried forward to support children's progress were not always present and meaningful. The manager and staff should now ensure that staff consistently extend children's learning and progress through interactions and the use of next steps.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The newly built nursery was welcoming and inviting for children and families. The setting was safe and secure and there was a system in place to address any maintenance issues. We raised a concern about one door to a classroom where the shutter mechanism didn't work and put children's safety at risk. This had already been reported and the manager repeated this and asked for a more urgent response.

Children were settled, confident and happy within their environment. We found the accommodation to be bright and warm with good quality furnishings. The service operated within eight adjoining rooms and outdoor spaces. Children had lots of opportunities to play together and could move between all rooms and the outdoor play area as they chose where they wanted to play.

Spaces for children to play and relax were well planned, taking account of children's stage of development. A dedicated area for younger children gave them support and space to explore as a smaller group. Quiet rooms were used throughout the day to support one to one time with children or create space to sleep.

A dedicated dining area provided a space for children to enjoy mealtimes away from play and other distractions. The area was bright and spacious and allowed plenty of room for children. A fitted kitchen area meant that staff could provide healthy meals in a safe and hygienic manner.

Outdoor and indoor spaces promoted children to explore, play with friends and expand on their play ideas together. Loose parts created additional ways for children to explore their ideas. Wall displays showed children's voice and learning, helping them feel respected and included. We suggested that spaces for children could be further enhanced over time to create more opportunities for children's ownership as children and staff settle into their environment.

Good use of the local community benefited children's learning and experiences. Groups of nursery children participated in 'forest school' throughout the week. On these days the identified group of

children would spend most of the day in a local wooded area. This created meaningful learning times which children clearly enjoyed. The use of a local poly tunnel meant that children were taking part in growing plants and vegetables. Children enjoyed regular visits to care for the plants and be part of the community.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The provider, manager and staff had a positive approach to improvement. Staff were encouraged to be part of any developments and make suggestions for improvement. This meant that the team worked well together and empowered change to benefit the children's experiences.

A shared vision of 'Learning through play in a nurturing way' was promoted and evident in the way that staff worked. Staff were in the early stages of reviewing their aims and objectives as part of coming together in a new environment and as a new staff team. This will help them further align as a team.

Children's outcomes were supported by a meaningful development plan. Areas identified for development were clear and relevant with all staff taking an active role in making improvements. Staff evaluated their practice against national guidance documents and best practice. This resulted in planned changes which supported improved outcomes for children.

Children and families were meaningfully involved within the setting and able to influence change. A consultation with children was in the early stages. There were plans to use the feedback from this consultation in the review of the services aims and objectives. This helps children feel included. Parent and key worker meetings gave families the opportunity to offer feedback. Responses were collated and used to inform areas for planned improvement. Through this, the manager had identified the need to review the communication tool 'see saw' and how this was to be used going forward.

Families were involved in the life of nursery and offered support such as decorating at Christmas, helping at the poly tunnel with the plants or enjoying stay and play sessions. Regular online bulletins shared weekly updates and gave a general overview of activities to help keep families informed.

Team meetings were held to ensure staff were informed and involved in the service. Staff received supervision meetings throughout the year which set out clear progress and goal setting. This helped staff identify strengths and any training or development needs they had.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4.3 Staff deployment

The staff team had undergone changes throughout the past year. New staff joined the team and others took on new leadership roles. The team had worked well together to build trusting relationships. They were helpful and supportive of each other. This helped support children be cared for in a kind and caring environment.

Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day. There was sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of the children in attendance. Timely breaks gave staff the time to relax and recuperate, and they were planned in a way that did not disrupt the care of children.

Specific importance was given to planning key workers breaks to ensure consistent care of children during their lunch time routine. Arrangements for staff absences were managed to minimise disruption to children's care. These approaches helped build relationships and helped children feel safe, respected and nurtured.

At times staff could improve their communication when going on break or when a child has a need. More detailed handovers and communication between staff would ensure children's play, learning and needs were met consistently.

Staff were well supported by practice that encouraged their learning and development. Regular supervision meetings between individual staff and leaders helped identify learning needs and provided staff with wellbeing support. Staff were encouraged to complete their training in an early years qualification. An ongoing development programme supported those nearing the end of their qualification by creating mentoring opportunities in future roles. This contributed to a positive ethos, helping to retain staff and supporting them to grow in confidence.

Staff were up to date with core training such as child protection, first aid, and food hygiene. They were enthusiastic about their learning and attended a range of continuous professional development opportunities to further their knowledge of the early years. Staff spoke about how these courses helped support their work with children.

Care Inspectorate grade: very good

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.