

Summarised inspection findings

Achiltibuie Primary School Nursery Class

The Highland Council

27 August 2019

Key contextual information

Achiltibuie Nursery Class is based in a small room of Achiltibuie Primary School. The school is in a rural setting situated in the North West Ross-shire country area of Coigach and South West of Sutherland within Assynt. The headteacher, who has been in post for seven years, also has responsibility for Lochinver Primary School and nursery class as part of a two school cluster. The nursery has a small garden area which is situated directly outside the playroom. The nursery is registered for ten children aged three until they start primary school. Currently, three children attend the nursery class and at the time of the inspection only two children were present. Staffing consists of one early years practitioner. A class teacher who works within the school provides support to the nursery one session per week.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- Positive relationships are evident between children and practitioners. Children have fun at nursery, appear happy, confident and settled. They independently choose resources and materials to support their play. Children engage for most of the time during both adult-led and child-initiated experiences. They sustain interest for extended periods when chopping and preparing fruit at snack time and when taking part in an activity in relation to healthy eating.
- All practitioners across the school work extremely hard to create a pleasant learning environment for children within the nursery. This includes the recent development of the nursery garden based on children's ideas and suggestions, which has also involved school pupils. Practitioners have introduced natural materials and loose parts into the garden. As a result, children are developing their imagination and problem solving skills well. Children now need regular access to these materials within the playroom to support children's play more effectively.
- Practitioners' interact in a positive, caring and responsive manner to support children's interests and curiosity. They give children appropriate support to be independent, lead their play and increasingly, be involved in planning their learning. Practitioners make appropriate use of questions to support and extend children's learning, for example when investigating the growth of the nursery butterflies and exploring loose parts. The support from the local authority and a class teacher has been extremely valuable to the nursery practitioner. This has supported the practitioner to engage in professional dialogue and develop further the quality of learning and teaching.
- Practitioners know children and their families very well and are responsive to their care and learning needs. They carry out regular observations of children during play and record these within individual children's learning journals. As a result of recent professional learning, the quality of observations is improving. Observations are beginning to demonstrate children's progress in their learning. Individual learning journals contain a high amount of adult text.

Practitioners now need to review and revise the process to include sufficient photographs and examples of children's work. This will support children to talk about their learning and achievements more readily. Very recently, practitioners have set appropriate individual learning targets for children. We discussed with practitioners ways to involve children at a greater level in recognising their achievements and discussing what they might learn next. This will support children to have a sense of ownership of their learning.

- Planning for children's learning continues to develop through the support of a class teacher and the local authority. Practitioners observe children's interests and capture their ideas through a learning wall and floorbooks. Children are encouraged to share what they know about their specific interests. Practitioners support them to consider what they would like to find out to extend their knowledge and how they could do this together. As a result, children engage well in the range of interesting experiences that capture their interests. Practitioners now need to deepen their understanding of the design principles of Curriculum for Excellence. This will support practitioners to plan and evaluate children's learning more effectively. A stronger focus on challenge, depth and progression is required in order to support children to make the progress they are capable of.
- Practitioners, with support from the headteacher, now need to ensure that planning and evaluation of learning demonstrates consistently what skills children have achieved across the curriculum. Assessment of learning now needs to be planned for as part of the planning cycle and build on what children already know. Practitioners use developmental overviews to outline individual key milestones that children have achieved. The headteacher now needs to devise a system to monitor and evaluate children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This will enable practitioners to track the progress children are making in these areas more effectively.
- Informal daily conversations with parents enable practitioners to share information about children's achievements. Parents can also view their child's learning journeys to gain information on their child's learning. In addition, parents receive an end of year report outlining their child's progress. There are no formal meetings arranged for parents to meet with practitioners. Currently, there is very limited parental engagement within the nursery. The headteacher now needs to engage with parents to gather their views on how they could be involved in nursery life and in their child's learning. Parents who engaged with the inspection process stated that they would welcome opportunities to be more involved in the nursery.
- In the final term, practitioners organise a range of interesting activities for nursery and primary children to play and learn together. Children enjoy these experiences and engage well. An end of year report provides the receiving teacher with summary information on each child's learning and progress. There is scope to develop further opportunities for transition across the school year and closer working with colleagues in the school. This will support continuity in learning and progression across the early level.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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

- Observations of children, individual learning journeys and developmental overviews demonstrate that children have made good progress in their learning since joining nursery. Children come to the setting with a range of skills and knowledge and it will be important for practitioners to build on this prior learning consistently. Children would benefit from suitable levels of challenge to ensure they make the best possible progress in their learning.
- In health and wellbeing, all children are making good progress. They play well together and enjoy friendships. Children develop physical skills such as coordination and balance during outdoor play. They are now ready for more challenge during physical play to develop a wider range of skills. Children develop their fine motor skills through a range of activities such as threading, using scissors and attaching ropes to transport large pieces of equipment. All children develop independence during snack, when dressing for outdoors and through personal hygiene routines. Daily 'check ins' enable children to explore how they feel and develop an awareness of different feelings and emotions. Children are beginning to become aware of the benefits of good health. They can identify healthy food through snack and relevant stories and regularly join school pupils for the 'daily mile'.
- Most children are making good progress in early literacy and language. They are confident to communicate with their peers and familiar adults. They share their experiences from outwith the setting and develop their skills in conversation turn taking as they interact with adults and their peers. All children enjoy listening to stories and recall key characters and events. They ask and answer appropriate questions to extend their learning. All children know familiar rhymes, identify words that sound the same and clap out the syllables of their name. They recognise their name and are aware that signs within the local community are giving them important information. All children enjoy mark making and are beginning to write letters from their name. There is scope to support children's early writing skills more effectively through real-life opportunities to develop an awareness of writing for a purpose.
- In numeracy and mathematics, most children are making good progress. Most children develop their counting skills and use of number well through nursery routines and a range of interesting experiences both indoors and outdoors. They recognise basic two-dimensional shapes and would now benefit from exploring a wider range of shapes and three-dimensional objects. All children gather and record information as they observe birds in the garden, record weather and identify what they can see, hear and smell during a community walk. Most children use appropriate mathematical language such as more and less and heavy and light as they make comparisons during play and adult-led activities. Children would now benefit from

increased real-life experiences to develop their awareness of how money is used, for example, through enterprise projects.

- Children develop early science skills as they learn about new life including the life cycle of frogs and butterflies. Practitioners make regular use of their local community. This includes visits to the village hall library, the beach, a local croft and a small section of woodland. These experiences enrich children's learning across the curriculum. We have asked the headteacher to develop greater levels of partnership working to support the curriculum and develop children's awareness of the world of work.
- Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated appropriately through praise, encouragement and 'star of the week'. We would suggest that practitioners seek ways to encourage parents to share their child's achievements from outwith the setting on a more regular basis. This will enable practitioners to build on children's skills and talents to support their progress. Children contribute to the life of the school and the local community, for example, through litter picking and recycling and as a result develop early citizenship.
- Practitioners actively promote and support equity through a supportive and inclusive ethos. They work with families and when required partner agencies to reduce barriers to learning. As a result, practitioners provide children with good support to access all learning experiences and make progress within the nursery.

1. Quality of care and support

- Children had established positive relationships with staff and were happy and confident in nursery. We observed staff being caring and nurturing to all the children. Staff were aware of and met the care and support needs of the children.
- As a small nursery in a rural community, staff had established positive working relationships with parents/carers which allowed for good levels of communication. During the inspection we discussed with the manager and staff how they could encourage parents/carers to become more actively involved in the life of the nursery.
- There were 'emotional check in's' where the children talked about how they were feeling.
- Although there were personal plans in place, they required to be further developed to collate the information the service had for all individual children. These plans should clearly set out how the nursery will meet the care and development needs of each child and include identified strategies and next steps. These plans should be completed in conjunction with parents/carers and should be routinely reviewed when there were any significant changes and at least on a six monthly basis. The manager and staff should also ensure that they have appropriate written parental consents in place for each child. These should include the taking and use of photographs, applying suncream, outings in the local community and the weekly outdoor sessions.
- Each child had a learning journey folder, which contained 'all about me' sheets, records of observations and some small photographs and examples of their work. There was a very strong reliance on text. Greater use should be made of photographs and examples of the children's work. These folders were readily accessible to the children in the playroom and parents/carers were free to look at their child's folder any time in the nursery. The manager and staff should encourage parental involvement in the learning journey folders and include records of the children's achievements and 'wow' moments at home and in the wider community.
- Snack was a positive experience for the children. Children were involved in snack choice and snack preparation. The children were encouraged to develop their independence skills. Snack was a social activity where staff sat with the children. Consideration should be given to replacing the plastic cups and plates with proper crockery.
- The playroom opened directly onto an outdoor area, which was very popular with all the children. The area contained a very good range of resources, including loose parts, which encouraged the children's imaginative play and learning. There were opportunities to take part in planting activities, investigative play, numeracy and literacy, a mud kitchen and various physical activities. The children also regularly spent a full session outdoors in the local community. These sessions were led by a local outdoor education project worker. All parents were of the opinion that the outdoor sessions were very important and offered the children a wonderful learning experience.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

- The service was provided from a classroom within the primary school building. The children were cared for in a bright and welcoming environment. Staff completed daily checks of the playroom and the outdoor play area to ensure that they were safe and secure. Visitors were required to sign in and out of the building.
- There was a good range of activities and experiences available which offered opportunities for the children to take part in challenging and fun activities to enrich their play and learning experiences. During the inspection we discussed with staff how further open ended and natural resources could be made available within the playroom.
- There was a limited range of risk assessments completed and written records maintained. The manager and staff should develop, complete and routinely review appropriate risk assessments. We also discussed the importance of encouraging children to be involved in the risk assessment process.
- The service had direct access to an outdoor space which they made use of on a daily basis. The outdoor area included a paved area with a drop onto a concrete path and an overgrown area with a sharp drop down onto a septic tank. During previous inspections, the need to put in place permanent measures to ensure the safety of the children had been highlighted as a priority, however, none had been erected. Parents/carers were frustrated by the lack of progress. After completing a risk assessment, the staff had erected a temporary barricade of old tyres filled with compost along the edge of the paved area to allow the children to use the outdoor space directly outside the playroom. Given that no permanent measures had yet been put in place to ensure the safety of the children, a requirement will be made.
- The development of the outdoor space was a priority for the staff. They had continued to work hard to create a fun and exciting area for the children where they could take part in a full range of outdoor activities which encouraged the children's learning and imaginative play. The children very much enjoyed being outdoors and having the opportunity to take part in a variety of activities. They proudly told us about the various vegetables, fruit and flowers they were growing.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

3. Quality of staffing

- We observed staff being very caring and nurturing towards the children. Staff knew the children they worked with well and had also established very good relationships with the parents/carers. Staff were of the opinion that the relationships they had with families allowed for good information sharing and the opportunity to offer support and guidance. Parents/carers considered staff to be friendly and approachable. They very much appreciated the feedback they received about their child's day at nursery when they collected them each day.
- As a very small service, there was only one permanent member of staff – the early years practitioner-who worked full time in the nursery. She was enthusiastic and committed to providing a service of a high standard. She had been very proactive in seeking out information, best practice and new ideas which she could use to develop the service. The early years practitioner had done much of this in her own time.

- During this academic year, one of the class teachers from the primary school had spent one session a week in the nursery. The early years practitioner had greatly appreciated this input and having the opportunity to discuss the day to day running and development of the service. She had also benefited from the positive working relationship she had established with the full time teacher in the primary school. They had expanded the opportunities for the nursery children to be part of activities along with the older children.
- Following previous Care Inspectorate inspections, two requirements were made in relation to staffing. One requirement related to staff receiving regular support and supervision meetings and an annual staff appraisal meeting with the manager. Although the early years practitioner had previously attended an annual appraisal, appropriate support and supervision meetings with clear and meaningful minutes had not been provided. Only very limited informal supervision was offered. This requirement had not been met and remains outstanding.
- The second requirement related to the manager identifying the training needs of staff and making appropriate arrangements for them to receive training to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their role and to meet the care, welfare and development needs of the children attending. The early years practitioner had only been provided with very limited formal training. Much of the learning the early years practitioner had completed was very much through self-directed study. This requirement had not been met and remains outstanding.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4. Quality of management and leadership

- Following previous inspections, a requirement had been made in relation to quality assurance. It highlighted the need for the manager to develop and implement an effective system of quality assurance to monitor and improve all areas of practice and improve outcomes for children. Very little had been done to progress this requirement and it will therefore be repeated.
- The service should actively involve children, parents/carers and all other relevant stakeholders, including staff, in the ongoing self-evaluation process. There should be clear evidence of their involvement in the quality assurance process and the development of the improvement plan.
- Staff continued to encourage the children and the parents/carers to provide feedback and suggestions as to how the service could be further developed. The children's ideas were recorded in mind maps and floor books and were used to influence planning. Staff asked parents/carers to give feedback informally and invited them to give suggestions in relation to the day to day running of the service. Although they felt that the staff took account of their feedback, parents/carers were frustrated by the failure of the manager to action their suggestions or accept various offers of support and assistance from the wider community.
- The manager should establish regular monitoring and observation visits to the playroom and provide feedback to the staff. This feedback would allow staff to reflect on their own practice as well as reflect on the children's experiences within the nursery. Regular full nursery team meetings should also be put in place. These would allow all staff who are involved in the provision of the nursery and the manager to review current practice, discuss improvements, identify next steps and action points.

Care Inspectorate grade: weak

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had three requirements and no recommendations. From these, three requirements have not been met and an additional requirement has been made. As a result of this inspection, there are four requirements.

Requirements

- As a matter of priority, the service should put in place appropriate permanent measures to ensure the safety of the children while they are accessing the outdoor play area.

This is in order to comply with:

- The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation, 2011 SSI 2011/210 – Regulation 4(1)(a) Welfare of Service Users. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that 'My environment is secure and safe'. (HSCS 5:17).

Timescale: by 19th August 2019.

- The manager should ensure that all staff receive regular support and supervision meetings and attend annual staff appraisal meetings to discuss their practice, identify agreed goals and training needs, and identify any action to be taken and by whom. Staff should receive clear written records of these meetings.

This is in order to comply with:

- The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation 2011, SSI 2011/210 - Regulation 15(b) Staffing. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state 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).

Timescale: by 11 October 2019.

- The manager must identify training needs and ensure staff undertake training relevant to their role to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their role and to meet the care, welfare and development needs of the children attending. Staff should use what they have learnt to improve practice and outcomes for children.

This is in order to comply with:

- The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirement for Care Services) Regulation 2011/210 Regulation 4 (1)(a) and Welfare of Service Users and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state 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).

Timescale: 11 October 2019

- The manager should develop and implement an effective system of quality assurance to monitor and improve all areas of practice and improve outcomes for children.

In order to achieve this the provider must:

- develop and implement a rigorous quality assurance programme
- implement regular effective support and supervision for all staff

- involve staff in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service
- put clear plans in place for maintaining and improving the service
- ensure the manager effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.

This is in order to comply with:

- The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulation, 2011 SSI 2011/210 - Regulation 3 Principles and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes (HSCS 4.19).

Timescale: 11 October 2019

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.