

# Smithton Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Smithton Primary School  
Smithton  
Inverness  
IV2 7PD

Telephone: 01463 791 606

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
1 February 2023

**Service provided by:**  
Highland Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001693

**Service no:**  
CS2003017266

## About the service

Smithton Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 84 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time. The nursery is operated by Highland Council. The setting operates term time only.

The nursery is provided in three rooms within Smithton Primary School in Inverness. Two of the rooms occupy one building within the school grounds, both accessing a large outdoor area. A third room, located in a new, standalone building, is also within the school grounds. This room also has access to an enclosed outdoor area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced which took place on 1 February 2022, between 08:30 and 15:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service;
- reviewed feedback from three families;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Staff were very nurturing and care towards children, who they knew well.
- Children were supported to develop literacy, language and numeracy skills.
- Children benefited from a wide range of resources, including loose parts and real-life objects.
- The management team and staff were committed and motivated to make improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- The staff team worked very well together.

## 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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

## How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where a number of important strengths clearly outweighed areas for improvement. The strengths will have a significant, positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes.

### 1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children experienced very nurturing care and support from staff. Staff were knowledgeable about children's personal circumstances and offered reassurance and cuddles when children were upset. Interactions supported children to regulate their emotions by encouraging them to problem solve, for example, when they were becoming frustrated. These positive interactions supported children's overall well-being.

Personal planning information supported staff to meet children's needs. Staff spoke with confidence about children's likes and dislikes, and their families. Parents and carers were consulted regularly for any changes to children's ongoing needs. As a result, staff were able to provide individualised care for children. Parents told us they felt "staff were there to support my child". We reminded staff to update personal plans, even when there were no changes, to support all staff to respond effectively to all children.

Children enjoyed positive experiences during snack and mealtimes. They were given opportunities to develop life skills at snack time by preparing food and the environment, such as cutting fruit and selecting plates and cups. Children told us they were excited to help. We observed that children were well supported by staff during both snack and lunch. Staff used these times to discuss healthy eating and support children's literacy and numeracy skills.

Staff understood the importance of supporting children's emotional resilience and well-being by ensuring they accessed quieter spaces when they needed to. Some children accessed small, enclosed spaces when they needed to self-regulate, others made good use of sofas which were positioned away from noisier spaces. As part of ongoing improvements to the environment, the staff team were in the process of identifying further options to provide quality spaces where children could sleep and rest. This gave children the message that they were respected and valued.

### 1.3 Play and Learning

Overall, children were engaged and observed to be busy and happy in their play. They had opportunities to lead their own play which supported them to develop their confidence and sense of wellbeing. They were able to choose from a range of real life and natural resources which supported their imagination and curiosity. Most staff supported children through the use of high quality, open ended questioning which encouraged problem solving. This also contributed to children developing skills in literacy and numeracy. However, we identified missed opportunities to extend and enrich children's play and learning through creative approaches.

Children were able to choose where they wanted to play for some of the time, choosing to play outside or inside when the doors to the garden were open. However, some children experienced more interruptions to their play than their peers, undertaking adult directed activities, for example after arriving and before lunch. This significantly reduced children's engagement levels.

Most observations detailed children's developing skills. Staff were using the 'planning in the moment' approach. They recorded significant observations in children's development. However, not all staff were confident they knew where their key children were in core areas, such as numeracy and literacy. As a result, children's next steps were not clearly identified and recorded. The staff team should continue to consider how they assess children's progress, and plan to support children to reach their potential by providing challenging and meaningful experiences.

### How good is our setting?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good where major strengths supported positive outcomes for children. There were very few areas for improvement.

Children experienced a setting that was welcoming, warm and resourced to meet their needs. Each playroom was tidy, well ventilated and benefited from plenty of natural light. Direct access to the outdoor spaces supported free flow play. One parent told us how much they "enjoyed seeing my child play in the nursery environment". Homely touches, real life items and natural resources helped children to feel valued and comfortable.

Outdoor spaces provided a variety of play and learning experiences, such as den building, which was accessed in an area close to the nursery. As part of ongoing improvement, the staff team were working towards opening up the outside area to allow children to access all areas of the garden. They were aware of the need to keep children safe and secure at all times. As a result, children's play experiences were not compromised.

The setting was well maintained, with effective measures in place to identify and rectify equipment and resources which needed repair. Staff were confident in their role to keep children safe, and they followed best practice guidance for infection prevention and control which minimised the potential spread of infection. This meant that children were able to play and learn in a safe environment.

### How good is our leadership?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good where major strengths supported positive outcomes for children. There were very few areas for improvement.

A shared vision had been created in conjunction with the whole school community, including families, children and staff. The emphasis on positive relationships was reflected in the interactions we saw within the setting. The views of children and families were actively sought by a variety of methods, for example, surveys, via online forums, during visits to the nursery. As a result of this, children and families felt involved in a spirit of true partnership.

Effective quality assurance identified areas of good practice and areas for improvement. A clear action plan was in place, detailing areas for development within the nursery. This meant that children experienced positive outcomes, through continued and sustained improvement.

Regular, whole team meetings with the manager provided an opportunity for staff to reflect on their practice and self-evaluate against best practice guidance, such as 'Realising the Ambition'. As a result, areas for improvement were identified and a focus on making improvements to children's experiences was evident. This resulted in improved outcomes for children and their families.

Staff told us they felt very well supported by their manager, and the senior early years practitioner who had recently been appointed. This strong leadership led to staff feeling empowered and confident to make changes within a continuous cycle of improvement. This meant that children received consistent, high-quality care and support.

## How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good where major strengths supported positive outcomes for children. There were very few areas for improvement.

The staff team were very caring and nurturing towards children and effective staffing levels supported children's overall wellbeing. Staff breaks were well planned to ensure that the quality of care was not negatively impacted, for example, during lunchtimes. A very good balance of skills, knowledge and experience ensured that children received positive experiences throughout the day.

Staff communicated clearly to each other when they were leaving an area or taking children to another part of the setting. In addition, they updated a visual reminder of how many children were present in the playrooms. This meant that children received effective supervision, which kept them safe.

There was a positive ethos amongst the staff team. New staff told us they felt very well supported by their colleagues, with in house mentors in place to support their learning. Staff felt empowered to reflect upon their practice and contribute to ongoing improvements. As a result, children consistently benefited from high quality care and support.

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

We recommend that an updated risk assessment of the service take place following discussions with the relevant authorities. This is to ensure the current arrangement of keeping toilet doors wedged open (when the toilet is not being used for personal care of children) does not constitute an infection control issue.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards 5.16 which states that; 'The premises have been adapted equipped and furnished to meet my needs and wishes.'

**This area for improvement was made on 25 March 2019.**

#### Action taken since then

The management team had undertaken a full risk assessment and review of the arrangements to ensure appropriate infection prevention and control around the toilet area. We were satisfied that current arrangements protected children from the possible spread of infection. This area for improvement has been met.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good



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Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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