

**Integrated Inspection by the
Care Commission and
HM Inspectorate of Education of
Ballachulish Primary School
Nursery Class
The Highland Council**

18 October 2006

Ballachulish Primary School Nursery Class
Ballachulish
PH49 4JQ

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act, 2001, requires that the Care Commission inspect all care services covered by the Act every year to monitor the quality of care provided. In accordance with the Act, the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education carry out integrated inspections of the quality of care and education. In doing this, inspection teams take account of *National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16*, and *The Child at the Centre*. The following standards and related quality indicators were used in the recent inspection.

National Care Standard	Child at the Centre Quality Indicator
Standard 2 – A Safe Environment	Resources
Standard 4 – Engaging with Children	Development and learning through play
Standard 5 – Quality of Experience	Curriculum Children's development and learning
Standard 6 – Support and Development	Support for children and families
Standard 14 – Well-managed Service	Management, Leadership and Quality Assurance

Evaluations made using HMIE quality indicators use the following scale, and these words are used in the report to describe the team's judgements:

- Very good : major strengths
- Good : strengths outweigh weaknesses
- Fair : some important weaknesses
- Unsatisfactory : major weaknesses

Reports contain Recommendations which are intended to support improvements in the quality of service.

Any Requirements refer to actions which must be taken by service providers to ensure that regulations are met and there is compliance with relevant legislation. In these cases the regulation(s) to which requirements refer will be noted clearly and timescales given.

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher, staff and the education authority. Copies are also available on the Care Commission website: www.carecommission.com and HMIE website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about integrated pre-school inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of integrated pre-school inspections, you should write in the first instance to Kenneth Muir, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to either:

Complaints Coordinator	Hazel Dewart
Headquarters	HM Inspectorate of Education
Care Commission	Denholm House
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Riverside Drive	Almondvale Way
Dundee	Livingston
DD1 4NY	EH54 6GA

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You can write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk.

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Introduction

Ballachulish Primary School Nursery Class was inspected in June 2006 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. HMIE carried out this inspection on behalf of both organisations and consulted the Care Commission about its findings. The nursery catered for pre-school children aged three to five years. It was registered for 24 children attending at any one session. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 32.

The environment

Standard 2

The nursery was located in a recently built wing of the primary school. The accommodation consisted of one large playroom, a smaller quiet room, an office and a good sized entrance area which was also used as a cloakroom. The building was in a very good state of repair and provided children and staff with a pleasant learning environment. Lots of natural light flooded the playroom and gave the building a very spacious feel. An effective secure entry system was in place.

Staff had ensured that the playroom was well equipped with appropriate resources to support children's development. They had organised room layouts to allow children to play independently and in small and larger groups. They also made good use of a fully enclosed and attractive outdoor play area, further enhanced by spectacular scenery surrounding the nursery. Staff had effective measures in place to control the risk of infection. They carried out appropriate risk assessments and ensured play equipment was clean and well maintained.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff had created a warm and attractive learning environment. They engaged very well with children and used effective questioning to challenge children and extend their learning. Children engaged enthusiastically in their play and were very well supported by caring and responsive staff. They accessed an appropriate range of activities and resources which enabled them to develop skills in different ways. However, children would further benefit from improved access to a wider range of resources. Staff ensured that there was a good balance between adult-led activities and those which children chose for themselves. They used a flexible approach to snack which did

not disrupt children's play, allowing them to access it when they wanted.

The arrangements made by staff to gather observations and assessment information were good. They used this information well to record and monitor children's progress. Staff made good use of weekly planning meetings to ensure that children's interests were discussed and appropriate learning experiences planned. They did not always identify clearly next steps in children's learning or what they were expected to learn.

Features of the programmes for children included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Children were happy, settled and secure. They cooperated and shared resources very well. Staff used praise and encouragement effectively to raise children's self esteem and recognise their achievements. Children followed rules and routines very well. They were good at putting resources away after completing an activity. They were encouraged to become independent when putting on jackets and at snack. Children were developing good hygiene practice when washing their hands and brushing their teeth. Most were developing skills in perseverance when using computer programmes and construction toys.
- The programme for communication and language was very good. Staff provided good opportunities for children to develop skills in listening and talking in small groups. Children were encouraged to contribute to group discussions and their input was valued. Staff provided an attractive book corner which provided good opportunities for children to quietly explore an appropriate range of books. Children used books to find interesting information about birds and insects. They enjoyed daily storytelling and were learning about the language and layout of books. Children used a good range of writing resources to develop early writing skills through play. They used notepads and pens to record the different varieties of birds visiting their garden.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was very good. Children had been appropriately involved in designing features for their garden. They were developing problem solving skills and had used pipe cleaners to construct a very effective 3D model of a birdhouse. They had created a worm observatory and were learning about mini-beasts. Children confidently used small programmable robots to learn about pathways and directions. They explored technology and used digital cameras and electronic microscopes well to further develop their understanding of insects. Children were learning to look after plants and enthusiastically helped maintain the vegetable garden. They demonstrated a good understanding of early shape and number.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Children took on adult roles in the well resourced home corner. They used a toy train set and a doll's house creatively to invent scenarios and develop imaginative play. Children used clay and had produced some very good

models and paintings of mini beasts. A few children explored colour and texture at a painting easel. They did not have access to a wide enough range of resources and materials to fully encourage their creativity. Children used play dough well to create models of volcanoes and sculpt models. They played with a good range of musical bells very effectively to explore sound and beat.

- The programme for physical development and movement was good. Children used scissors, construction toys and play dough to develop good hand control. They enjoyed daily access to the attractive and spacious outdoor play area for extended periods of play. They used footballs and basketball nets to improve aiming skills and hand-to-eye coordination. They were developing an awareness of space as they ran around and enjoyed energetic activity. Staff used the gym hall in the primary school to further promote physical activity. Staff did not yet fully plan for physical play activities to ensure children were appropriately challenged.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

The nursery provided very good support to children and families. Staff kept parents well informed about nursery life through newsletters and informative notice boards. Staff used photographs and captions very effectively to document and celebrate children's learning experiences and to show them engaging in purposeful play. They used small electronic recording devices very well to produce an interactive and informative display board reflecting children's work. Parents were encouraged to become involved in the nursery and their achievements celebrated in a 'parent of the month' board. Almost all parents who responded to surveys were very satisfied with all aspects of the service. A few indicated that they would like more regular information on their child's progress.

Staff had a good programme in place for children who were starting nursery. They organised an induction week to help settle children and inform parents of nursery rules and routines. Staff had effective procedures in place to support children as they moved on to P1. A 'buddy system' was in place where older pupils teamed up with younger children to help establish positive relationships at an early stage. The nursery invited staff from receiving primary schools into the nursery to meet children prior to them moving onto P1. Staff appropriately shared information about children's progress with parents and receiving primary schools.

The nursery had established effective links with a range of outside support agencies. They worked closely with agencies, for example social work, and were confident on how to access support for children requiring additional help with their learning.

Management

Standard 14

The headteacher worked closely with nursery staff and provided good leadership. Due to unforeseen circumstances, he was absent on the day of the inspection. He had developed very good relationships with staff, parents and children and was supportive of the nursery team. Staff felt valued and found him to

be very approachable. The headteacher delegated a few aspects of self-evaluation and monitoring of nursery practice to the nursery coordinator teacher. The nursery team worked very effectively together to ensure the smooth running of the nursery.

The headteacher had ensured that a comprehensive range of policies and procedures were in place to guide the work of staff. Appropriate child protection arrangements were in place. Staff were aware of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice and of the implications for future training. The headteacher provided formal opportunities for staff to review their work. Staff were encouraged to attend further training.

All staff were involved in evaluating the work of the nursery. The nursery coordinator teacher led this process effectively. Nursery staff had identified key areas for improvement and incorporated these in the school development plan. Staff were making good progress in taking forward agreed areas for improvement. They had appropriately identified the need to review current arrangements for curriculum planning. The headteacher regularly monitored the work of the playrooms informally and had begun to introduce more formal monitoring procedures.

Key strengths

- Ways in which staff used the spectacular setting and rich outdoor environment to encourage children's appreciation of natural beauty.
- Caring and responsive staff who worked very effectively together.
- Effective support to children and families.
- The very good programmes for emotional, personal and social development, communication and language and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

There were no outstanding issues from the last Care Commission singleton inspection.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should further develop assessment, planning and recording procedures to ensure observations are used more effectively to plan next steps in children's learning.
- The manager should continue to develop formal systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the provision.

Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors have asked the pre-school centre and education authority to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report. Where requirements are made, the action plan should include timescales to deal with these. The plan will be available to parents and carers. In liaison with the pre-school centre and education authority, Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors will monitor progress to ensure improvements are in line with the main findings of the report.

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