

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

**28 April 2004**

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.

<b>National Care Standard</b>	<b>Child at the Centre Quality Indicator</b>
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

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher, staff and the Director of Education, Culture and Sport. Copies are also available on the Care Commission website: [www.carecommission.com](http://www.carecommission.com) and HMIE website: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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## **Introduction**

Central Primary School Nursery Classes were inspected in January 2004 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. An inspection of the primary school was carried out at the same time by HMIE and is the subject of a separate report. The nursery catered for children from age three to five. At the time of the inspection the roll was 46.

## **The environment**

Central Primary School Nursery operated from two separate premises within the school grounds. The English medium nursery class was located within the main building and the Gaelic medium nursery class was located within the Gaelic school section. Both premises were clean, well maintained and secure. The nursery playrooms were bright and welcoming. Children's work and photographs were attractively displayed.

The English medium nursery playrooms were organised to allow children opportunities to play alone and in small groups. Staff in the Gaelic nursery class should improve the playroom space to ensure children's needs are fully met. Both nurseries had a variety of resources and play equipment available to children. All equipment was clean and well maintained.

Opportunities for outdoor play were being developed. The boys' toilet facilities in the Gaelic Medium nursery were in need of refurbishment.

## **Quality of children's experience**

Staff were generally friendly and approachable and had developed positive relationships with children. In the English medium nursery class staff interacted well with children as they played. They planned a broad range of activities but needed to make more effective use of assessment information when planning the next steps in children's learning. In the Gaelic medium nursery class there were inconsistencies in the quality of interactions between some staff and children. The Gaelic nursery teacher extended children's learning skilfully. She observed children's progress carefully and used this information effectively in planning the next steps in children's learning. The headteacher needed to explore opportunities for both nursery class staff to plan regularly together. Children's profiles, in both classes, needed to contain more evaluative comments about their

progress. Parents received a written report at the end of the year outlining their children's progress.

Features of the programmes in the key aspects of children's development and learning were variable across both classes.

- In both classes staff supported children very well in emotional, personal and social development. Children were happy and relaxed. They were encouraged to take some responsibilities, develop independence and show consideration for others. They had settled well into the nursery and had a good understanding of daily routines. They were developing appropriate social skills and showed good awareness of simple rules and hygiene practices. Staff promoted healthy eating through snack routines.
- In communication and language, the programme was very good. Staff in both classes provided a wide range of opportunities for children to talk, listen and enjoy books in different contexts. The Gaelic medium nursery teacher used repetition effectively to support children's Gaelic language skills. All children were learning to listen carefully to stories and instructions and to talk in small groups. Effective use was made of books in play areas, labels on pictures and simple posters. Most staff provided good opportunities for children to develop effective early writing skills in a range of different contexts. Some children were able to recognise their name in print and a few could write it.
- In the English medium nursery class, staff provided a good programme to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world. They encouraged the development of children's curiosity and investigative skills using a range of natural materials. Most children were developing good skills in number, colour, pattern and shape. Staff needed to organise more opportunities for children to use the outdoor learning environment. In the Gaelic medium nursery class the programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was fair. Children were learning about colours, numbers and shapes. They needed more opportunities to observe, investigate and solve simple problems. Staff did not provide suitably stimulating activities to engage children's curiosity. Opportunities to meet visitors or make visits to places of interest within the local environment were limited.
- Staff in the English medium nursery class provided a good programme in expressive and aesthetic development. Children had good opportunities for role-play in the nursery hospital. Staff provided a range of art and craft activities for children but these were often adult led. Children needed more choice in these activities. Children enjoyed singing songs and rhymes and were able to use musical instruments freely to explore sound. In the Gaelic medium nursery class the programme for expressive and aesthetic development was fair. Staff provided some opportunities for children to develop skills in printing, painting and making collages. Children needed more opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings through art and role-play. Staff provided some activities for children to engage in singing and music making. They should encourage children's use of simple percussion instruments further.

- In the English medium nursery class staff provided a good programme in physical development and movement. Staff provided opportunities to develop hand control in a variety of activities. However, opportunities for energetic play were limited as children only had weekly access to the school gym hall. Staff needed to provide daily opportunities for energetic play. In the Gaelic medium nursery class the programme for physical development and movement was very good. Children were developing good hand and finger control through using a range of small toys, play equipment and the computer. Children had daily energetic play in the gym hall within the Gaelic medium building.

## **Support for children and families**

Staff generally provided good support to children and their families. Most staff were sensitive to individual needs and responded positively to concerns raised. Attractive story bags had been made and were popular with most children and families. Staff should consider parental responses to these story bags to improve their effectiveness in supporting children's learning. There was a planned programme of induction for children transferring to primary school. Information on children's progress was shared with parents and the receiving P1 teacher.

Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with most aspects of the work of the nursery classes. Some, however, were unhappy with lack of access to designated waiting areas within the school when bringing and collecting nursery children.

In the English medium nursery class there was a planned programme of parents' meetings and workshops. Parents were encouraged to assist within the playrooms. Current security arrangements, however, limited opportunities for informal daily communication.

In the Gaelic medium nursery class, staff needed to explore ways of encouraging parents to be more actively involved in their children's learning.

Both nursery teachers had a very good understanding of the procedures for supporting children with special educational needs. They had begun to develop individualised educational programmes and had made effective links with other support agencies.

## **Management**

The headteacher provided good leadership. She and her depute, who had delegated responsibility for managing the nursery, were approachable and had developed good relationships with staff, parents and children. They were strongly committed to supporting the differing needs of both classes. Both nursery teachers who were responsible for the day-to-day running of the nursery classes provided very good support to the management team. The headteacher should continue to explore opportunities for collaborative working between both staff teams. The nursery teacher in the Gaelic Medium Class provided a very good role model to staff.

All the appropriate policies, procedures and records were in place. Staff followed the local authority child protection guidelines. Most staff were trained in education and childcare and were encouraged to participate in further development and training. The ratio of staff to children was in line with National Care Standards.

Staff were involved in self-evaluation procedures. They contributed to evaluating the quality of the nursery and identified areas for improvement. Nursery priorities, which were incorporated within the whole school development plan, were being implemented.

Systems were in place to monitor the quality of learning. The management team should use the system to ensure consistency of provision across both nursery classes.

## **Key strengths**

English speaking nursery class.

- Very good relationships between staff and children.
- Very effective staff team.
- Very good programmes in emotional, personal and social development and communication and language.

Gaelic speaking nursery class.

- Very good programme to support children in the Gaelic medium.
- Gaelic speaking nursery teacher was a very good role model.
- Very good programmes in emotional, personal and social development and physical development and movement.

In both.

- Very good support for children with special educational needs.
- The commitment of the management team to support the differing needs across both nurseries.

## **Recommendations for improvement**

English speaking nursery class.

- Staff should make better use of the outdoor learning environment.
- Staff should provide daily opportunities for energetic play.
- Staff should improve informal, daily communication with parents.

Gaelic speaking nursery class.

- Staff should improve the organisation and use of space to meet children's needs more fully.
- Some staff should improve their interactions with children to extend and develop their learning.
- Staff should provide more opportunities for children to express their thoughts and feelings in music, art and role-play.
- Staff should involve parents more fully in their children's learning.

In both.

- The headteacher should explore regular opportunities for collaborative working between both staff teams.

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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