

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

26 October 2005

**Coulhill Primary School Nursery Class
Coul Park
Alness
IV17 0RD**

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

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.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report you should write either to the Care Commission or to HM Inspectorate of Education at the address below. If you are still dissatisfied with our services, you can contact your member of the Scottish Parliament (or, if you prefer, any other MSP). You can also contact the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and Agencies.

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Introduction

Coulhill Primary School Nursery Class was inspected in May 2005 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. The nursery catered for pre-school children aged three to five years. At the time of the inspection the roll was 74.

The environment

Standard 2

The nursery for three-year-old children was located in a very old pre-fabricated building based within the school grounds. The external fabric was extremely worn and in some places rotting and falling apart. There were issues in relation to the security of the property as it had been broken into twice in recent weeks. The accommodation needed significant improvements to be fit for the provision of a care service. It was the recommendation of a Health and Safety Review in February 2004 that the building be replaced. The wooden fire escape had come away from the building some time ago and had yet to be reinstated. The building was not connected to the school's fire alarm system. Internally, the general fabric of the premises was very poor. The flooring was worn and there were large areas of peeling paint on the ceiling. Toilet provision was poor, with no discreet nappy changing facilities. There was no hot water to the sinks for the children to wash their hands. A small enclosed outdoor play area was well used to provide energetic play and to extend children's understanding of nature. However, this area was also run down and in need of attention.

The nursery for children aged four years was located within the main school building. The accommodation was bright, clean and pleasant. However, the toilet provision was limited and was shared with the children in P1. There was no hot water available. The nursery had access to the school gym for short periods on a daily basis for physical activities. There was limited access to a small area for outdoor play and gardening activities. However, the area was not enclosed or secure.

Staff had created attractive and informative displays of children's work and photographs in the entrance areas to both nurseries. The layout of each nursery was such that it allowed for the children to play independently or in small groups.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff interaction with children was friendly and supportive. Overall, they made effective use of discussion and questioning to

engage children's interest and focus their thinking. Staff provided a broad range of experiences in which children could interact with one another and learn through their play. However, too many activities were organised and led by adults. Children did not have sufficient opportunity to develop and extend their learning through their chosen experiences.

Although staff observed children's play and recorded their progress in learning, the quality of their observations was not always consistent. Some observations did not contain enough information to enable staff to plan appropriately challenging learning experiences for individual children. Staff shared information on children's progress with parents at review meetings twice per year.

Features of the programmes for children included the following.

- The programme to support children's emotional, personal and social development was very good. Staff were respectful and provided very good models of social interaction when speaking to children. They used praise effectively to recognise children's achievements and boost self esteem. Children were confident, relaxed and helpful. They showed consideration for one another, taking turns when playing games and sharing resources in gardening activities.
- The programme for communication and language was very good. Staff were extending children's awareness of words and print when discussing signs and symbols on local buildings. Children showed a keen interest in books when relaxing in the book area and using them to find information on nature topics. They listened attentively to stories and demonstrated good understanding in response to simple questions. Children talked confidently and staff gave them appropriate time and support to enable them to explain their thinking clearly. They experimented with writing materials in their play.
- The programme to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world was good. Staff provided good opportunities for children to interact with members of the community to extend their understanding of the world of work and citizenship. Children were learning about nature and growth when observing minibeasts and joining in gardening activities in the outdoor area. Staff were developing their use of information and communications technology (ICT) to provide further opportunities for children to learn through investigation.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Staff encouraged children to explore rhythm and sound in music making and introduced children to a variety of musical styles. They provided a wide range of role-play and drama experiences in response to children's interests. Some children were keen to explore colour and texture and showed a good awareness of shape and form when using art and craft materials. They did not have sufficient opportunity to plan and explore their own ideas to create large, corporate pieces of art work.
- The programme for physical development and movement was good. Staff provided a good range of resources to

enable children to develop effective hand control. Children were confident and were developing appropriate levels of skill when using scissors, the computer mouse and when drawing. Staff provided some energetic activity indoors and outdoors each day. However, the amount of time available was limited by the restrictions of the daily timetable.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

Staff in the playrooms had established positive relationships with children. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their children were happy and well supported. However, parents did express a range of concerns. Almost all parents were very dissatisfied with the poor condition of the accommodation for children aged three years. Some commented that there was insufficient communication and consultation between staff and parents and between the headteacher and parents.

There was an appropriate programme of visits of staff and children to support children at the time of transition to P1. Staff worked closely with parents and other agencies to provide effective support to children with additional needs.

Management

Standard 14

There were some important weaknesses in the leadership of the nursery. The headteacher had been appointed in 2002. From the time of her appointment she had focused her attention on the development needs of the primary school and had not given sufficient consideration to the needs of nursery. The headteacher considered the work of staff valuable, but needed to ensure that communication was effective at all times. The deputy headteacher had delegated responsibility for the nursery within her remit. She reviewed staff planning on a termly basis and paid informal visits to the age four nursery class. The senior management team did not take a sufficiently active role in monitoring, evaluating or supporting the work of staff. They made very little contact with the staff, parents and children in the age three nursery. The local authority recognised that the senior management team would benefit from further support.

An appropriate range of policies and procedures was in place and these were being implemented by staff. Staff had received training and had a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to child protection matters. They had received copies of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice. Staff held relevant qualifications in early years education and childcare. A system of annual appraisals for nursery staff had been developed and was due to be implemented.

Although accidents and incidents were recorded, the documentation needed to be improved to ensure effective and confidential communication with parents.

Staff worked hard to provide good quality learning experiences for children. They had undertaken some evaluation of the nursery. In particular, they had identified the need for more effective support from the management team. No plan for improvement had been developed. However, the headteacher

intended to address these issues within the next improvement plan.

Key strengths

- Happy, confident and motivated children.
- The good quality experiences offered to children in each area of the curriculum.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

There was one recommendation from the previous Care Commission Inspection in May 2004 which had been actioned. However, the requirement which related to the review of the suitability of the premises for the three-year-olds' nursery was still outstanding.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should improve aspects of the programmes as identified in this report.
- The management team should establish effective communication with parents and staff.
- The headteacher should put in place a systematic and rigorous process of monitoring and evaluation to provide support to staff and ensure that the needs of the nursery are met.
- The headteacher should take a more active role in leading the work of the nursery.

Requirements

- As a matter of priority, the nursery accommodation used for the three-year-old children to be fit for the provision of a care service by the beginning of the next school term. Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 114 Regulation 10.

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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