

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

29 June 2005

**Dochgarroch Primary School Nursery Class
Dochgarroch
Inverness
IV3 8JG**

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

Dochgarroch Primary School Nursery Class was inspected in March 2005 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 pre-school children aged three to five years. At the time of the inspection the roll was 12.

The environment

Standard 2

The nursery was located in an attractive building within the grounds of the primary school. Useful information for parents and carers was displayed in the nursery foyer. The nursery classroom was secure, accessible and provided a bright, pleasant and colourful environment. Staff had arranged the play area to provide opportunities for children to play by themselves or in groups. There was a range of play resources in place. However, staff should review the layout of the playroom to provide opportunities for energetic play indoors. Staff had created attractive displays of children's work throughout the nursery.

Children had some opportunities for planting in the school playground. Staff made good use of the local environment for energetic play and to extend children's skills of observation and enquiry. There were plans to further develop the local environment. Staff carried out appropriate risk assessments of activities.

Staff made occasional use of the school playground, particularly when the field area was temporarily out of use, for outdoor play. However, this area was unsafe and activities needed to be organised more effectively. The education authority should work with the school to provide a safe, secure, designated outdoor play area for the nursery. Resources for energetic and physical play needed to be increased and better storage needed to be provided for this.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff had created a warm and caring environment. They made good use of praise to encourage effort and to make children feel valued. Key workers knew children well and were sensitive to their needs.

Play and adult-led activities were organised across each morning session. The programme was not well balanced as the indoor programme provided too much emphasis on adult-directed activities. There were insufficient opportunities for children to choose their own activities, develop independence and take responsibility for their own learning. Staff needed to restructure the daily programme. They required to review the balance between adult-led experiences and free play, both indoors and outside.

Staff planned a range of themes, seasonal events and festivals. They used a daily planning sheet to plan for children's progress and development. However, staff required to take more account of children's interests and needs when planning the curriculum. They needed to offer a wider range of learning opportunities across each morning session. Staff made use of the information provided by the associated playgroup when children joined the nursery. They should continue to develop their procedures for planning and assessment and focus more on specific next steps in children's learning.

Features of the programmes for children included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was good. Children were happy, friendly and familiar with daily routines and simple rules. They were developing friendships and self confidence. Most children were aware of the needs of others. They were able to take responsibility for personal hygiene and for tidying away materials. They participated enthusiastically in a tooth-brushing programme. Opportunities for children to develop skills of independence and concentration were too limited.
- The programme for communication and language was good overall. Most children listened carefully and were beginning to talk well to one another during play and group snack time. However, they required more opportunities to listen carefully in small groups and to develop talking and listening in appropriately challenging activities. All children recognised their name in print and the majority could write it. Staff did not always make appropriate use of labels and signs to develop children's awareness of print. They needed to provide further opportunities for children to extend their early reading skills through play.
- The programme for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world was good. Regular outings in the local area included walks to the local shops, post office, the marina and beach. The nursery was part of the Eco school project. Children were learning about recycling through cleaning sand and using a compost bin. Most children could recognise colours, count and recite simple numbers well. Children required more opportunities to develop a wider range of skills in early mathematics, especially sorting, matching and grouping. They had insufficient opportunities to use the computer.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was fair. Children were developing some skills in painting.

Although children took part in a few art and craft activities, their opportunities for free choice across the whole of each morning session were too limited. Children enjoyed taking part in role-play, both inside and outdoors. They sang well but required more opportunities for free choice and self-expression using percussion instruments.

- The programme for physical development and movement was fair. Children were developing hand control through timetabled use of painting, drawing, hammering and throwing. The nursery made regular visits to Abriachan Forest to develop energetic activities. However, staff required to provide children with daily, challenging and stimulating opportunities for play outside. Children had insufficient opportunities to use large-scale climbing equipment.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

The nursery staff offered good support to children and families. Relationships with parents were positive. Parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with the nursery. They valued frequent opportunities to talk informally with staff and felt well informed through regular newsletters and an attractive notice board.

The nursery had a well-planned programme of induction for children transferring from playgroup to nursery and from nursery to P1. Nursery children had regular opportunities to visit P1. Staff made good use of transition records. They shared information about children's progress with parents and the P1 teacher.

The headteacher and nursery staff liaised with outside agencies and other pre-five centres to provide a good level of support for children with additional learning needs. Children who required additional support benefited from regular visits made by a range of support agencies.

Nursery staff had received recent training in child protection and showed an awareness of policy and procedures.

Management

Standard 14

The headteacher provided good leadership. She was highly committed and supportive and had plans for developing the service. Although she had class teaching responsibilities, she visited the nursery regularly. The nursery had become an integral part of the school. The approachable, caring and experienced staff team, supported by the coordinator teacher, worked well together to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the nursery.

There were effective systems for communicating with and consulting parents and carers. There was an appropriate range of policies and procedures in place to support the welfare of children. These had been shared with staff, parents and carers. The nursery maintained very good adult-to-child ratios.

The headteacher was aware of the Scottish Social Services Council and its role in registering and regulating the workforce and their education and training. Staff had received copies of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice.

There were formal procedures in place for regular staff review. Weekly staff meetings were minuted and all staff had been involved in the formal evaluation of the service. Staff were supported and encouraged to access relevant training opportunities to enhance their practice and there were systems for liaising with other centres. The work of the nursery was included in the development plan for the whole school and appropriate priorities identified. The headteacher needed to develop more rigorous, formal procedures for monitoring the quality of the nursery provision.

Key strengths

- Positive relationships with parents.
- Effective procedures for children's learning about recycling and the environment.
- Good transition procedures between playgroup and nursery and nursery and P1.
- The approachable, caring and experienced staff team and happy children.

Recommendations for improvement

- The education authority should work with the school to provide a safe and secure, designated outside play area for the nursery. Appropriate storage facilities should be provided.
- Staff should continue to develop procedures for planning and assessing children's progress. They should make more use of assessment information to plan more specific next steps in children's learning.
- The headteacher should improve the programmes for children's learning and development as outlined in this report.
- The headteacher should develop more rigorous and systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the nursery.

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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