

Stronsay Junior High Nursery Day Care of Children

Stronsay Junior High School
Stronsay
Orkney
KW17 2AE

Telephone: 01857 616 246

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 September 2024

Service provided by:
Orkney Islands Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001951

Service no:
CS2003016052

About the service

Stronsay Junior High Nursery provides a day care of children service to a maximum of 20 children at any one time aged from two years to not yet attending primary school.

Stronsay Junior High Nursery operates from a designated class room within Stronsay Junior High School. The nursery playroom is spacious and bright creating a relaxed, welcoming environment for children. Direct access to a large outdoor play area allows children to freely explore both the indoors and out with ease.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 18th September 2024 between 08:45 and 14:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector 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 families
- spoke with the manager and staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were safe, loved and secure in their attachments with staff.
- Children were developing their curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills through high quality play experiences.
- Children were very happy and engaged and having fun taking part in various activities, both indoors and outdoors.
- Very good use was being made of loose parts and open ended resources to enrich children's play and learning.
- Children experienced very warm, caring and nurturing support from staff who knew them very well.
- Positive relationships with families supported continuity of care and effective partnerships.
- The manager and staff were committed to the ongoing development of the service to provide children with a service of a high standard.
- Continuous improvement was supported by good quality assurance systems.

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 key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

The children were very happy, settled and having fun. We observed that positive attachments had been formed between staff and the children which contributed to children developing a sense of worth and a sense of belonging. Children experienced warm, kind, nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. Staff provided reassurance, praised children and offered cuddles when needed. This contributed to children feeling happy and secure and promoted an inclusive care setting where all children mattered.

As a small service, children's wellbeing was supported by staff who knew them very well and could confidently discuss their individual needs and the strategies to support them. This meant that all children were respected and valued as individuals. Each child attending the service had a personal plan. These ensured that everyone had a clear understanding of children's individual needs and how to support them to reach their full potential. Personal plans were completed and routinely reviewed in partnership with parents to ensure that they reflected children's current needs and the strategies required to meet these needs.

Children and families benefitted from a service that recognised the importance of establishing strong working relationships with families to support children. Staff worked in partnership with families when developing personal plans and support strategies. This ensured that children received appropriate levels of consistent care and support. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time and there were opportunities for parents to spend time in the nursery.

Where children required further support, staff had established good working relationships with other agencies and were confident in their role in liaising with them. They worked closely with other professionals to ensure consistency in their approach. As a result, children experienced a collaborative approach to their care and development.

Children experienced positive snack and lunch times which were relaxed, sociable and unhurried. Staff were aware of any allergies or dietary needs which helped them to keep children safe. Children were supported to develop their independence skills, for example pouring their drinks and self serving snack. Staff sat with children which provided opportunities to form and maintain relationships and support language and social skills.

Staff were all very aware of their role and responsibility to safeguard children. They had completed child protection training and fully understood the procedure to follow should the need arise. The staff had a knowledge and understanding of the Care Inspectorate SIMOA project - Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act. This contributed towards children health, safety and wellbeing.

Quality Indicator 1.3 : Play and Learning

Children actively led their play and learning and were happy and engaged. It was a bright and sunny day and the children particularly enjoyed spending time outdoors taking part in a range of activities. For the majority of the time, children benefitted from uninterrupted play, allowing them to become absorbed in their play and have fun, at times inviting staff into their play. This increased children's happiness and engagement.

Planning approaches were child led and followed children's interests and needs. There were floor books which were used to record children's interests and illustrated how interests were extended and developed. Play spaces were well resourced and promoted learning through real life experiences. There was a good mix of spontaneous and planned experiences. Children were offered stimulating and interesting experiences which promoted curiosity, imagination, problem solving and collaborative play.

Quality play, learning and development was taking place during the inspection. Numeracy and literacy were naturally incorporated into most play areas within the nursery. Children had the opportunity to develop their numeracy and literacy skills and mathematical language while playing with real life resources in the home corner, construction area and taking part in activities outdoors. For example, some of the children learnt about size, volume and speed as they rolled different balls down some tubes outside. Books were available throughout the nursery as were mark making materials.

Staff understood their role in supporting children's development and were adding further value to children's play and learning through their carefully considered interactions. Staff supported children to develop problem solving and decision making skills through effective questioning. They also encouraged children to develop risk assessment skills to keep themselves and their friends safe when playing.

Staff ensured that parents were well informed of children's learning, progression and next steps and were encouraged to give their feedback. Children's learning and achievements were recorded in their individual folders which were routinely shared with parents. Parents were also welcome to visit the nursery and attend stay and play sessions.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a safe, comfortable and inviting environment where they could play and learn. The playroom was comfortable and homely and benefitted from plenty of natural light and ventilation. Furniture and resources were of a high standard and organised to support free flow play indoors. Homely touches and natural resources helped children to feel valued and comfortable. Wall displays were attractive and contained interesting information about children's learning, which gave children a sense of ownership in the space. Children were confident moving around the spaces available, both indoors and in the enclosed outdoor play area.

There was a system to report any repairs and damaged items were promptly replaced. Suitable infection control procedures were in place, such as embedded handwashing before mealtimes and after outdoor play.

A secure entry system and close monitoring of visitors by staff contributed to children remaining safe. There were appropriate risk assessments in place which promoted the safety of the children as well as daily checks of the premises. As a result, children's health and wellbeing needs were prioritised.

Children enjoyed access to a well-resourced and well set out indoor play space which provided a rich learning environment. Each area was well defined and very well resourced to promote children's creativity, enquiry and curiosity. Quiet areas where children could rest, relax and be alone enabled them to set the pace of their play and further supported their emotional wellbeing. Consideration had been given to the variety of activities and experiences on offer to spark children's curiosity and imagination. Areas within the indoor play space had been set up to reflect the children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate materials, including natural and open ended resources, to extend their learning and offer challenge. Resources were easily accessible to children and supported independence, investigation and inquiry. We saw a variety of resources such as sand, musical instruments, paint and water. These provided children with opportunities to take part in sensory play and develop their creative skills.

Staff had a very good understanding of the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall wellbeing. The playroom had direct access to a large, fully enclosed outdoor play area. The outdoor play area offered children a fun and stimulating space where they could comfortably engage with a variety of creative, open ended and natural resources. Children had access to a breadth of rich and meaningful learning opportunities, including a mud kitchen, wheeled toys, large sand pit, water play and a planting area.

The outdoor space, supported children to develop their gross and fine motor skills, numeracy and literacy skills as well as explore risky play, and build their confidence and resilience. The children spent much of their day outdoors engaged in a range of activities either on their own or with their friends. Staff supported children to direct their own play and activities in the way they chose. There were lots of positive interactions by staff which supported children to develop their thinking and learning, and widened their skills while enjoying active play and fresh air.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are well led

Children benefitted from a positive ethos and a culture of continuous improvement. The manager promoted a positive attitude to change and recognised the importance of including all relevant stakeholders in developing a shared vision. The manager and staff were all committed to the continuous improvement of the service to secure high quality outcomes for the children.

Effective policies, procedures and quality assurance processes were in place to support the development and improvement of the service. There was a quality assurance calendar in place that ensured purposeful audits of various aspects of the nursery were routinely carried out. There was a improvement plan which identified priority action points to support positive outcomes for children. Current priorities for the service included supporting children to develop language and literacy skills and improving family engagement.

The manager was a regular visitor to the nursery to monitor the setting and observe staff practice to ensure children received high quality play and learning experiences. The manager also met with staff to discuss the continuous improvement of the service to secure progression and positive outcomes for children.

As well as monitoring visits completed by the manager, staff from the local authority's central early years team completed regular observation and monitoring visits.

The manager recognised the importance of involving children and parental engagement in the evaluation process. Involving children and their families contributed to building strong, trusting relationships and for children and families to feel included. This helped to promote a shared partnership in the delivery of high quality care for children. There were opportunities for parents to formally evaluate the service through questionnaires and comments/feedback sheets as well as provide feedback informally during daily contact.

Families were actively encouraged to participate in the life of the service through ongoing contact. Regular communication with families took place through a variety of methods, including daily face-to-face discussion, questionnaires and online platforms. Parents were also very welcome to spend time in the nursery. For example, the service had reintroduced stay and play sessions.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children. Therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

At the time of the inspection, there was only a very small number of children attending the service. There were two members of staff who each worked part time hours. As a consequence, apart from one hour at lunchtime when there were two staff, there was one staff member in the mornings while the other member of staff worked in the afternoons. A lone working risk assessment had been completed to ensure that children received appropriate support and supervision at all times. Deployment of staff throughout the day supported children to lead their play and engage in free flow opportunities whilst remaining safe.

The staff were skilled, kind and nurturing. They were motivated and committed to providing a happy and supportive environment for children. They were warm, caring and sensitive in their approach, which promoted a happy and secure environment. They were responsive and respectful of children during interactions and play which supported children to feel safe, secure and happy. Children enjoyed spending time with staff and were comfortable in their company.

Staff understood how skilled interactions supported children's play and learning. They had a good knowledge of children's individual developmental needs and were able to respond appropriately. Staff made use of effective questioning to extend children's thinking and problem solving skills. They understood how children's play could be extended when using open ended materials.

The staff had established positive relationships with the children's families and worked to ensure every family was welcomed and valued. Staff had regular communication with parents and had established positive relationships which enhanced children's experiences and promoted a partnership approach. Having good communication with families contributed to parents feeling included in their child's experiences at nursery and assisted staff when identifying how best to meet children's needs. Parents were positive in their comments about staff, their friendliness and how welcoming they were to both the children and their families.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at 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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