

**Sgoil Araich Loch A Tuath
Back
HS2 0LQ
Isle of Lewis
14 November 2007**

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 4 – Engaging With Children Standard 5 – Quality of Experience	Staff/child interaction Structure of the curriculum Children’s progress and development and learning through play
Standard 6 – Support and Development	Meeting children’s needs and care routines Partnership with parents
Standard 14 – Well-managed Service	Leadership and Self-evaluation

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

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths, some areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	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.

Introduction

Sgoil Araich Loch A' Tuath was inspected in June 2007 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 25 children attending at any one session. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 29. The playgroup provided education through the medium of Gaelic.

Key strengths

- A welcoming and stimulating playroom environment.
- High-quality learning experiences for children across the curriculum.
- The effective teamwork of staff.

How good is the quality of children's experience?

Standard 4 & 5

Staff were enthusiastic and knew individual children well. They interacted effectively to encourage children to develop their ideas fully and used questioning to extend learning. Staff took good account of children's interests but they did not sufficiently involve children in their learning. Staff made some use of assessment information to plan children's next steps in learning and to record their progress. This information was not used effectively to meet individual learning needs or to communicate progress with parents.

Overall, staff provided a very good range of activities across the curriculum. Children were very happy within the playroom and made purposeful choices in their learning. They had developed friendships and cooperated well with each other. They demonstrated independence during snack and dressing for outdoor play. Children were making very good progress in communication and language. They eagerly took part in extended conversations about their interests and used descriptive vocabulary to explain their ideas. Staff supported children very well to find out information about tadpoles and shells in non-fiction books. Children were very motivated in their writing. Many older

children could write their name and identify the initial letter sound. Children made good use of their senses to explore materials from the beach and closely observed tadpoles and caterpillars developing in the playroom. They were gaining in confidence whilst using a computer and were learning to control a programmable toy. Children were making very good progress in early mathematics. They counted with confidence and were able to identify and order numbers. A few children made 3D shapes with magnetic building toys. Children freely used the very good opportunities to create individual pictures and models from their imagination. Younger children particularly enjoyed mixing their own colours at the painting easel. Children were very purposeful in the role-play café. They dressed up, wrote orders and served meals. They joined in to sing familiar songs and made music with instruments. Children had good opportunities to be energetic. They went on regular challenging walks and developed skills with small equipment at a weekly gym session. However, they had no opportunities to be freely energetic within the playroom.

How well are children supported?

Standard 6

Staff warmly welcomed children and their families and offered them good support. They shared valuable information informally about the group on a daily basis and displayed helpful information on notice boards. Staff encouraged parents to share their skills with the group. However, they did not fully involve parents in their child's learning or provide sufficient information about their experiences. Those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with most aspects of the group and, in particular, the work of the staff. A few wished for more information about the work of the group and their child's progress.

Staff were fully informed and had undertaken training regarding new legislation designed to support children with additional support needs. They worked closely with outside professionals to provide appropriate assistance to children and their families. Staff had well-planned transition arrangements in place and had very good relationships with the local school. Staff and primary school teachers exchanged visits and transition reports to help maintain the continuity of learning.

Leading and improving the centre

Standard 14

Leadership of the playgroup was very good. The manager was hardworking, enthusiastic and committed to the group and the Gaelic medium. She was ably supported by assistant play leaders. Together, they worked effectively as a team. The manager liaised closely with a link officer who provided valuable support in leading the learning within the group. She had very good relationships with the playgroup committee who raised additional funds and organised events for families.

Assistant play leaders worked hard and were flexible in their working hours to meet the needs of the group. These staff had taken part in professional review and enhanced their skills in teaching and learning through a number of courses. They had recently updated their training regarding the protection of children and were fully aware of policies and procedures. They were fully aware of the requirements of The Scottish Social Services Council.

Self-evaluation was good. An improvement plan was in place and good progress had been made in meeting some of the targets. Staff had participated in an audit of the playgroup and were well aware of future priorities for development. The link officer monitored playroom practice on a regular basis and provided valuable oral and written feedback. The group had plans to develop a calendar of self-evaluation activities and collate information about their work to provide a clear picture of improvement.

Issues from previous inspections

Response to recommendations or to requirements or enforcement action made at previous inspection.

At the last Care Commission singleton inspection there were four recommendations and one requirement. The requirement has been met, as have three of the recommendations. The fourth is on going and is included within the text.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should improve their use of assessment information to clearly define next steps in learning and involve children in planning.
- Staff should improve procedures for communicating children's progress and the work of the group with parents.

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of the centre, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The centre and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the centre, will provide a progress report to parents.

Shona E.S. Taylor
HM Inspectorate of Education

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like an additional copy of this report

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

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