Merry Go Round Playgroup
Day Care of Children

The Institute
Aytoun Hall
High Street
Auchterarder
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Telephone: 07952 267 537

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
8 September 2022

Service provided by:
The Parent Committee of Merry Go Round Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003002184

Service no:
CS2003010137

About the service

Merry Go Round Playgroup runs from the Aytoun Hall in Auchterarder. The service is provided by a voluntary management committee who have overall responsibility for the service and is registered to provide care to a maximum number of 24 children aged between two years and four months and an age to attend primary school.

The playgroup runs for two mornings per week from 9.15 to 11.15. The children make use of different play areas set up in the hall and have access to toilet facilities. There is no outdoor space.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 6 September 2022 between 09.00 and 11.30. We returned to the service on 8 September 2022 between 09.30 and 13.00 to finish the inspection and provide feedback to the manger and a staff member. 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 four people using the service and six of their family members
- spoke with three staff and management
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and having fun
- Transitions into the playgroup were well supported
- Children enjoyed a healthy and nutritious snack
- Staff used effective questioning techniques to extend children's thinking
- The provision of natural, loose parts and opened ended materials should be available to children during every play group session
- Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests
- A small cosier space should be provided for the children to rest in and have quieter time if needed
- As there is no access to an outdoor space, the staff should consider outings out of the play group within the children's wider community.
- Staff were motivated and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care.
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation systems had been improved.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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 made an evaluation of good for this key question as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences and support positive outcomes.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, confident, and enjoying their time at playgroup. They happily played independently or cooperatively together in small groups. The overall ambience was calm, and children were having fun.

Children new to the playgroup were provided with comfort and reassurance which supported them with the transition from home to the setting. We saw these children had formed positive relationships with staff and quickly settled into their routines. Parents told us that staff were kind and caring and spoke very positively about their nurturing skills, especially when children first attended the service. These sensitive interactions supported children's emotional security and supported them to confidently start engaging in play activities.

Children's personal plans were detailed and effective in keeping children safe. For example, allergy information was transferred onto place mats used at snack time which clearly identified any allergies or food intolerances. Families shared information about children's likes and dislikes and had identified a target for children to work on with staff while attending the playgroup. These supported staff to meet children's individual needs and support them to develop new skills in preparation for school nursery.

Children were learning to make positive choices about behaviour supported by staff who were praising them for making good choices which helped them build positive relationships with their peers. Staff used behaviour techniques which were respectful and supported children's emotional wellbeing. We saw staff talked with the children about feelings which helped them to develop language skills and an understanding of respecting others.

Children enjoyed eating a range of healthy and nutritious food at snack time, including fresh fruit. After snack had been served, staff sat with children, promoting manners and encouraged children to try new food. However, children were not involved in the preparation of their snack, and we saw there was limited opportunities provided for choice, independence, and development of self-help skills. We spoke with staff about how they could improve the snack experience through small changes. For example, providing smaller jugs for the snack table so children can serve themselves drinks, and putting fruit in the centre of the table so children can choose what they would like to eat. Staff were responsive to our suggestions and on our second visit the snack experience had improved which supported a more homely, and a positive learning experience for the children.

1.2 Play and learning

Since the last inspection staff had improved their skills in using open-ended questioning. Children were given the appropriate time to respond, and staff were skilled in their response. This approach supported children to effectively extend and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills.

Children were supported with their learning at home with progress and achievements shared with families. Parents told us they liked the daily updates on face book and used this to start conversations with their

children about their time at playgroup. One parent told us 'The information we receive is detailed and allows me to start conversations with my child at home'.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests and staff regularly discussed how children were progressing. Families shared information about what skills they would like their children to develop while attending the playgroup. These supported staff to meet children's individual needs and helped them develop new skills in preparation for school nursery. Parents told us the staff talked to them regularly about their child's development which contributed to them feeling included in their child's learning and development.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences and support positive outcomes.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The playgroup used a shared hall, twice a week for the playgroup sessions. The large space was well thought out giving children opportunities to be creative and physically active using a range of equipment. We saw that the resources and toys were well used by the children who moved freely between areas that captured their interests.

Children were leading their own play and learning. They were provided with easy access to toys and activities from a well-resourced cupboard containing labelled boxes which encouraged children's independence and choice. On our second visit, staff had enhanced the provision of natural, loose parts and opened ended materials. We suggested that children have access to these resources as their core provision at every session. This would encourage and promote their curiosity, imagination, and investigation skills further.

There were suitable arrangements in place to ensure equipment and resources were safe for children to use. Staff worked well together to identify and minimise any risks and ensured the environment was safe for children. They spoke to children about keeping safe while also encouraging a healthy approach to adventurous play. For example, they supported children well to stop running around the hall and encouraged them to think about how this would keep themselves and others safe.

A photobook of children's experiences celebrated their successes, and we saw children enjoy flick through them with their friends. They proudly showed us what they had enjoyed and told us, 'Look what I did here, this was fun'. Children's artwork was attractively displayed which helped children to feel valued and respected.

We spoke to staff about developing a small cosier space for the children to hide and rest in. This would provide children with a quieter space where they could relax and would enable them to have some alone time if needed.

The playgroup does not have direct access to an outdoor area as the hall is situated on a main street. Staff told us how the building limited the ways in which they could support children in accessing the outdoors. We suggested ways in which children could begin to experience opportunities within their local community every so often. For example, a trip to the local shop to buy food for snack. Parents told us due to the short

session of the playgroup they did not expect the children to access the outdoors. They were happy with the large play equipment, which enabled their children to be physically active while attending the service.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences and support positive outcomes.

3.1 Quality Assurance and improvement are led well

The manager was a visible leader, working alongside staff, they were committed to improving the quality of the service by ensuring children and their families felt valued and included in the running of the playgroup. Parents and staff were aware of the service aims which included: ensuring smooth transitions, encouraging listening and developing self-expression. Together they had effectively sustained a shared vision for the setting.

Staff morale was high, they told us they often met with the manager and parent committee and found them to be approachable and supportive in all areas of their practice. It was evident that there was a positive ethos which supported staff to be invested in the service.

A basic Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was being monitored by staff in a shared communication diary. We asked the manager to further develop this plan to support improvements found during the inspection and to include realistic timescales of when actions would be addressed. This would contribute to an increased pace of positive change and development within the service.

Self-evaluation systems had been improved since the last inspection. For example, parental questionnaires gathered informative information from the children and their families on current service delivery and priorities for future planning. Parents confirmed that they felt included in the service and felt the playgroup was tailored around their children. One parent told us, 'We are always asked our views and thoughts'.

Quality assurance processes were in place and had improved since the last inspection. Actions to support improvement were recorded in a diary and shared with staff and the parents committee. We suggested how quality assurance processes could be improved further to ensure they remain effective in identifying service improvements.

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.

4.3 Staff Deployment

Staff demonstrated enabling attitude's and believed in children reaching their full potential. They were motivated and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. Staff told us, as they were a small team, they felt included in all aspects of the service provided and were happy within their roles. They identified strongly with the service and a strong team ethos was evident which supported children to feel safe and secure.

Sufficient staffing levels were in place to ensure children's needs were met in a consistent and caring manner. Staff were deployed in a way that meant there was a good mix of skills and experience within the playgroup. They worked and communicated very well together, which resulted in effective supervision of the children throughout the playgroup session.

Staff morale was high, they told us they often met with the manger and parent committee and found them to be both approachable and supportive in all areas of their practice. It was evident that there was a positive ethos which supported staff to be invested in the service.

Staff were supported with their continued professional learning to ensure they were competent and skilled. Online training and support from the service to access external training opportunities meant staff were able to keep updated with mandatory training and could access training that was relevant to their training needs. Staff should continue to use current best practice documents to reflect on and develop their knowledge and practice further.

Staff did not take breaks due to the playgroup session running for a few hours and absences of staff were managed very well. Parent committee members were available to attend the playgroup session if there were any planned or unplanned absences. These approach's ensured minimal disruption to children's care, routines, and experiences.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The service should devise a planning system which is responsive to the needs and interests of the children attending.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that:

'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in a way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 1 October 2021.

Action taken since then

Information is gathered on children's interests and informs planning processes, all information is recorded in a communication book which is shared with staff. Seasonal planning is integrated into monthly plans. Planning systems have improved.

This improvement has been met

Previous area for improvement 2

It is recommended that the service use the feedback gathered from staff, children, and their families for improvement. By using the gathered views, improvements identified through inspection and the self-evaluation process, develop a service improvement plan to support continued improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state:

'I am actively encouraged to be involved in improving the service I use, in a spirit of genuine partnership.' (HSCS 4.7).

This area for improvement was made on 1 October 2021.

Action taken since then

Parental responses informed service developments as questionnaires had improved. Asking open ended questions gathered informative information from families and the children attending which resulted in improved outcomes.

This improvement has been met

Previous area for improvement 3

A robust and effective programme of quality assurance should take place to ensure that improvements are identified and actioned to have a positive impact on the outcomes for children.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19)

This area for improvement was made on 1 October 2021.

Action taken since then

Quality assurance systems had improved since the last inspection. The small staff team discussed improvements on a daily basis and any actions for developments were noted in a communication diary and shared with staff and the parent committee.

This improvement has been met

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	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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