Springholm Nursery
Day Care of Children

Springholm Memorial Hall
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

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Service provided by:
Springholm Nursery

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CS2003010857

About the service

Springholm Nursery is an early learning and childcare service situated in a community building in the village of Springholm, Dumfries and Galloway. The service is registered to provide day care for 16 children aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school. The provider is Springholm Nursery committee with the registered manager providing day to day running of the service with two staff and a modern apprentice.

The setting has the sole use of the village hall which comprises one large playroom where children play, rest and eat snack. Children have lunch at the local primary school which is in very easy walking distance of the hall. The kitchen is for staff only to prepare snacks. There is a large outdoor space adjacent to the premises, which children use throughout the day.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced visit which took place on 3 December from 09:15 to 15:30 and 4 December 2024 from 9:00 to 16:00. 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 6 children, 5 parents and used responses from questionnaires to parents and staff
- spoke with 4 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents including staff files, improvement plan, policies and procedures and children's records.

Key messages

Confident happy children who were enjoying a wide variety of experiences which supported them to learn and develop new skills and interests.

Children were respected by a caring staff team who knew them very well and were sensitive to their needs.

A planning process which put children at the centre and supported partnership working with children and their families.

A committed management team with a clear vision and understanding of how their service will continue to support children and their families within their community.

Effective quality assurance systems which supported continuous improvement throughout the setting.

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?	5 - Very 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? 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 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were being cared for by a warm, caring and nurturing staff team and as a result were confident, secure and developing friendships. Relationships were very important within the setting and the whole staff team have worked hard to form strong partnerships with families, the community and one another. Parents told us: "I trust them with my child and have formed a good relationship while my child has attended the nursery".

Staff knew the children in their care very well and were able to tell us about their individual needs and preferences. All children in the setting had a personal plan which was based on information gathered from parents when they first started. Staff had developed their planning process to ensure that children were at the heart of what they did and as a result involved parents and children by sharing information and reviewing their care with them very regularly. As well as conversations and review meetings, the setting had introduced an online app, which they used to share each child's learning story including observations and photographs with families. Parents told us "I come in for regular reviews on my child's progress and get my updates on the learning journal also staff update me every day on how my child got on that day".

Staff engaged with children very well. They praised them and comforted them appropriately. The nursery was a communication friendly setting and were developing their use of Makaton so that children could use a variety of ways to express themselves. At the time of the inspection, children were learning to sign Merry Christmas. The setting had also been developing how they listen to children's voices and were supporting children to understand their rights by using the United Nations Rights of the Child. Staff listened to children, sought their opinions throughout the day and answered questions openly and in an understandable way, which helped create a respectful environment where children were valued and trusted.

Snack and mealtimes were sociable occasions when staff encouraged children to chat and share their thoughts. Snacks were eaten within the nursery setting where children helped with preparation and were encouraged to be independent. Meals were served in the nearby school, and children would benefit from more opportunities to be helpful and involved. All staff were aware of allergies and dietary preferences. Children were enabled to make choices and their feedback about meals was welcomed.

Family and community involvement was an area of focus for the service, and they were providing a variety of opportunities for both family and wider community involvement in the setting. Parents valued the opportunities provided by the weekly Toddler session as this enabled them to meet other parents, support younger children to get to know the setting and be supported by staff. We discussed how the snack time offered could be improved for both children and parents so that everyone could be included in the meal.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun as they enjoyed high quality play and learning experiences. We heard laughter and happy chat throughout our visit, as staff supported them to be curious, experiment and try things out for themselves. Our observations and discussions showed that staff had a clear understanding of how children

develop and the importance of learning through play. Parents told us "My child enjoys having friendly staff who are always there to help her and teach her new things and educate her to things she can do better, she says the nursery is fun and she loves it".

Children were offered a wide variety of play and learning opportunities throughout the day. They were developing skills like balancing, problem solving and fine motor skills like threading and cutting. Children were able to play by themselves or with friends and chose where they wanted to play, including outdoors. They could also choose to take part in whole group activities like singing games and group chats when they were had the opportunity to discuss things which might affect them, like room layout, snacks and handwashing.

Children's creativity and curiosity were very well supported, through arts and crafts activities and science and technology. These experiences were enhanced by the use of QR codes on their tablets, which enabled them to find out about different techniques and styles, for example we observed them experimenting with the style of Kandinsky. Staff supported children's play by providing materials, answering questions and often developing and challenging thinking. They encouraged children's curiosity by providing interesting objects in their "What's in the Box" curiosity sessions.

Staff encouraged children to talk for a variety of purposes and we observed children having fun with language as they changed the words of popular songs. They engaged in number games and supported children to understand mathematical concepts like shape, size and volume. Although numeracy and literacy were evident throughout the play environment, children's learning would benefit from these being better integrated into play areas, like construction and the home corner, so that children understand the relevance of what they are doing.

Children's voice was at the heart of the planning process. Staff had continued to develop their planning to take account of children's interests, identified next steps from observations and the world around them. Staff discussed children's learning with them every week and their learning story was shared with parents every week on their digital learning platform. Children's learning and progress was also tracked on this app. This meant that staff and parents knew where each child was in their learning and were able to plan how they would take their learning forward.

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 were being cared for in a welcoming, spacious and safe environment which provided them with a wide variety of play and learning opportunities. The layout of furnishings, toys and materials enabled children to make choices about their day. Children were able to be active both indoors and out, as well as rest and take part in quiet activities like listening to stories and looking at books. Parents told us that there was a "wide range of resources and activities given to my child tailored to his interests and learning" and "my child enjoys water play, sand play, creating obstacle courses, looking at minibeasts, some gardening and looking at plants and trees".

The nursery shared the accommodation with other groups, and this meant that furnishings and toys often had to be tidied away. Whilst this was challenging it also meant that staff were able to adjust the layout of

the environment to meet children's changing needs and interests. Children's opinions were also sought about the layout of play resources and staff used their observations of children's play and how they were using the space to decide how the room should be set out. This enabled children's interests and play to flow naturally by giving them the space and materials to follow through their ideas.

The environment both indoors and outdoors was clean. Staff carried out daily health and safety checks. Infection control procedures were in place, and appropriate handwashing facilities had recently been installed in the playroom. We observed that children were following good hand washing practice. They knew when to wash their hands, including after the toilet, meals and when they came back inside.

Children were being cared for in a safe and secure environment. Access to the building was controlled and monitored. Registers and sign-in sheets meant that staff knew who was in the building and visitor ID was checked on arrival. Children were learning to keep themselves safe, for example when going to the school they were encouraged to take responsibility for looking and listening for cars. We agreed that children would benefit from more opportunities to be involved in assessing risk for themselves. This will help them to understand risk and enable them to make good decisions for themselves.

The building was in a good state of repair and there were plans in place to ensure continuous improvement, for example refreshing the walls and replacing the flooring. Additional plans were in place for extra storage, which will free up space within the building for administration and management of the setting. The building did have internet access which meant that children were enabled to use devices to find out about the world around them. All staff had had appropriate training on data protection. Children's records and confidential information were stored appropriately.

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 led well

Children and families were meaningfully involved in the service. The service was provided by a voluntary committee of parents and interested members of the community, which meant that they had regular opportunities to be involved in the running of the service and its improvement journey. There was a clear understanding of the pressures on families and challenges parents face when being involved. Committee meetings were regularly held online which enabled more people to be included and have a say. Parents told us: "we are often asked if we have any worries or ideas about developing the service, but I can't think of any as we are happy with service our child gets at nursery".

There was a well-defined vision for the setting which laid out how children would learn and develop through play and be supported by staff. This had been reviewed following their recent move back to the village hall by both staff and parents.

A meaningful improvement plan was in place, which was based on effective quality assurance processes, like practice audits, feedback from children and families, supervision and professional development reviews and self-evaluation. The manager had recently participated in the Care Inspectorate improvement programme and valued the learning, which she has continued to embed within the service. This meant that outcomes for children had improved significantly since the last inspection and ensures improvement will continue.

Self-evaluation was very well used within the service and a number of practice documents had been used to review what happens. For example, the Care Inspectorate mealtimes document had been used to improve the lunchtime experience for children. Staff had regular opportunities to reflect on practice within the setting. They met formally each week and had a regular focus area to look at, including self-evaluation and the improvement plan. Staff displayed a confident knowledge and understanding of child protection and we agreed that all staff would benefit from child protection being a regular focus area at team meetings. The improvement plan was clearly a working document, and we suggested that it would be helpful if it was more accessible so that notes could be added as they occur.

The management team work together well and lead the process effectively. They met regularly and discussed events and the needs of children and the setting. Management valued the benefits of being able to visit other settings and were keen to provide similar opportunities for their staff. Overall, they had a very good understanding of what was happening in their service and were committed to ensuring its continuous improvement.

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

Children were being cared for by a caring, committed and professional staff team. Across the team there was a wide mix of skills and experiences, which helped them to work together to meet children's needs effectively. Interactions between staff, children and parents were respectful, friendly and kind. Parents told us: "my child has developed a positive relationship with all members of staff and feels confident within the nursery" and "we are extremely pleased with the care that our child is receiving and all staff are a credit to the service".

Staff were deployed appropriately throughout the day and this meant that there were the right number of staff available to meet children's needs. Staff observed what was happening in the setting and moved around to ensure that they were in the right place to support children, for example by going outside, playing games and reading stories. Staff responded very well to children's questions and made sure that answers were easy to understand and appropriate. This meant that children were secure, valued and trusted the adults caring for them.

The staff team were keen to learn and develop their practice. Training plans were in place for new members of staff, which were based on the National Induction Resource and this ensured that they had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities for ensuring the wellbeing of children. All members of staff were supported to attend training and learning events which enabled them to follow their interests and meet their professional registration requirements. Management encouraged staff to put their learning into practice, for example staff had attended communication skills training which helped them support all children effectively.

Management of the setting knew their team well and supported them to develop their skills and interests. Regular support and supervision sessions meant that they had the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify areas they would like to focus on, for example the development of the arts and crafts area. Staff

told us that they felt well supported and strongly agreed that they had the resources to help them support children and that there were always enough staff to meet children's needs.

Systems were in place to cover staff absences including maternity leave and contingency planning for illness. We examined the setting's recruitment procedures and found that these followed safe practice. However, we agreed that staff files would be improved by the inclusion of a cover sheet which will help monitor the complete recruitment and induction process. We have also suggested that folders be developed so that all of the information about a staff member is held in one place, including their training records.

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

To ensure children's needs are met, their personal plans should be developed to identify how the service meets children's health, welfare and safety needs.

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

My personal plan is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices. (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 9 November 2023.

Action taken since then

Children were supported by personal plans which set out how the service would meet their health, welfare and safety needs. The service were using an online platform which meant that they were able to share information and review plans with parents on a regular basis.

The planning process had been improved and guidance for staff clearly set out what was expected of them. The process aimed to ensure that children were at the heart of the planning process.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure both children's nutritional and safety needs can be met, staff should improve the lunchtime and snack arrangements for all children.

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

If I need help with eating and drinking, this is carried out in a dignified way and my personal preferences are respected (HSCS 1.33)

I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.(HSCS 1.35)

I can drink fresh water at all times (HSCS 1.39)

I can take part in daily routines, such as setting up activities and mealtimes, if that is what I want. (HSCS 2.21).

This area for improvement was made on 9 November 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff had reviewed meal and snack provision using the Care Inspectorate Mealtimes practice document. They had identified areas for improvement and had worked with the local school to improve children's experiences.

Mealtimes were a generally sociable occasion with children developing independence and making choices.

We have asked the service to review snack time when the Stay and Play Toddler session is present so that this is a more sociable experience for children and their families.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's progress and development in learning, staff should ensure children are provided with opportunities to consolidate their own learning through play and are sufficiently challenged to meet their full potential.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that:

As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling (HSCS 1.30).

This area for improvement was made on 9 November 2023.

Action taken since then

The service had recently returned to the larger memorial hall in village of Springholm. This meant that there was sufficient space for a wide variety of play and learning opportunities. Planning processes had been developed which took account of children's voices. Children were involved in reviewing their own learning and progress each week.

Play and learning opportunities reflected the curriculum areas of numeracy, literacy and wellbeing. Science and Technology were also evident. Children had opportunities to explore and be curious both indoors and out.

Staff were available to support children and challenge thinking by providing materials and guidance.

Previous area for improvement 4

To ensure children's needs can be met, the provider and staff should continue to develop self evaluation processes to identify where improvement can be made. Continuous effective monitoring of practice should be further developed using the calendar already in place.

This is to ensure that 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 9 November 2023.

Action taken since then

Management and staff had fully embraced self-evaluation and were using a wide variety of practice and quality indicators including the Care Inspectorate framework, How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare, the Rights of the Child, and Wellbeing Indicators.

The manager had fully participated in the Care Inspectorate improvement programme and had put her learning into practice in the service. As a result, parents, children and staff were included in the improvement journey.

The management team had improved quality assurance and monitoring systems, including regular opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice both individually and as a team.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very 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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