LASC Childcare Services (Community Nursery)
Day Care of Children

Loanhead Centre
George Avenue
Loanhead
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Telephone: 01314 480 103

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 June 2022

Service provided by:
LASC Childcare Services Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003003106

Service no:
CS2003013328

About the service

LASC Childcare Services (Community Nursery) is one of six services provided by LASC who are a voluntary organisation operating in the Midlothian area. The nursery is registered to provide a care service to maximum of 70 children at any one time aged from three months to entry into primary school.

The nursery operates from premises in the Loanhead Community Hub, close to local schools, parks, and shops. The service comprises of three playrooms with an additional space currently used as a dining area. Children have free flow access to a secure outdoor space, directly accessed from all three playrooms.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 May 2022 between 09:15 and 15:45. Two inspectors carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the 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:

- Observed practice and daily life.
- Spoke with children who experienced care at the service and 16 parents/carers.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Reviewed relevant documentation.

Key messages

• Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from staff who knew them well.
• Children were happy and having fun in their play.
• Staff work well together and had built trusting relationships with children and families.
• Staff should continue to build skills and knowledge to support and challenge children's learning through appropriate questioning.
•Staff should continue developing outdoor opportunities to ensure there is always sufficient challenge to bring a sense of adventure, excitement and fun to children's play.

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?	4 - 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.

Children were happy and having fun engaged in activities. They approached staff confidently for support and we saw positive interactions between them. Staff were responsive and caring offering children comfort and reassurance. This contributed to them feeling safe and secure. Children told us that staff were "nice" and "they help us."

Staff knew children well and gathered information of their needs, routines and interests. This was used to inform personal plans which were regularly updated with parents. Staff demonstrated that they had effective strategies in place to support individual children's care needs and worked well with other professionals, including speech and language therapists. We found that not all short term targets for children had been updated. We discussed with staff the need to keep them updated to ensure children's individual needs were met and they were receiving the correct care and support.

Parents told us they were happy with their child's care and two parents commented "the staff are incredibly caring, attentive and responsive to the children" and "the staff are brilliant."

Children enjoyed a calm, social and positive experience at snacktime. They had good opportunities to develop their independence skills in choosing snack which included dips vegetables and breadsticks. They poured their drinks and cleared away the plates. This gave them a sense of responsibility. Lunchtime in the dining area provided less opportunities for children to self serve or make their own choices. The manager told us that Covid-19 restrictions had impacted on the lunchtime experience, however this had been under review and self serving options were to be reintroduced. This would improve children's learning experiences.

Opportunities and experiences provided for children to lead their own play and follow their own interests and ideas. The range of activities on offer allowed for children to investigate and explore and one child told us the best thing about nursery was making "pretend cakes and building houses." We saw staff challenge children's learning through appropriate questioning however we also saw missed opportunities from some staff to effectively intervene and support children in their play.

The planning process was informed by children's interests and tracked through observations, floorbooks and learning journals. These were regularly shared with parents. We sampled and tracked responsive planning which included observations of children's interests. In the Bumble Bee Room staff had introduced a set of 'nursery gym stairs' in response to the youngest children's interest in climbing. This provided opportunities for them to follow their interest and practice their skills safely. Staff we spoke with had a good knowledge of best practice guidance 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' and shared with us how they linked this to children's learning journals including experiences, routines and developmental progress.

Staff had been focusing on creating a literacy and numeracy rich environment and we could see examples of this displayed on printed text around the playrooms and in the range of activities provided. In the Butterfly Room number cards were displayed on the snack table and children confidently explained "you count the

pieces that the card says." This meant children were developing counting skills, problem solving and decision making skills.

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.

Children benefitted from an environment that was well maintained, bright and welcoming for children. The environment had been a focus of improvement since the previous inspection and the service had worked well to improve learning opportunities for children to learn key skills. One parent told us that the "new story corner in the Butterfly Room is very magical."

Children benefitted from a free flow approach to the indoor and outdoor spaces. This meant they could move around at their own pace and supported meaningful and uninterrupted play.

Within the playrooms we saw children enjoying a range of activities including water play, art and crafts and role play. The home corner provided a range of natural resources which promoted curiosity and imagination and we saw children having fun together making "cakes and dinner." Cosy and sensory areas had been created to provide opportunities for children to rest, relax, self-regulate and spend time in small groups.

We saw children "visiting" other playrooms throughout the day and staff were responsive and welcoming, encouraging meaningful interactions. This meant that children were respected and valued. Parents told us that children had lots of access to the outdoors and one parent told us "I love that all the classes share a garden and interact."

Children benefitted from daily access to be outdoors in the fresh air. There was a range of activities which supported children to use their imagination, and we saw them building a "hotel" and a "house." They were balancing on planks, boxes and tyres, building confidence and practicing and developing their physical skills.

One child playing at the mud kitchen told us they were making "apple soup" but we found that resources were limited and did not provide sufficient challenge to stimulate curiosity and imagination. Staff should continue developing outdoor opportunities to ensure there is always sufficient challenge to bring a sense of adventure, excitement and fun to children's play.

We discussed with the manager and staff in the Bumble Bee Room the need to review sleeping arrangements to ensure children have a quiet, calm and peaceful time to settle to sleep. We found that lunch tables waiting to be cleared restricted space and impacted on a smooth transition for children. Some children had to wait for beds being prepared which distracted children that were trying to settle to sleep. The manager and staff reviewed and took action to make changes during the inspection. Children would join the Caterpillar Room children in a designated sleep area which would create a more peaceful transition and positive sleep experience.

The management team were clear of their role in the storage of information. Information was held on secure computer systems and paper files were kept in secure filing cabinets. The service are moving to a secure online application Family App and the manager has communicated and consulted with parents to gain permission of how their information is stored.

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.

The manager was committed to improving the quality of the service and staff told us they found the manager to be approachable and supportive. Parents told us they were happy with the service and one comment stated "management have always been great, nursery runs like clockwork."

Good communication with parents ensured they were included in their child's care. Methods used included direct conversations with parents, online learning journals, social media, emails and newsletters. Parents views are actively sought to inform the development of the setting. One parent told us the service is "always happy to take feedback and normally ask on a regular basis for feedback on various topics."

The manager shared best practice and improvement documents with staff to help inform their practice. For example, they were using 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' to evaluate practice. We discussed the importance of giving staff opportunities to share and consolidate their knowledge of these documents. This will allow them to embed this knowledge in their practice to help them support children effectively.

The service improvement plan identified priorities to support the development of the service, these included the environment, care plans and partnership development with parents and other professionals. The visiting teacher gave support and guidance of the priorities with a focus on enriching the environment through literacy and numeracy. Improvements were monitored and updated as they were achieved. This helped to ensure that outcomes for children were focused and relevant.

The manager had a good understanding and overview of self evaluation and had introduced the 'Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare.' This would help develop the service and embed consistency to the quality of children's experiences and ensure continued improved outcomes for children.

Quality assurance systems was in place that supported the monitoring and auditing of the service. The service should continue developing their practice and evaluate performance to identify areas to support and develop improvements within the service.

How good is our staff team? 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.

Staff were warm and caring in their approach and worked well as a team. They understood the importance of developing nurturing relationships and listened to children's ideas and experiences. This meant that children were valued and respected. Parents told us "the staff are very caring and it's clear they have a great bond with the children."

Staff have completed core training, for example child protection, first aid and food and hygiene. They were now focusing on developing their skills and knowledge further to enhance their practice. They shared examples of training opportunities they had taken forward, which included autism awareness, outdoor learning and loose parts toolkit training. An audited training plan was in place and staff completed a

training analysis evaluation on completion of training. Not all staff had completed these evaluations. We highlighted this gap to ensure any areas for development are supported to enable staff to continue to develop and improve.

Team meetings were held regularly and included discussions of children's learning, information sharing, ideas and reflective practice. Staff were encouraged to share their skills and knowledge which promoted a shared culture of learning. This ensured children received care and support that was right for them.

Staff we spoke with described a positive experience of induction and felt well supported. They had regular opportunities to meet with the manager to discuss progress and set goals and share practice. A mentor was appointed to support staff work through key policies and procedures and the daily routines to support children's individual needs.

The management team recognised that continuity of care was important and they planned staff working patterns that ensured appropriate levels of staffing throughout the day. This provided consistency for children and supported their wellbeing.

Staff breaks were planned to minimise disruption and to ensure appropriate levels of staffing during children's lunch time. Staff shared tasks and worked as a team to meet the needs of children which ensured appropriate supervision and engagement.

The working patterns of staff were planned to ensure that there were opportunities for sharing information about children and families and promoted a continuity of care. Parents had been provided with information about who would be looking after their children and, where there were changes this was communicated to parents.

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 that children received the right support at the right time, the nursery should ensure that all personal plans are completed to include, where necessary, individual strategies for support and personalised risk assessments. These should be kept up to date and shared with relevant staff.

This is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards. Standard 1: I experience high quality care and support that is right for me (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 22 April 2022.

Action taken since then

Children have had an individual care plan folder created during their settling in period at nursery. All care plans reviewed six monthly by staff, parents and children. Individual risk assessments have been developed to support the children who require additional care and support to ensure their needs are met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The play environments for all children should be improved to ensure that they provide rich, interesting and well resourced opportunities for learning. To support children's play and learning staff should become more familiar with guidance on the value of interactions during play to enable them support children's learning.

This is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards. Standard 1: I experience high quality care and support that is right for me (HSCS 1.30 and HSCS 1.31).

This area for improvement was made on 22 April 2022.

Action taken since then

The nursery garden area renovation is now complete and the outdoor area is in use throughout the day. Continue to build on the environment outdoors ensuring children's needs are being met in providing quality interactions and learning opportunities.

- Senior Staff member's to ensure that core play experience are provided daily.
- Monthly self evaluation of play spaces using environmental toolkits.
- Staff to ensure that all resources are kept well stocked to prevent areas lacking these or children being limited to their resources.

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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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