Halfmerke Community Nursery
Day Care of Children

Logie Park
East Kilbride
Glasgow
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Telephone: 01355 243 156

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 October 2023

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
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CS2003015298

About the service

Halfmerke Community Nursery is a daycare of children service situated in East Kilbride, South Lanarkshire. It is close to parks, shops and public transport links. The service provides care for 119 children aged from birth to those not yet attending primary school.

Each playroom has direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area. There are opportunities for children to have access to nearby wooded areas and visits to places within the local community.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 and 24 October 2023 between the hours of 09:00 and 16:00. Feedback took place on 25 October 2023. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 20 children using the service and 23 families
- spoke with 27 members of staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- consulted with two visiting professionals.

Key messages

- There was a calm, welcoming ethos throughout the service.
- We highlighted the lunchtime experience for all children as a particular strength.
- More child-led, responsive planning would support and extend play and learning experiences for children.
- A strong manager and management team with a clear vision for improvement were in place to lead and support developments within the service.
- The enthusiastic and motivated staff team worked well together to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- Some monitoring systems should be more in-depth, robust and meaningful.

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?	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

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from staff. They were responsive to children, offering reassurance and support. This met individual children's care and support needs, assisted children who were settling into the service and contributed to children feeling loved, safe and secure. The service recognised that building strong relationships with families was important in meeting children and families needs. There were several opportunities for parents to participate in workshops and programmes to support and build relationships through play and nurture. Parents told us, 'Staff are great and know what's going on in personal lives and this is noted. They always involve parents and I love the 'stay and play' visits' and 'Children are warmly welcomed into nursery. My child is so happy there and skips in every day.'

Staff knew children's care and support needs well and information recorded within personal plans reflected this. Clear, very detailed information and support was in place for children with additional support needs. The service should continue to monitor personal plans to ensure all required sections are complete and agreed next steps are clear and specific for all children. This would ensure information was current and meaningful. Parents told us, 'We are kept up-to-date regarding activities and discuss what goals they are working towards in terms of their learning. My child's keyworker is fantastic, very approachable. If we would like the nursery to work on areas with our child, staff are more than accommodating.'

Children's lunchtimes were highlighted as a particular strength throughout the nursery. Snack and mealtimes were calm, relaxed experiences for all children with rolling snack and lunches now in place. This meant children could choose when to eat within smaller group settings, creating a pleasant, sociable dining experience. They were included in preparing and setting the table, chose where to sit and what to eat once food options were ready to be served. Children were encouraged and supported to be independent in serving themselves, pouring drinks and clearing their own dishes away. A member of staff sat, chatted and ate alongside children at each table, as low music played in the background. This created a homely, nurturing atmosphere.

Children's personal care was undertaken sensitively, maintaining children's privacy and dignity. Individual sleep routines respected families wishes and any changes in sleeping patterns and routines were followed. Parents added, 'Welcoming, caring and nurturing nursery. Best interests and changing needs of the child always at the heart.'

Although the storage of medication and parental consent forms for medication were in line with current guidance, the administration of medication forms should be updated to include parental signatures. This would ensure parents were clear about the exact times medication had been administered at nursery contributing to children's overall health, safety and wellbeing. We were assured these forms would be amended immediately.

Management and staff had completed child protection training relevant to their role and were clear and confident about their responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. This contributed towards children's health, safety and wellbeing.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

The majority of children were happy and having fun. We observed many adult-directed activities with some examples of good questioning and investigation. However, we discussed the importance of increased opportunities for more child-led, responsive and open-ended experiences for all children, as there were some missed opportunities to take children's interests and learning forward within all age groups. More effective questioning would encourage children's thinking, ensuring more depth, breadth and challenge in children's play and learning. Parents commented, 'The activities they put on are great. The gardens and rooms are full and a great place for learning' and 'lots of play areas with lots of different things to entertain and learn.'

Free flow access between the indoors and outdoors was available throughout the day which meant children could make choices of where to play and what to play with. All areas should be reviewed to ensure suitable, sufficient and varied resources were freely accessible to children. This would ensure children could make choices independently. Cosy, comfortable spaces for children to rest and play should be developed further both indoors and outdoors for all age groups of children.

Children shared their views with us. They told us, 'I like to play outside, painting, drawing and the playdough' and 'I love all the toys, playing in the garden and my friends.'

We signposted staff and management to current national practice guidance and responsive planning to inform staff knowledge, skills and practice and to support the ongoing development of varied, inviting play spaces and experiences for children. This would support, develop and enhance children's natural curiosity, learning and creativity in play and learning and support staff with planning.

How good is our setting? 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 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Secure entry systems, fobs to access playrooms and fully enclosed outdoor play spaces supported children's safety. Large windows, newly painted walls and new flooring ensured corridors and playrooms were bright and welcoming. Designated outdoor areas accessed directly from each playroom contributed to an inviting and accessible learning environment for all children.

All parents we consulted with agreed that the service was clean, well maintained and that their child was safe. They added 'The facilities here are great. Different spaces to meet different needs and times of day. The outdoor space for children is wonderful', 'rooms are clean and kept well' and 'as close as possible to a home environment.'

Toys, resources and furniture were in good condition. Resources were generally stored where children could access them independently and in sufficient number and variety to offer children increased choice in their play. However, we advised reviewing particular areas where additional resources would support imaginative play, literacy and numeracy. Examples included increased resources at mud kitchen areas, making good use of the 'hobbit hut' and reviewing the suitability of some resources and play experiences within the garden for the youngest children.

We acknowledged plans were underway to create a sensory and vegetable garden with children, families and the local community as part of the 'Eco Group' developments, thus ensuring an inclusive approach.

Good infection prevention and control procedures were followed by staff and children for almost all of the time, taking account of recently updated guidance. We advised reviewing hand hygiene guidance with all staff to ensure this was more robust throughout the day.

Risk assessments were in place and undertaken to ensure the safety of the environment for children. We advised these should be reviewed and updated when accidents or incidents occur. Following our sampling of records, management agreed accident and incident records should be monitored more robustly to identify commonalities or additional areas for consideration and improvement. This would contribute to children's safety and wellbeing.

Children's personal information was securely stored and managed. Appropriate systems took account of general data protection requirements and families preferences in regards to sharing photographs and information within apps and online journals. This contributed to children and families safety and respected people's views.

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

There were shared visions, values and aims which informed practice. Information was displayed attractively throughout the service to ensure parents, staff and visitors felt included and valued. The improvement plan, information on parental and development groups and monitoring calendars were accessible to all in corridor areas. This added to the inclusive, welcoming environment, with all relevant information being transparent and openly available. Plans were in place to extend links with the local community, adding to this inclusive ethos.

There was a positive ethos of continuous improvement. Clear improvement priorities, self-evaluation and monitoring systems were in place. We advised areas where monitoring could be more detailed and robust to enhance the good quality assurance systems already in place.

The strong leadership team supported devolved leadership, where staff had 'champion roles' within working parties and were responsible for key areas and developments. All staff spoke passionately and enthusiastically about their individual roles, responsibilities and areas for development.

All parents we consulted with agreed the service was well-managed and added, 'The manager goes above and beyond, always available to talk to if needed, always providing new opportunities for the kids and always on the nursery floor, which is great to see' and 'I believe the nursery has improved exponentially. We receive more communication, more opportunities to be involved and the atmosphere seems to have improved.'

Children, families and staff had been meaningfully included and consulted in improvement priorities and nursery life. Their suggestions and views were welcomed, with results displayed on a 'you said, we did' display wall. Plans were in place to expand this to ensure families were informed of the outcomes of any actions taken. This would inform families that their views were valued and had an impact.

An open-door policy and regular appraisals took place where staff felt their strengths, interests and personalities were respected and any training or development needs supported positively. Staff meetings took place at different times to include all shift workers and all staff roles. One member of staff stated, 'This is the first service I have worked in where I feel very much part of the team, part of staff meetings and where my views are really listened to and welcomed.'

All staff spoke positively about the manager and the management team. Their support and passion had led to staff feeling empowered, having increased confidence in their skills and abilities, sharing the passion for the improvement of the service and ensuring the best outcomes for children and families. Staff told us they 'felt valued, respected, had a voice and could lead change and initiatives.'

An external professional who regularly visited the service to support children and families added, 'I have a very good working relationship both with the management team and with the individual keyworkers of the children I support. All staff, including management, take my advice and support very well indeed, and this is reflected in the improvements shown by the children I support. Families are very well supported and are made very welcome by everyone.'

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

Members of management and office staff welcomed children and families as they arrived at the service before being welcomed into the playroom by staff. One parent said, 'Children are warmly welcomed into nursery. My child is so happy and skips in every day. I love how welcoming all staff are. They really show interest in what you are saying or asking.'

Staffing levels and deployment of staff were managed effectively. This took account of the different experience, knowledge and skills of the staff team. Sufficient staff were in place to meet the needs of children and not just the number of children in attendance. We observed staff working flexibly to support each other indoors or outdoors if numbers or needs of children changed within areas. Children with additional support needs were supported well by staff throughout the day. This contributed to ensuring positive outcomes for children, keeping children safe, secure, happy and cared for. Parents comments included, 'Staffing levels are good with plenty of staff in the playrooms at any given time. I have never been concerned that there were not enough staff for the volume of children.'

Staff were observed working well as a team in each of the playrooms and all staff we spoke with confirmed this. They shared examples of mentoring new members of staff, sharing good practice and training, seeking assistance from their peers and management if required and several spoke of 'being part of a family.'

Arrangements and systems were in place to offer continuity of care for children. One example was staffs' completion of communication books in each of the playrooms. All relevant information was recorded and shared as appropriate with families arriving or leaving at different times, including staff who worked varied shift patterns. This ensured everyone was informed and included and supported the care, safety, health and wellbeing of individual children. Parents added, 'I cannot stress how grateful I am. I trust staff the same way my children do and my children feel safe' and 'they are very on the ball with children who have additional support needs. They support the child and the family in every way they can.'

Smooth, natural transition periods were observed over the course of the day. This meant no children were waiting for snacks, lunches or within large groups for lengthy periods of time. Staff were deployed effectively over lunchtimes, ensuring children's needs came first, but that staff also had time to rest and be refreshed. Identified staff attended to tasks and other duties, while others remained seated alongside children as they ate. This flexible, supportive plan contributed to the positive lunchtime experience.

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 provider should review and audit the paperwork relating to personal plans, planning for learning and observations to ensure that the information being recorded was meaningful, individualised and allowed effective monitoring of children's learning and development needs and progress.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which states that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 5.1)

This area for improvement was made on 10 June 2022.

Action taken since then

Personal plans were in place for all children. The format had been reviewed and updated to ensure information was more meaningful and relevant for the individual child. Personal plans were monitored. We advised this improvement should continue to ensure all children's plans were current and complete.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The provider should review and make changes to their snack and lunch routines so that children have opportunities for developing their independent living skills in a relaxed atmosphere.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which states that: 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.' (HSCS 1.35)

This area for improvement was made on 10 June 2022.

Action taken since then

Snack and lunchtime routines and improving children's experiences were identified as the area to improve when working with the Care Inspectorate's improvement team last year. Following this in-depth review, we have highlighted the service's snack and lunchtime routines and experiences for children as a particular strength and detailed this within this report.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's natural curiosity, choices and wishes, management should review and develop the environment. This should include but not limited to, ensuring toys and materials are available to support spontaneous play and furnishings of a good quality.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices' (HSCS 5.23) and 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.' (HSCS 5.24)

This area for improvement was made on 10 June 2022.

Action taken since then

The types, quantity, condition and quality of resources had been improved. This further supported children's play and learning. Furnishings were clean and comfortable. The overall environment was clean. Most areas had been freshly painted and new flooring laid. This ensured children could access a good range of quality equipment and furnishings in clean, well-maintained premises.

This area for 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?	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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