Woodlands Nursery Centre
Day Care of Children

Highstonehall Road
Hamilton
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 June 2023

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2007159536

About the service

Woodlands Nursery Centre is a daycare of children service located in Hamilton, South Lanarkshire. It is close to public transport links, parks and shops. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 117 children aged from birth to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is provided from purpose built premises on a shared campus with a primary school. Each of the three playrooms have direct access to designated outdoor play areas and shared use of a large, enclosed woodland area known as the Curriculum Garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 and 6 June 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 15 children using the service and 16 families
- spoke and consulted with 26 members of staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- All staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with all children.
- Snack and mealtimes were pleasant, sociable and relaxed experiences.
- Children could freely and independently access a variety of areas and resources indoors and outdoors for the majority of the session.
- To ensure improved outcomes for all children, the management team should review and evaluate the purpose, value and outcomes of 'family time' group times and some adult- directed activities.
- There should be increased opportunities and flexibility for children to access the additional play and learning areas within the service such as the curriculum garden, nurture room and sensory room.
- To support good infection prevention and control, the service should continue with their refurbishment plans within identified areas. More effective cleaning procedures should be implemented and maintained in areas discussed and agreed at inspection.

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 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 were generally happy and settled. Staff were kind, patient and nurturing in their approach which created a calm ethos throughout the day. They were aware of the individual care and support needs of children, their interests, next steps and any agreed strategies which were in place to support children. Children sought reassurance and comfort from staff and they received this in a natural, sensitive way. This helped children feel safe, secure and confident and contributed to them reaching their full potential.

The manager recognised that communication with families was important in meeting children and families needs. Parents were now able to come into the service to drop off and collect their children and weekly opportunities were in place for parents to speak with their child's keyworker. Online learning journals, stay and play sessions and parental workshops had further supported communication and building relationships with families. Parents told us, 'Communication with parents has been improving,' and 'Detailed learning journal posts. Lovely updates at drop off and collection. They know my child inside out.'

Personal plans were in place for all children. The service had reviewed the current personal plan formats and planned to update these in the next few months. This would ensure all required information was clear and up-to-date, taking account of the wellbeing indicators. Including the child's voice and parents' input more consistently would assist with this improvement focus.

A rolling snack system was in place. This meant children could choose when to have their snack during the session. This was a relaxed, pleasant and sociable time. Children in the older age groups could choose to sit indoors or outdoors at the 'snack cafe.' Lunchtimes were currently being reviewed to ensure this was a positive experience for all children. We observed children in the younger playrooms helping to set the table, choosing a centrepiece for the table and having their meals on trays or plates in line with their preferences. Staff sat alongside children as they ate, while other staff attended to tasks. This enabled staff to engage in conversation with children, while ensuring their safety as they ate. Older children were refilling the water jugs and making choices of where to sit and eat. To support this improvement focus, we shared the Care Inspectorate's practice note Keeping Children Safe - Supporting Positive Mealtime Experiences in Early Learning and Childcare.

The storage of children's medication and consent and administration of medication forms were in line with current guidance. This contributed towards ensuring the health and safety of children who may require medication while at nursery. To support children's wellbeing, we advised improving the monitoring systems for reviewing medication with parents and alerting parents whose child's medication was due to expire. This was actioned over the course of the inspection.

Management and staff had completed child protection training relevant to their role. They were clear and confident in their responsibilities in regards to following child protection procedures. Relevant information was displayed to inform adults visiting the service. This contributed towards children's health, safety and wellbeing.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun while engaged in a variety of play and learning experiences. They could access the indoor and outdoor play spaces independently for the majority of the day, leading their own play. Children confidently led us to look around the outdoor area and told us about their favourite activities. They said, 'This is our new swing and that's the new house. You can go in there and read books or just sit' and 'I like playing outdoors. Football is my favourite. I kick the ball outside.'

Developmentally appropriate spaces supported children's play. We observed children mark-making in the sand, experimenting with water play and transporting resources to make 'strawberry soup' in the mud kitchen. The well-resourced outdoor area enabled children to make choices such as building with construction materials, making dens using wooden boxes and loose part play materials and taking part in imaginative games.

Staff explained the value of children leading their own play and following children's interests. Children told us, 'We made this playdough' and 'I picked green colour and put pasta bits in it.' From our consultations and discussions the majority of staff strongly agreed that the needs and interests of children were at the centre of play and learning.

To improve outcomes for children and as discussed at the last inspection, we advised the service to review the 'family time' group time sessions for the older children. This is where children took part in more structured, adult-directed activities with their keyworker group. Although some children participated in some planned activities, others were not as engaged. It therefore restricted children's choice and interrupted their flow of play for a set time within the week.

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

The setting was bright, comfortable and welcoming. The layout of areas both indoors and outdoors contributed to a quality learning environment. Children could freely access these areas throughout the day. The majority of resources were stored at children's level. This ensured children could make choices of where to play, follow their current interests and curiosities to support play and learning. To ensure children's safety, secure entry systems were in place at main doors and plans were in place to extend fob systems within the building. Secure, fenced outdoor play spaces and associated risk assessments ensured children could play safely. Staff were aware of the Care Inspectorate's safety campaign - Keeping Children Safe - Look, Think Act and posters were displayed within the service. This raised awareness of the importance of keeping children safe when indoors, outdoors or on outings.

The setting took account of the recent hot spell of weather, used the ultraviolet (UV) index to monitor UV levels and shared information and procedures with families to ensure children were safe in the sun. We advised the service to make more use of the natural shaded areas in the curriculum garden and explore options to create shaded areas within all outdoor play spaces. This would support children to continue to play safely in sunny weather and offer additional play experiences.

Maximising the use of all valuable and available play spaces would offer extended and varied learning experiences for all children. In particular, the curriculum garden had so much potential to offer, extend and challenge play and learning opportunities for children within a rich, natural environment. We observed children fully engaged in investigating and exploring this area over the course of the inspection. Children's comments included, 'There is a bee sleeping in there', 'This is the biggest stick and this one is smaller' and 'I can hear the birds but I can't see one yet.'

Although the majority of staff followed effective hand hygiene practices and promoted this with children, we raised issues around infection prevention and control and maintaining a safe environment during the inspection. This was addressed in part over the course of the inspection. The manager shared plans for replacing flooring and refurbishment within children's toilets, together with maintaining more robust cleaning practices for nappy changing areas and cleaning of all vents. Following hygienic nappy changing practices, undertaking effective cleaning of equipment and maintaining a safe, clean environment is vital to reduce the risks of transmitting infection to children and staff.

How good is our leadership? 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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There was a stable management team in place. Each had clear roles and remits to support the improvement journey of the service. To improve outcomes for children and families, an improvement plan with key priorities was used well as a working document recording the actions taken and those planned. Examples of developments included a focus on staff interactions, increased parental engagement opportunities and developing children's independence at lunchtimes.

Self-evaluation and monitoring systems further evaluated the service provision in line with current national and best practice guidance. To continue to support children's play and learning opportunities the management team were keen to develop more responsive and 'in the moment' planning with additional training for staff.

The majority of staff and parents strongly agreed or agreed that they were meaningfully involved in the service and could influence change, with a small minority disagreeing. Families and staff had been consulted in devising the shared vision, values and aims for the service. Staff told us the main strengths of the service were, 'Our commitment to improve and have faith in our vision - make a memory everyday' and 'Woodlands is a family where we support one another.'

With the cost of living crisis, the service were very aware and sensitive to the needs of some families whose children attended the nursery and those in the wider community. To offer meaningful support a food bank and clothing bank for children and adults had been established in open areas within and outside the building. This meant families could independently select any items they required.

The majority of parents were very happy with the service and looked forward to more parental groups being re-established. Comments included, 'Communication has been improving', 'I feel really involved in the play and stay opportunities' and 'The management team are approachable, visible and always friendly. They are always very much involved in the day to day goings on at nursery.'

How good is our staff team? 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 4.3: Staff deployment

Members of the management team welcomed families and children as they arrived at the service and arrangements were in place to ensure all families had weekly updates from their child's keyworker. All parents who responded to our consultations strongly agreed or agreed that there was always enough staff in the setting and they were confident staff had the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to care for their child and support their learning.

There was now a more settled staff team in place with a mix of skills, knowledge and experience. All staff were kind, calm and nurturing in their interactions with children. They spoke with children at their level, praised, cuddled and reassured them throughout the day. This contributed to children feeling secure, loved and valued.

Deployment and levels of staff were effective to ensure good quality outcomes for children, with support from the management team where required. Additionally, the local authority had systems in place for the service to request additional support staff to meet the needs of individual children.

We observed staff working well as a team within all playrooms. Staff communicated quietly with each other should a task take them away from their duties and they ensured children knew where they were going if they had to leave the playroom for any reason, for example, their own lunchbreak. Staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on the children, while ensuring staff could rest and be refreshed.

An induction programme supported staff who joined the service. A mentoring system meant more experienced staff supported, role modelled and demonstrated good practice with colleagues. Peer reviews were being introduced. This would help to support staff to identify and acknowledge others' skills, strengths and areas for development in a professional manner, leading to improved practice, knowledge and better outcomes for children.

Staff were confident, enthusiastic and aspirational in their discussions and feedback with us. They spoke confidently of their experiences, their studies for further qualifications and plans for the service. Comments included, 'Staff have different positive approaches, skill sets and interests, ensuring children get breadth and depth at all stages and a variety of experiences. Management have spent a lot of time and provided many training opportunities. They encourage staff to highlight any issues and assist us to overcome these to ensure the best possible setting for our children' and 'Woodlands is a happy environment to both work and play, where everyone is valued for the contribution they bring to the Woodlands family.'

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 important information on children's care is shared consistently, the manager and staff should improve communication processes. This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring deployment of staff supports information sharing.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19) and 'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources.' (HSCS 4.27)

This area for improvement was made on 14 July 2022.

Action taken since then

The management team had reviewed the role of the keyworker and arranged 'meet the keyworker' visits for children and families. Arrangements were put in place to ensure all families had weekly updates with the child's keyworker. This was arranged to suit children's patterns of attendance and parental preferences.

As parents now came into the setting to drop off and collect their child, this offered opportunities for informal discussions. Learning journals supported online communication with families.

Parental groups such as 'stay and play' sessions, walking groups, bookbug sessions and parent groups had been re-established. This meant parents had more opportunities to be included in their child's day at nursery.

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?	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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