

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery Day Care of Children

Letham Village Hall
Letham
Cupar
KY15 7RS

Telephone: 07732048289

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
24 May 2023

Service provided by:
The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

Service provider number:
SP2006008688

Service no:
CS2008176034

About the service

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery is registered to provide care to a maximum of 28 children, aged from three years to 16 years.

The service is provided from an outdoor location using the woodland areas within the village of Letham in Fife. The children from the Buttercup group met between 8.30 and 9.00 each day and the Foxglove group met between 9.10 and 9.30 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Both groups met in the playpark opposite the village hall

This hall was used to prepare snack and was also available to use in extreme weather conditions.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 May 2023 between 08:30 and 16:30. Feedback was shared during the inspection visit. One inspector carried out the inspection.

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 several children using the service
- spoke with and gathered feedback from several families in person
- spoke with management and staff
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefitted from a highly skilled staff team. All staff worked very well together and had created a welcoming and enabling environment. This approach supported children's wellbeing, including the right to play.
- Children were having fun, actively leading their own play, and were fully engaged.
- Sensitive and skilled interactions were used to expand children's play and learning. Staff were respectful in the way they spoke to children and this helped them to feel listened to, valued, and loved.
- Staff supported children to develop independence, problem-solving skills, and emotional resilience within the woods. This had a positive impact on children's overall development.
- Positive relationships with families supported continuity of care and effective partnerships.
- Quality assurance and self evaluation processes enabled the service to deliver high quality care.
- Staff and families had developed tailored support plans for some children which provided consistent strategies to meet needs and choices.
- The provider, manager, and staff had significantly improved handwashing opportunities within the woods and this routine was embedded in daily practice.

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.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring, and nurturing approaches from staff throughout the inspection. We observed staff sensitively listening and responding to children at appropriate times, offering comfort and reassurance when needed. This ensured children felt safe, valued, listened to, and loved.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Each child's personal plan was created in collaboration with families to promote continuity of care. One parent told us, "They really take time getting to know children as individuals, it is a real partnership". Staff knew children very well and for some children who required additional support there were effective strategies in place to support them. For example, staff worked closely with families to create individual support plans to meet children's needs. This enabled staff to respond quickly and sensitively to children's individual needs. Staff were skilled in using the information within children's personal plans to meet their needs. This approach resulted in families feeling fully involved in their child's care and development and children receiving the right care at the right time.

Children enjoyed meals in an unhurried and social way. Staff worked well together to ensure that both snack and lunch times were relaxed and unhurried. Children and staff ate together and chatted about the morning; this approach encouraged children to be sociable with each other. Staff were knowledgeable about potential choking hazards and encouraged children to take small bites which kept them safe from potential harm.

Effective medication arrangements supported the service to maintain children's health and wellbeing. Medication was regularly reviewed with families through emails and verbal discussions. This ensured children received the right medication at the right time to support their health and wellbeing.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were empowered to lead their own play and learning, developing their curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This supported children to feel included and valued.

Children were experts in their own learning and achieving. This was motivated by the rich natural environment. Planning approaches documented children's thoughts, ideas, and discussions, highlighting staff's responsiveness to their interests.

Staff were very skilful in their interactions, ensuring that they supported children when needed. Staff gave children time to enjoy their play and learning. Effective questioning was used to provoke thought and discussions were used to enhance children's experiences and challenge their thinking. For example, staff asked children, "Do you feel safe doing this? Do you need my help?". This approach supported children to feel confident in their own abilities. As a result, children received high quality play and learning experiences.

Staff consistently promoted responsibility and independence and offered lots of praise for successes and achievements. This supported children to feel valued.

Numeracy and literacy were naturally incorporated into the different woodland sites. Children had the opportunity to develop their numeracy and literacy skills and mathematical language using the natural environment. Story sharing during lunch time offered further fun experiences where numeracy and literacy were naturally embedded. As a result, children were happy, confident, and making progress.

Children were supported to feel part of their community through the daily use of the park for drop-off and pick-up. Members of the community waved and spoke to children on their walk up to the woods. This encouraged children to connect with their local community and feel included.

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.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a natural environment in which to explore and be physically active in peaceful and calm surroundings. The 25-acre woodland site meant that children benefitted from a range of environments and this enabled them to explore the variety of sites and to engage with nature. Children explored 'the garden' site with ease, aware of their boundaries and how far they could go to keep safe. Children showed the full boundary of the site and told us, "You can go as far as the field and this will keep you safe". Risk assessments were robust and were regularly reviewed and updated by all staff. This ensured hazards were minimised, keeping children safe from potential harm.

Staff communicated using radios and this always supported effective communication. A whistle procedure was embedded into practice and used to gather children together, if needed. As a result of these procedures, safety around the site was very well managed. Children were protected from harm in a safe and secure environment.

Children benefitted from opportunities to develop positive risk in their play. For example, climbing on haybales, then jumping off and using tree swings. Children were confident to ask staff for help when faced with challenges. Staff skilfully supported children to make good choices and judgements about their outdoor play experiences. This approach encouraged children to develop an awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe while supporting their overall health and wellbeing.

Play and learning was of high quality, it was offered through a wealth of natural resources which the children collected from the woods. There were extensive loose parts and objects of interest which children explored and this further encouraged their creativity, curiosity, and imaginative play. We saw that children were busy and fully engaged in a wide variety of learning experiences. Their natural environment continuously challenged and developed their physical confidence.

At 'the garden' site, a large yurt provided a warm and cosy environment for children to relax, look at books, or shelter from the sun. A log burner provided warmth in the colder months. This space enabled children to rest if they needed to.

We found that significant improvements had been made in relation to handwashing routines within the woods. Children had access to warm running water, hand soap, and paper towels. This ensured that children were protected from the potential risk of infection.

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.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager and staff are committed to providing positive outcomes for children. A shared vision for the setting reflected the aspirations of children, families, and the wider community. This resulted in a strong ethos across the team and service which clearly demonstrated the nursery aims and objectives for children to reach their full potential.

Staff told us that they felt well supported by the manager and found them to be open and approachable. This supportive approach extended across the wider staff team, with each member of staff having a listening partner. This benefitted staff as they each had a designated colleague that they could talk to and were able to share both positive aspects of their job, as well as share any worries or anxieties. These opportunities ensured that everyone working in the service felt valued and listened to.

Weekly meetings gave staff regular opportunities to talk about the successes of the week, discuss any individual children's needs or next steps, and reflect on practice. This resulted in a strong ethos across the team and service, which clearly supported children to reach their full potential.

A realistic improvement plan considered key planning priorities which was monitored and reflected on with staff throughout the year. Children and families gave feedback on the service at key points throughout the year. This supported children and families to influence positive change and feel included in the service.

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 were committed, motivated, and passionate about knowing the children as individuals and the benefits of nature on children's health, wellbeing, and overall development. Staff worked very well together and they identified strongly with the values of the service. This resulted in a happy, nurturing, and enabling atmosphere with children at the heart.

The well planned deployment of staff ensured children had continuity of care across the day. Staffing was shared with families on a weekly basis through email. This ensured that children and families knew who was working in the woods that day.

Staff had a very good understanding of current best practice documents and were well trained. They were keen to tell us the impact of recent training and how this supported their own professional development. Staff confidently told us how they used each other's skills and knowledge to support planning children's experiences.

Families spoke highly of the staff team. One parent said, "They are excellent and I would not want my children to go anywhere else, they really go over and above".

Staff were recruited safely. A recorded induction period was in place. The national induction resource was used effectively to support the induction and encouraged staff to reflect and evaluate their own practice.

Staff values, skills, experience, and knowledge resulted in high quality experiences for children.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 31 January 2023, the provider must ensure that effective handwashing measures are in place for children and staff in line with current guidance.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) Ensure that all children and staff can wash their hands effectively with running water and liquid soap.
- b) Provide suitable hand hygiene facilities for both staff and children, including running water, liquid soap, and disposable hand towels.

This is to comply with The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210) Regulation 4(1)(a)(d) Welfare of Users.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance, and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This requirement was made on 20 December 2022.

Action taken on previous requirement

The service has consulted with staff, children, and families and through this consultation process, developed a variety of methods which support effective handwashing routines in the woods. This approach ensures that children and staff are protected from the potential risk of infection.

This requirement has now been met.

Met - within timescales

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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