Smart Cookies Nursery
Day Care of Children

Back Wynd
Falkland
Fife
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Telephone: 01337 857 766

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 June 2024

Service provided by:
Smart Cookies Childcare, Irene Tudor and Ross Tudor a partnership

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2013320616

About the service

Smart Cookies Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 66 children at any one time, aged from birth to an age to attend primary school full time, of whom no more than 20 are under two years of age. The service is provided from a large building within the village of Falkland, Fife. The building has five playrooms which accommodate children from birth to five years of age. Each playroom has its own toilet areas for the children and kitchen areas for social experiences during snack and mealtimes. There are two secure outdoor learning play areas for the children to access in all weathers.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 4 and 5 June 2024 between 08.45 and 16.15. We provided feedback on 5 June 2024. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration and any complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with staff members
- reviewed feedback from 33 families using MS forms
- reviewed feedback from staff members employed in the service using MS forms
- spoke with senior management and all staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Children benefitted from a caring and nurturing staff team who knew them well.

Children were keen to share their personal learning journals with inspectors and were proud of their achievements.

Staff worked effectively as a team to meet children's individual needs.

Management and staff were keen to further enhance the lunchtime experience to make it a valuable and enjoyable time for all children.

Children were engaged in their play and explored the resources and activities with confidence.

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 found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm and nurturing care. Staff had developed positive connections with children and their families. We found that staff were kind, caring and supportive of children's emotional needs and their overall wellbeing. We saw staff give children reassurance and comfort when needed. As a result, children were secure, happy, and settled within the nursery environment. Most families who completed our online questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that they have a strong connection with the staff caring for their child. Some comments included:

'I have a great relationship with staff I'm always informed about my child daily and told what they have been doing, the genuine care that is given by all the ladies is exceptional and I have no worries leaving my child.'

'Feeling comfortable leaving your baby with someone means you trust them so to me that is a good relationship.'

'The staff are consistent, well trained, experienced, and hugely invested in the children and their families. My son knows all the staff's names and they all know his- I feel they are really nurturing.'

Staff were kind and respectful towards children, asking permission to wipe noses and change nappies. This supported children to feel respected and valued. Staff knew children well and interacted positively with them to support their needs. This helped children feel secure and contributed to the positive relationships they had with staff.

Younger children who needed a sleep were well supported by staff. Staff responded to individual cues, and this ensured their needs were consistently met.

Planning approaches were responsive to children's interests, with children being actively involved in leading their own learning. Learning walls were used to record children's learning and gave them a sense of ownership for their environment.

Personal plans were in place for all children across the service. Personal plans contained key information about children's health, wellbeing, development, and progress. They were created with families to respect family preferences and individual routines. Most families agreed or strongly agreed that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan. Families told us that 'they ask for input and share my child's voice too and the information that is provided on how my child is developing is great, I am sure if I had any concerns and wanted to change anything my comments would be taken into account.' Further work was needed to ensure that all plans identified clear next steps in learning for all children and that they were reviewed with parents/carers every six months or sooner if required.

Children mostly benefitted from relaxed mealtime experiences. Children could choose to have snacks when they were ready to, this approach supported their independence and choice.

We asked the service to consider their lunchtime experience to ensure that they were consistent across all rooms. At times we saw that staff were task orientated, which minimised the opportunity for children to develop social skills and engage in meaningful interactions with staff. We discussed ways in which this could be achieved, and the service were keen to discuss this with children, their families, and staff. The service felt that this could be easily implemented by offering opportunities for children to come together in smaller sittings. This proactive approach would help support positive mealtime experiences for all.

Staff understood their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. They spoke confidently of the steps they would take should a concern or a support need arise for a child or family.

Staff ensured that children with medical needs were responded to with dignity and privacy. Effective storage systems were in place for all medication. Appropriate information was recorded which ensured it was administered in line with best practice guidance.

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children's play and learning was well supported. Staff were responsive to children's interests and interactions were caring and nurturing. This contributed to children feeling valued and included. Staff used skilled questioning and interacted with children in a responsive and stimulating way. They had an enabling attitude and as a result children were supported to be confident learners.

Literacy and numeracy were supported through a range of experiences. Staff understood the importance of language development and provided a variety of activities to support this. Children enjoyed sharing books with staff throughout the day. They frequently sang together as they played. Children were developing confidence in learning early numeracy skills, counting aloud as they played, and recognising some numbers in the environment. We saw children confidently writing their names and recognising initial letters within their friends' names. One child told us that they could write their friends name as they knew the letters in it.

Planning approaches taken by staff were a good balance of spontaneous and intentional experiences. These were centred around the individual needs of the children. Children's current learning was displayed effectively and was used to record what children knew about a particular topic to what they had been learning. This approach celebrated children's achievements and progress whilst empowering them to lead their own play and learning. Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their local community. Most families told us that their children are regularly out in the community and one parent told us that 'using the Falkland estate has been wonderful!'

Resources across the service were age and stage appropriate, the service was keen to further develop their loose parts play materials, which are a collection of open-ended natural or real-life objects. These types of resources would further enhance children's play and learning whilst offering challenge and encouraging problem solving.

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

Children were welcomed into a safe and homely environment. Consideration had been given to the use of space and resources on offer in most areas. The service should now continue to review and develop their environment to ensure all areas provide rich play experiences and to further support choice for all children.

Children had spaces to sleep, rest and relax if needed resulting in children's needs being consistently met across the day.

The garden areas were large and secure. This space was being developed by the service and consultation with children, families and staff was planned. There was no direct access to the garden for all rooms, so staff were creative and ensured that children had daily access to outdoor play experiences. This supported children to be healthy and physically active. Families who responded to our MS Forms survey told us that that their child could play outdoors always or very often. Some of their comments included:

'Smart cookies spent a lot of time outdoors, walking in the estate, going to the park or using the nursery garden for things like circle games and gross motor skills.'

'Great outdoor space and our child is very settled. Clear learning intentions and curriculum for excellence links which are visible both in displays and offered through play. Fun topics (currently minibeasts which he loves) and resources are frequently changed to add variety to his play-based learning. I am very satisfied that my son gets a rich variety of learning and play.'

'The children love playing in the garden and going on outings to walk in the woods, walk to the park, have outdoor picnics and going to the library bus.'

Risk assessments were in place. These were regularly reviewed and updated to ensure any risks were minimised for children, families, and staff. Regular head counts took place and robust measures were in place to keep children safe.

Information about children was kept securely in a locked cabinet in the office.

The environment was well ventilated, hand washing was embedded in practice and regular cleaning took place. Through effective infection prevention and control practices this allowed children to be cared for in a safe and hygienic environment.

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

The management and staff were passionate, motivated, and committed to continuing to develop the service to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. The service had experienced a period of change with some recruitment challenges. The deputy manager was promoted to manager and a joint manager was recently appointed. Both managers were keen to move forward at pace with their journey of improvement

and we could see that this was a priority. A development plan had been created and the priorities were outcome focused with realistic targets.

Staff told us they were included in reflecting on the quality of the service and planning for improvement.

Quality assurance systems were in place and were beginning to support improvement. The service required further time to develop and strengthen their quality assurance system. This would help to bring about positive change and contribute to positive outcomes for all.

Staff appraisals recognised individual strengths, training needs and areas for development. Staff confidently told us of the support from both management and the wider staff team, they felt empowered and motivated to progress. Comments included,

'Training helps me be more knowledgeable on things I could work on in the room for the children and could improve on with the children.'

'It has helped me to understand the needs of the children in my care and keeps me up to date with the most recent policy and procedures.'

'I have been given many opportunities over the years at smart cookies. I have recently been given the opportunity to mentor a trainee and pass on my experiences and knowledge to her.'

Management and staff had strong values and this approach promoted a positive nurturing experience for children and their families. We suggested that the service further develop how staff, children and their families are contributing to the improvement and development of the service. This will further support, staff, children, and family's sense of being valued, respected, and included in the life of the service.

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

Children benefitted from a caring and nurturing staff team. They recognised that continuity of care was important for children.

Following some staffing changes, the staff team were now more stable and were observed working well as a team. All families were welcomed into the service each day, this approach supported effective communication and built trusting relationships with families. The large staff team had a mix of skills, experience, knowledge, and staff worked well together. Staff understood their individual and collective roles, were flexible and supported each other. Experienced staff role modelled and supported their team. This encouraged a positive ethos where staff were courteous, supportive, and respectful to each other.

Support strategies were in place for some children, these strategies considered individual needs and were consistent, providing children with continuity of care. This meant that children felt safe, secure, and happy in a service where a caring staff team nurtured and supported them individually.

New staff had benefitted from an induction programme and the service were in the early stages of using 'The National Induction Resource' to reflect on their learning and evaluate their practice. Regular team meetings supported staff to reach their full potential. This contributed to a positive staff ethos, further supporting children to be settled and happy.

Overall, staff deployment was well planned to meet the needs of children. Staff worked well together to ensure children's individual care needs were met. We saw effective communication between staff members, especially when a task took them away from their responsibilities. This helped to maintain supervision of children and ensure they were safe.

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 their approach to responsive planning as well as enhancing the children's learning folders. This could include assessing children using the SHANARRI (Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible, Included) indicators, United Nations Rights of the Child and the Health and Social Care Standards. Consideration should be given to how the relevant curriculums are used. This will support the children to reach their potential.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that 'as a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I chose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 17 April 2019.

Action taken since then

Personal plans have been developed further and support children's learning, development and progress in the service. Planning approaches are child led and supports children's interests wishes and choices. This approach is now supporting children to thrive and progress in their individual learning.

Previous area for improvement 2

The provider should develop monitoring systems to evaluate the quality of the service and the impact on the outcomes for children attending. An appropriate bench marking tool or document to assess the impact of the provision on children's outcomes should be used. This will help to ensure that children's care, support and wellbeing needs continue to be met at a high level.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states 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 17 April 2019.

Action taken since then

Effective quality assurance processes are now in place. Managers are now carrying out regular quality assurance in all areas of the service. Time is now needed to for this to fully embed and to support a full cycle of improvement.

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	5 - Very 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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