Methilhill Nature Nursery
Day Care of Children

130 Sea Road
Methilhill
Leven
KY8 2GW

Telephone: 01592 719 422

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 June 2023

Service provided by:
Methilhill Community Children's Initiative a company limited by guarantee

Service provider number:
SP2013012220

Service no:
CS2013322737

About the service

The service is part of the Methilhill Community Children's Initiative. It is a community group dedicated to providing local children with clubs, activities, and an outdoor nursery. The Initiative is run by a board of volunteers. The outdoor nursery has its own manager and staff. It is open on a Tuesday and Thursday and offers morning sessions, afternoon sessions and whole days. The nursery is situated in a large, enclosed garden in Methilhill, Fife. It is close to the local primary school and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 June 2023 between 08:50 and 16:00. 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 and received 14 responses to our MS forms questionnaire.
- spoke with management and staff
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced kind and nurturing interactions, helping them to feel safe and loved.

- There was a strong sense of community in the nursery which supported children's sense of belonging and ensured they felt valued.

- Children experienced a natural outdoor environment which was designed to maximise opportunities for curiosity, creativity and inquiry.

- Staff promoted a positive and caring ethos, this resulted in respectful interactions with each other and with children and their families.

- Staff knew children well and were proactive in providing appropriate support to meet their individual needs.

- Staff were making progress in using observations to plan and develop next steps in learning for children.

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?	5 - Very 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.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were very happy and comfortable in the setting. They were supported throughout the day by skilled staff who knew them well. Staff interactions were warm, caring and respectful, this helped children to feel safe secure and loved. Staff were skilled at supporting children to express their emotions and validate how they were feeling. This further supported children to feel valued and respected. All parents spoke highly of the care their children received and one parent told us that, "I genuinely feel that the care my child receives is second to none".

Children enjoyed a relaxed, unhurried, and sociable snack time experience. They chatted happily to their friends and staff. By independently undertaking tasks, such as helping set up the table or clearing away their own plates, children were developing confidence and important life skills. Snack choices were nutritious and supported healthy choices for children. This supported children to make choices and develop a healthy relationship with food. Fresh water was available in the garden throughout the day for children to remain hydrated.

Personal plans were in place for each child, these were shared regularly with families. These plans were reviewed to ensure they reflected children's individual preferences, likes and dislikes. This enabled staff to give children the right care and support at the right time, ensuring their individual needs were consistently met. One Parent told us they preferred the new digital App, and that staff always took time to share information at the end of the session. This supported families to feel included in their children's care and learning.

Children's learning journals were informative and reflected next steps for learning. Support plans were also in place for some children, and these were developed with families to promote consistency of care.

The management of medication had been improved since the last inspection. A clear policy had been developed and this contributed positively to children's health and wellbeing.

Nappy changing was a nurturing and relaxed experience for children. Staff took time to talk to children and involved them in what was happening. Staff spoke to children in a respectful way, asking them, 'can I change your nappy?'. In line with best practice guidance staff used PPE (personal protective equipment) effectively. This approach helped to ensure that children were safe from infection.

Staff spoke confidently about their role in safeguarding and protecting children. They knew how they would record and report any concerns. Regular safeguarding training helped keep staff up to date and confident in their roles.

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 confident learners. Staff used their knowledge and practice to support quality play and learning experiences. They supported the emotional resilience of the children through holistic and nurturing approaches that secured their wellbeing and right to play.

This fully outdoor service encouraged children to make connections with nature and they used a variety of natural resources to support their creativity and curiosity as they explored the community garden with confidence. This also supported children to feel connected to their local community. Play experiences also provided opportunities for children to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy. For example, children were mark making using natural resources.

Children also benefitted from opportunities to learn valuable life skills, for example the polytunnel supported children to plant and grow seasonal vegetables and plants whilst learning how to care for them.

Planning approaches were child led and responsive to children's interests which supported them to feel involved and empowered. Children were given ownership of their play and encouraged to be independent.

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

The outdoor setting provided children with daily opportunities for exercise and fresh air in all weathers. The layout of the garden meant that children benefitted from a range of experiences. For example, there were trees which encouraged children to climb up and develop this skill with confidence. The yurt and 'Charlie's shed' were available and provided a warm dry space for children and staff to come together, to eat and to relax. This meant children could rest when they needed to.

Children experienced challenging and fun play experiences in a safe way. Risk assessments were in place for all areas of the service, identifying risks and hazards and actions taken to minimise these, to keep children and staff safe and protected. The service was in the process of developing a risk assessment for children to carry out and record. This would support them to be meaningfully involved in risk assessing their play space to ensure it was safe.

Children had the freedom to explore the garden and to be active, with opportunities to run around, develop their physical skills, be creative and enjoy quieter moments in the willow den. One parent told us, "It's an amazing service that lets children explore the outdoors and increases their awareness of nature and improves their gross and fine motor skills".

We found children engaged in their experiences as they moved seamlessly around the garden. On the day of the inspection, children were busy decorating the canopy over the fire pit for the graduation ceremony. Children told us they were excited for the celebration and some of their families were coming. This supported children to be included, valued and respected.

Effective infection control measures were in place, with children and staff handwashing regularly. Handwashing routines were embedded, and children knew when to wash their hands, for example, before lunch and after toileting and staff supported them when needed. This approach minimised potential spread

of infection and supported children's health and wellbeing.

Accidents and incidents' records were completed and shared with parents. Monthly audits were carefully completed to identify any areas of potential risk or concern. This helped to protect children from potential harm.

Children's information was stored securely on password protected computer systems and paperwork was contained in lockable filing cabinets in the nursery office.

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.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The new manager was clearly motivated in their role and recognised the benefits of establishing a positive working relationship within the small staff team. They worked well together, and this created an ethos of mutual trust and respect between them. They were committed to improving outcomes and ensured they provided an inclusive environment. This resulted in a happy, safe, and supportive environment for children and their families. One parent told us that, "Nature nursery have an open door; they are open to and receptive to feedback. The nursery has strong community links and engagement. Leadership is strong and creates a successful setting".

Quality assurance processes were in place. The service was beginning to develop their improvement plan in consultation with staff, children and families. Careful consideration was being given to setting realistic targets to support children's overall development and to develop a skilled workforce. Staff had identified high quality observations as an area to develop.

Team meetings gave staff the opportunity to come together to reflect and discuss individual children's needs, also to identify the strengths and areas for development within the service. Staff told us they felt valued and supported by the manager, this further enhanced positive relationships.

Staff placed high importance on regular communication with families. This was achieved using a variety of methods, for example, the service used emails, and the digital app to communicate. All parents told us that staff were approachable, and they had daily opportunities to talk to them. This contributed to the positive relationships between families and staff and supported children's continuity of care.

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.

4.3 Staff deployment

"The staff are wonderful. They have created an environment that is inclusive, interesting and has an abundance of learning opportunities". All families we spoke to, valued the staff team telling us how kind, caring and nurturing they were, and that communication was a real strength.

Staff were happy in their roles and felt supported by each other and management. Being a small team, and part of the local community initiative, they worked hard to create a welcoming and friendly environment for children and families. This contributed to creating a caring ethos with a strong sense of community within the setting.

Staff were effectively deployed across the setting to take account of their knowledge and skills. They were proactive, communicated effectively and worked well as a team. This approach enabled staff to meaningfully support children's needs and preferences. The service had recently purchased walkie talkies to support communication between staff across the garden. This contributed to a calm atmosphere and ensured children were always accounted for.

Effective arrangements for planned and unplanned absences were in place which ensured ratios were maintained. This approach ensured that children were kept safe, and well supervised by familiar staff, promoting a sense of security.

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 children's health and wellbeing are protected, the manager and staff should ensure that a robust medication policy is developed, and that all paperwork related to the administration of medication is completed accurately. This is to ensure that medication records and administration procedures are consistent with the Care Inspectorate document: Management of medication in day care of children and childminding settings

This area for improvement was made on 28 July 2022.

Action taken since then
This area for improvement has now been met, a robust medication policy has been developed and is consistent with the Care Inspectorate document: Management of medication in day care of children and childminding settings.

Previous area for improvement 2

To improve the quality of children's experiences, the manager should further develop quality assurance processes that identify strengths, areas for development, and support improvement of the service.

This area for improvement was made on 28 July 2022.

Action taken since then
This are for improevment has now been met quality assurance processes are in place and the service has begun developing an improvement plan in collaboration with staff children and families.

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?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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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