Almond Park Nursery
Day Care of Children

10-12 Macbeth Moir Road
Musselburgh
EH21 8JE

Telephone: +441316654136

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 December 2023

Service provided by:
The Almond Park Nursery Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2014012251

Service no:
CS2014323811

About the service

Almond Park Nursery is an early learning and childcare setting in a residential area of Musselburgh, close to the local primary school. The setting is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 120 children aged from three months to those not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The setting is comprised of four playrooms and separate staff and office area in the lower level. Each playroom benefits from having their own dedicated outdoor play space.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 5 December 2023, Monday 11 December 2023 and Wednesday 13 December 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 children using the service
- received written feedback from ten families
- received written feedback from 14 staff members
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- Children were happy, settled, and having fun playing with their friends.
- Staff were kind and caring towards the children, which created a welcoming and nurturing environment.
- Improvements should be made to how staff respond to children's cues within their routines.
- The setting provided a comfortable and inviting environment for children which was important to children's overall wellbeing.
- Improvements had been made to the outdoor play spaces.
- The management team showed a commitment to making improvements in the setting to promote good outcomes 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?	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 made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff consistently nurtured children through positive interactions, actively engaging at their level. Strong relationships were evident as children readily approached staff for reassurance and comfort, fostering a trusting and supportive environment. A parent told us, "I love how my little one comes in happy to nursery every day, running in to their teachers and they are always greeted with open arms and a big cuddle". We saw that children were happy, comfortable and had built trusting relationships with staff.

Staff knew children well and could confidently talk about their individual needs, dislikes and wishes. Staff recognised the value and worked closely with families and key professionals to support children's care, play and learning. A parent told us, "I needed support with some toileting issues at home and the girls were lovely and gave some great advice and kept me updated on their progress at nursery". Moving forward, the setting should continue with their plans to introduce various new strategies, including the use of visual aids to promote children's emotional wellbeing. This would support children to recognise and express their feelings within a group setting. We also suggested that the recording of strategies was streamlined for a more consistent approach and enable staff to easily access and refer to. This would further support staff to record progress and adapt their approach as necessary.

Children's medication was stored in line with good practice guidance. Staff confidently spoke about children's individual medical needs and how they would respond to these in an emergency. Medication and all paperwork had been reviewed and updated in partnership with families. We found some inconsistencies in relation to some medication not being kept on site. We asked the setting to review and update their policy and procedure to ensure that all children's medication was consistently available on site. The setting actioned this during the course of the inspection.

Children within the younger rooms experienced a calm, relaxed and nurturing mealtime experience. Most staff sat with children and used this time as an opportunity to engage in one- to-one conversations. The setting had ample staff across all spaces which supported this busy period. A rolling lunchtime within the 3-5 room promoted children's choice, as they were able to choose when they wanted to join the lunch table. However, the lunchtime experience within this room required further development. Staff should develop their knowledge and understanding of creating a positive mealtime experience and the many learning opportunities within this daily routine. This would ensure that all children experience a positive, nurturing mealtime experience that supports their overall wellbeing. The setting was receptive to this feedback and had begun to address this area of practice during the inspection.

1.3: Play and learning

Children experienced play spaces indoors and out that promoted learning and engagement. A parent told us, "When I go to collect my child all the children look like they are having great fun and there is always lots of different new and fun activities out for them to explore". Children were freely transporting resources around the spaces to support and extend their own play. As a result, children were busy and engaged in their play for long periods of time as they extended their interests and developed their own ideas.

Staff could confidently share examples of where children's interests and learning had been supported and extended. For example, a child that was fascinated with water play was enabled to fully explore this sensory experience by staff who understood the importance of children's curiosity and creativity. Staff recognised the uniqueness of each child and were working closely with East Lothian Council to improve how they used alternative methods to assess and record children's individual learning and progression. Moving forward, the setting should continue to further develop the quality of their observations. This would ensure that all observations were meaningful and effectively captured children's play, learning and progression. This was echoed by parents who told us there was room for improvement on the information that was captured and shared on the online communication app.

Staff took on a variety of roles in playrooms to support and extend children's play experiences. For example, staff were invited into children's play, facilitating play opportunities and extending learning through their conversations. This contributed to the positive, trusting relationships that had been built and supported children to thrive. Most staff fostered a questioning approach to encourage and support children's play and learning experiences. This enabled them to have more challenging conversations with children which supported their overall learning and development.

At our previous inspection we made an area for improvement in relation to children's individual needs being met. We could see staff had worked hard and improvements had been made across the setting. However, staff needed to further recognise and respond to children's cues within their routines. For example, the sleep routine within one playroom did not recognise the individual needs of each child, with all children being expected to sleep at the same time. As a result, staff spent long periods of time trying to encourage children to sleep when they were clearly not tired at this time. The setting was receptive to this feedback and had begun to facilitate reflective conversations across the staff team during the inspection. Moving forward, the setting should continue to support staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of developing flexible, nurturing routines that were responsive to individual children's needs (see area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1.
To support children's health and wellbeing, staff should improve their attention to meeting children's specific and individual needs. This should enable them to meet children's needs, parents wishes and be able to give parents accurate information about their child's day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was comfortable, furnished to a high standard and welcoming. Children had ample space for their care, play and learning needs, giving a strong message that they mattered. The natural light and ventilation created a refreshing atmosphere. A parent told us "The nursery is a warm welcoming place".

However, a parent commented that the large playroom meant it was often "loud". Staff continued to reflect on how best to have cosy spaces in the large playrooms to provide inviting and quiet spaces for children to retreat from the hustle and bustle of the playroom.

Housekeepers had been employed to support staff to maintain a clean environment, ensuring the wellbeing of children. This helped create a nurturing and organised setting, allowing staff to focus on children's care, play and learning without disruptions.

The staff and management team demonstrated a commitment to providing a quality outdoor environment with various play opportunities. This was an improvement from our last inspection. We saw staff's continued efforts were resulting in an ever improving rich and stimulating outdoor environment to support children's overall development. Children were happy and engaged in their outdoor play. A parent told us "My child loves to go outside and often talks about their 'gardening job'".

Staff gently encouraged children to tidy away resources once they had finished with them and staff re set areas during the day. This promoted respect and a sense of responsibility as children learnt to take ownership of their environment.

Staff adhered to infection, prevention and control procedures, including regular hand washing. This helped minimise the risk of spreading illness and infection among staff and children. Children were keen to show us how good they were at washing their hands. Cleaning rotas were maintained to uphold standards throughout the setting.

Staff spoke enthusiastically about making sure that the spaces and experiences were right for the children. Since the last inspection, they had worked hard to ensure the indoor spaces reflected children's current interests and curiosities, with the appropriate resources and materials to support their learning. As a result, we observed children fully engaged and having fun in their chosen activities.

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.

Quality indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The management team engaged well throughout the inspection and showed a commitment to making improvements in the setting to promote good outcomes for children. As a result, the majority of actions needed from the last inspection had been carried out. Since the last inspection management had made themselves more visible and available to parents. Parents told us, "Any interaction I have had with the management team has been very positive and they seem very proactive" and "I know who I can talk to if I need help and my concerns (not that I have many) are addressed quickly and then followed up later". This helped to foster open communication, build trust and ensure a supportive environment to meet the needs of children and families.

To promote leadership staff took on various champion roles, for example around promoting nurture and enhancing staff wellbeing. Champions served as role models, inspiring others with their leadership qualities. This fostered a positive and motivated work culture, encouraging teamwork and collaboration.

Regular whole team meetings and development of roles enabled staff to take responsibility and be accountable for the quality of the setting. Staff had worked hard to develop their self-evaluation processes, and these had contributed to bringing about positive changes in their practice. We saw a number of ways in which staff used self-evaluation and reflective practice. For example, daily reflective discussions, floor books to plan and implement changes to spaces and experiences and in daily planning conversations. This helped to develop a staff team who were motivated to provide positive outcomes for children.

Systems for auditing and monitoring were in place and had a positive impact on the quality of the setting. However, this was not yet carried out in a systematic way. Moving forward, we suggested that the manager considered using the quality improvement tool cycle, Plan Do Study Act (PDSA). This would support them to test an idea by temporarily trialling a change and assessing its impact. This would promote and strengthen the culture of continuous improvement that had been implemented.

When asked what the setting could do better, parents told us "I'm happy with everything about my child's room", "Nothing as I know my child is safe and cared for" and "Nothing, they do what I need everyday". This demonstrated satisfaction with the service provided to children and their families.

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.

Quality indicator 4.3 Staff deployment

Parents were complimentary of the staff team and the way in which they cared for their child. For example, they told us "Friendly and caring staff" and "Staff are always fun and welcoming, I can speak to staff about my child and they always support my decisions". Staff recognised the importance of nurturing, warm, responsive attachments and interactions. This meant children experienced genuine love and care. Staff were proud of the work they did, telling us "We have great relationships with our parents and it's like having one big family and we love to celebrate achievements". This contributed to the positive atmosphere that children and families experienced.

The staff team worked well together and were courteous and respectful to each other. This provided a happy and relaxed environment for children. A staff member told us ""We are very lucky to have such a family orientated team and great management who are always offering support and guidance".

Staff communicated well across the spaces to ensure that they were all working together to best meet the needs of children. For example, staff informed each other and children as they were about to leave play areas. This supported positive relationships and children were being reassured as to where key members of staff were and when they would return. Staff had defined roles and responsibilities in the playroom which helped them work together to ensure children's needs were met. This contributed to children feeling valued and important.

The induction process gave opportunities for staff to reflect at various stages and discuss their knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The management team used the 'national induction resource' (Scottish Government 2023) to promote a partnership approach between management and staff. As a result, staff were given sufficient time and support to understand what was expected of them. Staff told us they had received a thorough induction and learnt a lot from their mentor. This contributed to children being cared for by staff who felt valued and supported.

We saw there was a commitment to having a balance of staff with differing experience, knowledge and skills working effectively within the different playrooms. We recognised that the setting had experienced a number of staff changes. The manager was currently actively recruiting staff to remedy any gaps in the number of qualified staff. A staff member told us "Staff are all really good at supporting other teams when they can and where they can. Management also support playrooms as and when required and throughout the day". This demonstrated a whole team ethos to ensuring staff deployment was effective in ensuring high-quality outcomes for children.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 1 May 2023, the provider must ensure outdoor spaces provide children with stimulating and varied play experiences, supporting their physical development and overall wellbeing.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum ensure:
a) Improvements are made to the outdoor play areas, ensuring they are safe, suitable and appropriately resourced for children's care, play and learning.
b) Management oversight of improvements to outdoor play areas so they are implemented to a high standard with ongoing checks to ensure they remain well resourced and safe.

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

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:
'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, 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 requirement was made on 9 March 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

Significant improvements had been made to the children's outdoor play areas, resulting in a more engaging and enriching environment. The management team and staff had clear oversight to ensure that these improvements upheld high standards, promoting the well-being and developmental benefits of outdoor play for children.

Met - within timescales

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 support children's health and wellbeing, staff should improve their attention to meeting children's specific and individual needs. This should enable them to meet children's needs, parents wishes and be able to give parents accurate information about their child's day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS which state that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This area for improvement was made on 9 March 2023.

Action taken since then

We could see staff had worked hard and improvements had been made across the setting. However, staff needed to further recognise and respond to children's cues within their routines.

This area for improvement has been made again.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote children's enjoyment, safety and comfort, the manager should put in place a system for staff to report repairs and maintenance requirements. Once reported management should take prompt action to address the issues, preventing any potential hazards or risks to children's safety.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I can experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22).

This area for improvement was made on 9 March 2023.

Action taken since then

The introduction of an effective repair reporting system ensured the setting remained in a good state of repair, with timely completion of necessary repairs. Staff confirmed the system's increased effectiveness, highlighting improvements. The provider was developing an online oversight system to further contribute to efficient monitoring and management of maintenance tasks. This will further promote a safe and well-maintained environment for all.

This area for improvement had been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To promote improved communication and create a stronger sense of trust and collaboration between management and families, the management team should become more visible and involved in the day-to-day running of the setting.

This should ensure that the needs and concerns of parents are being fully addressed, and that the setting is operating at the highest level of quality and effectiveness.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

This area for improvement was made on 9 March 2023.

Action taken since then

The management team had significantly increased their visibility in playrooms, fostering stronger connections with families. This involved active participation in events such parents' evenings, 'chit chat' sessions, and engaging in the introduction of children and their families to the setting. Thoughtful gestures, such as distributing hot chocolate packs, demonstrated a commitment to making connections. The introduction of new communication books ensured that management stayed informed about conversations with parents, facilitating oversight of staff practices in collaborating with parents to meet children's needs.
This area for improvement had 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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.