# Newmill Nursery and Little Stars
# Day Care of Children

Newmill Village Hall
Middle Brae
Newmill
Keith
AB55 6US

Telephone: 01542 888 329

**Type of inspection:**
Unannounced

**Completed on:**
5 October 2022

**Service provided by:**
Pauline Hendry

**Service provider number:**
SP2019990643

**Service no:**
CS2019376003

## About the service

Newmill Nursery and Little Stars is a day care of children service situated in a community hall in the village of Newmill. The service is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of 15 children aged two years to not yet attending school.

The service is situated across the road from the local primary school, and close to the village shop and other local amenities. The children are cared for in a main playroom, a hall and a room used for serving and eating lunches. Children also have access to an enclosed outdoor area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 8 September 2022, between and 09:45 and 15:45, and 28 September 2022 between 12:30 and 15:30. 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 four family members of people using the service
- spoke with three staff and management
- observed practice and children's daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children were cared for by staff who nurtured them with kind, warm interactions.
- Children were happily engaged in play activities that reflected their interests.
- Children's progress should be supported by a consistent approach to recording learning and development.
- The manager proactively sought to make improvements and successfully involved children, families and staff in this process
- Staff communicated well as a team, working flexibly together to support children to have positive experiences and outcomes.

## 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? | 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? 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children's overall wellbeing was supported by staff who knew them well and interacted with kindness, care and nurturing approaches. We observed that the children were calm and settled in their play and responded happily to staff interactions. This made for a relaxed atmosphere.

During snack and lunch time, children benefitted from staff who were attentive to their safety and needs. The children were supported as they ate lunch by staff who sat with them, and were gently encouraged to eat well and enjoy conversations with friends. We observed that the premises layout meant there was limited scope for children to be involved in snack and lunch preparation. We asked staff to consider how they could promote opportunities for children to develop independence skills and to increase their involvement.

Children's care and development were supported by detailed personal plans which were based around the SHANARRI (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included) wellbeing indicators. These were regularly reviewed with parents ensuring that the information used to support children was relevant. Information from other agencies was used to develop support plans for children who required additional support and parents spoke very positively about the help they received. Individual care needs were shared with staff so that children were responded to compassionately and in a timely way.

Children's health and safety was promoted through staff knowledge of any conditions or allergies and the safe storage and administration of medication. We advised of the importance of recording when non-prescription medications such as creams were used. This may help build a picture of a pattern of symptoms, for example: pinpointing a potential trigger or cause.

**1.3 Play and learning**

Children had fun and were happy, engaged and enthusiastic learners. Children's opportunities for free flow play were limited to a wooden balcony with sand and water play. This was most frequently used by the two to three year olds' group. Staff provided regular opportunities for outdoor play in the larger garden area accessed via a safety gate and steps. This was supplemented by regular visits to a woodland area within the community. Whilst outdoors some children were excited to tell us about the slugs and mini beasts they had found. The children were encouraged to be kind and gentle to the creatures, helping them develop empathy and understanding for living things.

We found that for both age groups, children were supported in their play and learning by the provision of developmentally appropriate resources. The younger children were able to explore and play with large threading beads, shaving foam sensory play and books suitable for their interests and stage of development. The older children were able to explore more challenging play activities such as larger 'loose parts' play in the garden area. We saw children using these with some physical play equipment which presented problem solving and communication opportunities.

Children experienced a balance of planned and spontaneous activities. We observed that some activities were adult led and sometimes relied on printed worksheets, which had the potential to curtail children's creativity. During a key transition time children were unable to direct their play and make their choices as adults directed this activity. This resulted in children who were disengaged. To reduce interruptions to children's play, we asked the manager to review the arrangements in place for children's group times. Where we saw children leading and making choices about their own learning and play, this was well supported by the staff's skilful interventions. These high quality interactions enhanced children's understanding and learning, and fostered rich experiences more so than the adult led experiences.

Planning took into account children's interests and these were reflected in the resources available to the children. Children were supported to follow an interest in transport through the provision of a road-scape play mat. They were able to make choices about their play by being able to select play items from accessible baskets. These included a variety of themed items such as vehicles and animals, as well as open ended items such as wood slices, which they incorporated into their play.

Information recorded in learning journals showed some inconsistencies. Some observations more successfully captured children's knowledge and development of skills. The manager acknowledged that staff would benefit from further training to support a consistent approach. Children's recent success and achievements were celebrated on a: 'Wow Wall'.

There were mark making opportunities for the children to support their fine motor and writing skills. The manager told us that the two to three year olds' group was gradually being introduced to a wider range of opportunities to explore creativity through painting and sensory play. We observed the older children accessing painting at an easel and, mark making at a drawing/creative table. Children's numeracy development and understanding was supported by an environment which incorporated opportunities for counting and exploring numbers.

## 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. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a significant positive impact on children's experiences.

Children benefitted from being welcomed into a nursery which was clean, warm and inviting. There was adequate provision of toilet cubicles which were accessed directly from the playroom. Nappy changing facilities were available. Appropriate infection, prevention and control measures were in place. These included staff supporting children to keep toilet doors closed when in use, and when vacant in order to minimise cross-infection. Children were supported by staff in this way to respect their dignity and privacy.

The service was run from a community hall and had access to various rooms and spaces. These included a playroom; the hall and a kitchen for the preparation of snack and serving of lunch. Children benefitted from being able to access different areas of the premises safely, enhancing their experiences and play. This included access to a large hall for games and active play as well as access to an outdoor garden area.

We observed children participating in play with 'loose parts', inventing an obstacle course with support from staff. Another room was also used for multiple purposes such as meetings, staff breaks and was also where the children ate lunch.

We observed that a gate leading from the outdoor area to a lane was not sufficiently secure. This had the potential to compromise children's safety and security. The manager took immediate steps to make improvements to the security of the gate. Children could access an enclosed wooden balcony play area from the playroom. Wire grating was in place to reduce the occurrence of children slipping on the steps leading from the balcony to the garden. However, the decking area was slippery and was a potential slip hazard. We spoke with the manager about this and they advised that anti-slip paint had been purchased. The weather had been too wet to apply this to the surface.

Children were supported to rest or sleep, if needed, by the provision of a cosy area with a rug, sofa and access to books. Children could be given fold out mats if they wished to lie down to rest. Children's privacy was respected as staff were mindful of storing confidential information, such as chronologies, in a secure, lockable filing cabinet.

Children were able to follow their interests and lead their play as resources were easily accessible. This respected their choices and encouraged their independence.

## 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.

Children, families and staff benefitted from a well led service that had shared service vision, values and aims. These supported them to know what was important to the service in meeting the needs of children and families. The manager discussed their intention to review and update these in recognition of changes that children, families and staff have gone through since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Children's experiences and care benefitted from a service that proactively sought partnership working with parents and other professionals. Parents have been invited to: 'stay and play' sessions and asked to complete feedback forms. Different social media platforms were used to support communication between the nursery and parents. This helped keep parents informed and increased opportunities for parental involvement. This supported an ethos of continuous improvement and working together which promoted positive outcomes for children. Parents said they could: "contact (the nursery) at any time and they get back straight away."

Children's care, learning and development were supported by regular, effective communication between families and the nursery. Successes and achievements were celebrated in various ways. These included focus child sheets, observations, learning journals, a 'Wow Wall' and regular verbal feedback to parents.

Staff were encouraged to initiate well informed change and share responsibility for improvement. This led to realistic improvement actions and targets being identified, with change delivered by enthusiastic staff who felt valued for their contributions.

Challenge questions were used to stimulate reflective practice and self-evaluation. Staff were asked to provide individual written examples of improvement evidence and to identify next steps in developments. We suggested to the manager that whole team reflective discussions would stimulate self-evaluation allowing them to measure and record the impact of improvements as a team.

Regular staff meetings provided staff with opportunities to evaluate the impact of changes and improvements on children's care, experiences, learning and development. The manager and staff were proactive in involving children and families in planning and implementing improvements, gathering and recording their views as part of self-evaluation and quality assurance processes.

Children's safety, security and wellbeing was supported by staff who were aware of their responsibilities and procedures for reporting child protection concerns.

## 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.

Children experienced a positive ethos where staff spoke to each other, as well as the children, warmly, respectfully and calmly. Children's care and wellbeing benefitted from staff working together effectively, supporting and communicating with each other, which contributed to a positive staff ethos.

Staff acknowledged their appreciation for having an approachable manager with whom they could raise any issues. Staff told us: "If there's an issue, a staff meeting will be organised." Almost all members of staff mentioned during inspection that they felt they were part of a close team. One said: "we're really close as a team and get on well together."

Children's wellbeing, safety and development were supported by staff who were responsive to their needs and who worked flexibly as a team. Effective communication helped ensure that children's care was not compromised at busy times during the day. This helped provide continuity of care at busy times of transition such as lunch time and handovers when parents collected children.

The layout of the service premises and the use of different areas and rooms impacted on how staff were deployed. For example: we observed that staff breaks were planned around the children's lunch time. This meant that sufficient staff were available to support children's safety and wellbeing as lunch was served in a separate room.

Continuity of children's care, support and learning needs were a priority as new staff joined the team. We viewed documents which provided a structured induction and probation period for new members of staff. This included ensuring that staff received core training and any other support they required to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

Individual staff strengths, experience and needs were taken into account. Staff told us: "they always talk it through and show me what to do before I do anything on my own, which really helps." and "I feel supported as I was a bit anxious about doing things for the first time... but now I'm more relaxed."

## 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? | 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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