The Nature Nursery Montessori Ltd
Day Care of Children

Killbank Farm
Kirkfieldbank
Lanark
ML11 9UJ

Telephone: 07727 838 355

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 June 2022

Service provided by:
The Nature Nursery Montessori Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2020013516

Service no:
CS2020379890

About the service

The Nature Nursery Montessori Nursery Ltd is registered to provide care to 30 children aged from 2 years up to entry into primary 3 at any one time. A condition is in place to adjust the age range for one named child.

Care is provided from a dedicated outdoor space located within farmland in a rural area of Lanark. The service has access to a nearby carpark where they are able to facilitate arrival and collection procedures for children. Children had access to two large fields and a forest area.

Shelter was provided within two purpose built indoor areas including a kitchen area and Montessori classroom. Additional shelter was provided in a large tent and within two caravans.

This was an unannounced inspection, which took place between 30 May 2022 and 1 June 2022. Feedback was provided on 1 June 2022. Two inspectors carried out the inspection and a team manager was present as part of the Care Inspectorate's cross-team peer-working arrangements.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered through the inspection year. To inform our evaluations we:

- Spoke with children using the service and 20 of their family members
- Spoke with staff and management
- Spoke to other professionals working with the service including a food supplier and an educational psychologist
- Observed practice
- Reviewed documents.

What people told us

We received emailed comments from 18 family members of children and spoke to a further two by telephone. All parents and carers described being very happy with the care provided for their child.

Particular strengths highlighted included the level of information gathered by the service to support meeting children's needs and the range of child-led play opportunities that were available to children in a natural environment. We also heard that communication through the nursery app was valued by parents and carers and that this helped them feel connected to their child's progress and achievements.

We spoke to other professionals including a food supplier and an educational psychologist who commented very positively on their experiences of the service. We heard that the service worked closely with external partners to ensure the correct level of care and support was being provided for each child.

Two parents discussed access arrangements as they could not drive directly up to the service. Both understood this was in relation to planning restrictions for the space, which were outwith the provider's control. Parents were welcome to walk up to the site at any time during the day.

One parent said they would like to know a little more about staff and their backgrounds, which the provider agreed to take forward through the nursery app.

Self assessment

We did not request a self-assessment from the service prior to this inspection. We looked at the service's improvement plan and related paperwork, which identified their key areas for development.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of environment	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	4 - Good
Quality of management and leadership	4 - Good

Quality of care and support

Findings from the inspection

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

Children were happy and joyful when attending the service. Staff provided loving, caring interactions, which contributed to an environment where each child was valued and included.

One child told us, 'I love this nursery and I love all my teachers.'.

Staff knew children well and fully understood the support required by each individual child, and this was supported by personal plans that were regularly updated in conjunction with parents and carers. As well as having the key information needed to care for children, the plans were used to recognise each child's progress and achievements. The format of the plans was in a transitional phase and we encouraged the service to consider how best to evidence parental involvement within the new format. Parents told us they regularly contributed to children's plans and shared some examples of how their child's needs had been met.

Children were safe and protected from harm with clear policies and procedures in place in relation to child protection. Staff understood the role they played in this and had undertaken training to support them in their role. Overall, robust protection processes were in place and we were confident the service would respond correctly to any concerns about a child.

A balanced and nutritious menu was provided for children. The service worked closely with an external caterer, which ensured clear information was shared on allergies and preferences. To further promote children's independence, the service should consider whether the self-serving opportunities available at snack time could be included within the lunch experience.

A child-led approach to delivering high quality care was evident throughout our visit. This included free-flow mealtimes as well planning activities based on children's interests, which could be adapted as the day progressed. As a result, children were able to play and learn in a way that suited them and supported their overall development.

Staff regularly observed children and used these opportunities to create 'stories' on the family app. This allowed parents and children to discuss their day at nursery and created strong links between nursery and home.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 5 - very good

Quality of environment

Findings from the inspection

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

Children experienced an environment that promoted imagination and curiosity. They had access to a range of outdoor play areas as well as a forest space, which were stocked with natural materials and loose parts for children to play and learn with. The provider had plans to introduce more opportunities for climbing to provide more opportunities for children to explore risk and challenge. We agreed this would be a suitable next step for developing the environment.

The outdoor nature of the service had been carefully considered when assessing risk. All areas used by the service were safe and secure with a range of measures, such as secure gates and fencing, in place to ensure children did not come to harm. Safety was also a key consideration around any heat sources such as the campfire or log burner. Children understood where to stand in order to remain safe and staff were vigilant, ensuring risk was suitably managed.

Indoor spaces provided shelter and included caravans, a kitchen and snack area as well as the Montessori classroom, which were used as needed during the day to support children's routines or as a contingency for inclement weather.

Children were able to rest and relax as needed with some cosy spaces provided as well as opportunities to sleep outside. Staff were mindful of supporting children's needs with regards to sleep and ensured that children slept or rested when it was right for them. To further support children's comfort, the service should consider how sleeping arrangements outdoors always offer access to a hammock or suitable sleeping mat appropriate for each child.

Suitable measures were in place across the service to reduce the risk of infection being transmitted. Toilet and nappy changing areas were clean and tidy with storage of items being in line with best practice.

Appropriate handwashing facilities were in place and children always had access to soap and warm water with staff supervising handwashing to make sure it was effective. We noted some minor improvements in handwashing routines, which the provider agreed to address.

Children benefitted from being able to interact with the service's animals. This included a dog, cats, rabbits and chickens. We observed staff supporting children to feed and care for the animals, which was helping them to develop empathy and an understanding of nurture. Care was taken to ensure children's safety and the risk of infection relating to the animals was carefully controlled. One child told us, 'This nursery has animals, and I really like seeing animals'.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 5 - very good

Quality of staffing

Findings from the inspection

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

Staff were committed to their role and we observed them to be caring and kind, using sensitive interactions to support children's needs. Staff took opportunities to extend children's learning through the use of skilled questioning, which added depth to children's play experiences.

The number of staff present contributed to meeting all children's needs. Enhanced staffing levels above the standard ratio ensured staff were suitably deployed to care for and supervise children in the open outdoor space.

The training programme ensured staff were supported to develop their skills as practitioners, and opportunities were provided for staff to reflect on their training. This meant that learning from training, such as in-the-moment-planning, had been embedded within the service and was being used to provide positive experiences for children.

Suitable induction processes ensured staff received guidance and support from the outset of their employment. As a result, staff fully understood key information such as safety and child protection and could use this to support children. Annual appraisals helped staff reflect on their learning and development.

The next steps for these processes should be to include more opportunities for reflection at different points of staff's development.

We sampled recruitment documentation and found that staff had been recruited safely with the relevant checks in place before they started in their role. The provider should now consider how they can incorporate some other aspects of best practice guidance within the overall recruitment process. This should include a more structured approach to assessing key competencies related to the role applied for.

We identified that the required registration with the Social Services Council was not in place within the required timescale for one staff member. The provider had misunderstood the guidance on this and this had occurred during a time of transition and changes in guidance.

We were satisfied that the provider acted appropriately on this during the inspection. However, we stressed the importance of having a system for monitoring registration of staff to prevent a reoccurrence. (see recommendation 1)

Parents told us they valued the relationship they and their child had with staff. Staff were described as lovely, caring and committed, with one parent saying, 'I'm impressed with the relationships my son has developed with all staff not just his key worker.'

One child also said, 'I've been here a long time and I know everyone's name'.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To ensure that all staff caring for children are suitably registered, the provider should implement monitoring and auditing processes related to registration with professional bodies.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.' (HSCS 4.23) and 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.' (HSCS 3.14).

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of management and leadership

Findings from the inspection

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

The manager, who is also the registered provider, had a visible presence within the service and parents and children enjoyed positive relationships with the management & staff team. This contributed to an inclusive environment where all stakeholders were valued. Parents told us they valued the efforts the manager had gone to when addressing even the smallest concern.

One parent said, 'It's easy to have communication with this nursery, we work together.'

Communication was highlighted as a key strength by all parents and by staff. Parents particularly welcomed the regular updates they received through the app and by private messages. Staff described a supportive environment and told us this contributed to a close team who all had the same commitment to providing the best care to children.

Links had been established with other professionals and we evaluated that this was contributing positively to children's care and support. This included regular engagement with other professionals such as educational psychologists and other nurseries that children attended.

The management team was keen to develop their own learning and regularly engaged in peer learning and support with other services. As a result, they were now more aware of some of their responsibilities as a registered childcare service, such as notifications that should be made to the Care Inspectorate and other elements of best practice. This contributed positively to the overall development of the service and will support them on their improvement journey.

Clear quality assurance and improvement processes were in place and had taken account of children's views. To ensure improvements can be fully embedded and remain focused, consideration should be given to how the service evidences the outcomes of any monitoring or auditing activity and the impact this has on quality.

We asked the provider to update their policy on use of personal mobile phones to update the nursery app to ensure children's safety. We were satisfied this had been addressed during the inspection.

While storage of medication was appropriate, improvements were needed to the policies and procedures for the administration of medicine in line with best practice to ensure children's health and wellbeing. (see recommendation 1)

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To ensure children's health and wellbeing, the provider should review and update the procedures for the administration of medication in line with best practice.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the best practice document: 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services.'

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).

Grade: 4 - good

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

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

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

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

Inspection and grading history

This service does not have any prior inspection history or grades.

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