Silver Birch Outdoor Nursery
Day Care of Children

Silver Birch Outdoor Nursery
George Street
Hunters Quay
DUNOON
PA23 8JU

Telephone: 01369 708926

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 June 2023

Service provided by:
Argyll and Bute Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003373

Service no:
CS2021000197

About the service

The service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 12 August 2021.

Silver Birch Outdoor nursery is located in Dunoon. The provider of the service is Argyll and Bute Council. The service is registered to provide a care service as follows:

To provide a fully outdoor care service to a maximum of 24 children aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time.

Adult: child ratios will be a minimum of: - 3 years and over - 1:8 if the children attend more than 4 hours per day, - 1:10 if the children attend for less than 4 hours per day

The manager is also the manager of Clyde Cottage Nursery Centre, Pilot Street, Dunoon, PA23 8DB

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 13 June 2023 and Thursday 15 June 2023. The inspection was carried out by three early learning and childcare inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the service registered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with and observed children using the service

- contacted families and staff through Microsoft forms to gather their views

- spoke with staff and management

- observed practice and daily life

- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were confident within their surroundings exploring and engaging in their play and learning.
- Staff were nurturing, respectful, caring and kind.
- Staff told us they were happy to be at their work, they felt very well supported by management.
- Staff were respectful in their interactions with each other, creating a positive ethos and good role models for the children.
- Children relished being outdoors having fun in a stimulating environment that was rich and varied in experiences.
- Management and staff were working well together and committed to delivering the best outcomes for children and families.
- Personal plans should continue to be developed and streamlined to ensure next steps for each individual child are clear and meaningful.
- Review the lunch time experience and space to support children to have a more appropriate area to eat and relax.
- Management should develop and implement robust quality assurance systems with a focus on improving all aspects of the nursery.

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

Quality Indicator 1.1 - Nurturing care & support

Children were happy and confident throughout the inspection accessing areas within the service. Children were observed to be having fun with their peers and keen to show inspectors their environment in which they play and learn. They were confident within their surroundings exploring and engaging in play, some children could tell us about the nursery boundaries within their surrounding areas and what to do if they saw another child go out with the boundary. This supported children to feel safe, confident, and secure within the nursery environment. Parents told us.

'The staff are so enthusiastic, children have freedom to roam and explore the natural environment'.

'The nursery encourages enjoyment of the outdoors, keeps children active, fosters an understanding and interest in nature and the environment'.

Staff were nurturing and respectful, caring and kind. They knew children well and had built up secure relationships with them. We observed children approaching staff for support and help when required. We observed staff facilitating children to resolve conflict through encouraging restorative practice. Staff supported children through approaching them in a calm, understanding and supportive manner, discussing situations and offering resolutions this was enabling children to develop social skills, confidence and self-esteem when dealing with challenges or conflict. Parents told us.

'All the staff are brilliant and seem to genuinely care about all the children'.

'The Silver Birch staff are all warm, friendly and approachable. My daughter is happy to go with whoever is at the gate and regularly comes home with stories about the adventures they have shared together'.

Mealtimes were observed as a sociable opportunity children could choose to sit with their friends which was encouraging friendships and conversations. Food was healthy and nutritious, and children were offered more if required. Staff should continue to monitor and evaluate the lunchtime experience with a focus on staff positioning and engagement to enhance children's experiences. Children should be given further opportunities to develop independence with support from staff.

Staff knew children well and could tell us about their individual needs and personalities. Personal plans and online journals were in place for all children. Information gathered was giving staff some relevant details to support them in meeting children's individual care needs. However, personal plans should continue to be developed and streamlined to ensure next steps for each individual child are clear and meaningful. Management should continue to monitor personal plans to ensure these are being updated and reviewed to reflect support strategies in more detail or when there is a change with a child's health, welfare, and safety needs. Personal profiles should be arranged so staff and management can access up to date information clearly. **(See area for improvement 1)**

We sampled the nurseries medication policy and consent forms and found these were in line with current good practice guidance which ensured the health and wellbeing of the children. Management should develop the auditing process in line with best practice guidance management of medication in day care setting.

We sampled accident and incident records and asked management to audit these to identify common or reoccurring concerns. We shared an auditing template to ensure actions required are recorded and completed.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play & Learning

Children experienced a stimulating environment that was rich and varied in experiences. Staff were responding to children's individual requests to support their interests and had created some inviting areas that were reflective of children's curiosity and promoted independence. For example, children were transporting water to mix with mud to create potions, singing and chatting with friends on the hammock, developing imaginative play with dinosaurs and using binoculars to watch the red squirrels which the children had named Harry, Larry and Barry. Children were actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned experiences. We observed children that were happy and confident in their play with friends and staff. Parents told us.

'I love the fact that the nursery is based outdoors and that it brings children back to nature. Silver birch provides my child with a rich base to develop through play and exploring. The staff are amazing bringing the imagination of the children to life by creating new and exciting structures around the area to play with'.

'Fabulous setting with fabulous staff. My child's confidence has improved no end since attending'.

'The outdoor setting is fantastic and offers amazing opportunities for children to play, learn and grow and my child is always very excited to show us round all the brilliant areas that's are continually expanding and developing'.

Children had access to resources and play experiences that helped develop their language and literacy. There were books available throughout the service and staff took regular opportunities to read with children on their own or in groups. Staff had developed a reading area that was cosy and comfortable for children to read and relax on their own or with friends. Opportunities to develop numeracy should continue to be developed through staff developing numeracy language further during play.

Childrens learning was planned, documented, and tracked through online profiles, floor books and the services literacy, numeracy, and wellbeing tracker. All staff took responsibility to update observations of achievements on the online profiles. The manager, in partnership with staff, should continue to embed, sustain, and evaluate the planning and recording process through developing a system to streamline the information gathered to clearly identify children's progression of learning, interests, and next steps. This will support staff to track, record and deliver quality play and learning experiences tailored to children's individual needs. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to achieve their full potential and meet children's health, welfare and safety needs, the manager should develop and streamline children's personal plans. This should include, but not be limited to, identifying, and implementing appropriate strategies to meet children's needs, supporting progress, meaningful next steps and high-quality observation linked to clear progression pathways.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.1).'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

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 Childrens experience high quality facilities.

The outdoor setting provided a welcoming well-established environment for children with some rich, natural opportunities to explore and investigate. Staff were reviewing and reflecting on areas in response to children's interests. Base camp provided a wide selection of opportunities for children to play and learn on their own or with others, for example planting, using the hammock, making frothy tea, playing on the swing, water play as well as some areas to rest and relax. Children had a vast number of areas to run about, climb and develop imagination using some natural and open-ended resources. For example, one child had mapped out and designed his own hydro dam and then used a range of loose parts materials to bring his creation to life with pipes and blocks of wood. Parents told us.

'Silver birch is continually expanding and my son is always excited when they get something new including recently the boat area and the rainbow swing'.

'The only way to describe the overall environment at Silver Birch is "magical".
There are so many fantastic areas at Silver Birch, providing all sorts of varied opportunities to play and to relax'.

'The whole nursery woods have been beautifully and creatively developed to meet all the needs of children with separate areas and so much space for the children to enjoy and develop'.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place in line with current best practice guidance. We found toilets were clean and easily accessible for children and the setting had an adequate supply of personal protective equipment. Management and staff should continue to monitor areas accessed by children, to ensure resources, and fixed equipment are appropriately cleaned. Staff should also encourage children in more regular hand washing and be mindful of children who require support to clean their face after lunch or when they have a runny nose this will encourage good hygiene practice and avoid spreading infection.

The service had policies in place to support the safe delivery of the service in line with local authority guidance that ensured a consistent approach. Management and staff carried out daily visual checks of the outdoor environment. The service has a janitor based on site who supports management and staff in maintaining the areas accessed by children and if any maintenance issues are required these are rectified in a timely manner.

We sampled risk assessments that were in place to support a safe environment. We have asked management to review and update risk assessments to ensure they reflect the changing surroundings. We discussed the service implementing a more robust dynamic format of risk assessment that would reflect daily changes that could affect how children play, learn, and access the outdoor setting. This would support the service to continue to keep children safe in all spaces.

During both days of inspection, it was very warm and although there was appropriate shading from the trees where children were playing, the lunch area was warm, lacked free flow of air and was too small resulting in some children sitting outside. We would ask the provider along with the management team to review the space used for lunch time consider ventilation, appropriate seating, tablecloths, and bigger tables to support children to have a more appropriate space to eat and relax. Following the inspection, the provider has confirmed they will implement an enlarged and enhanced lunch space.

Children had access to fresh water throughout the session ensuring they were hydrated. We discussed with the provider and management the storage of children's water and have asked they consider using a cool box. Management advised they are currently awaiting on a fridge to be delivered which will support the storage of food and milk.

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 well led.

The management team were open and honest throughout the inspection and promoted a shared vision along with staff in delivering a quality service to all children and families. Parents told us:

'The depute manager is nurturing, supportive, encouraging and always fights to get the best for her staff and the children'.

'Staff in silver birch are caring, friendly, helpful. I genuinely feel happy when I leave my son as I know he is going to have great adventures he refers to it as the jungle'.

'All the staff are very friendly and caring and they all have a very good relationship with the children and are very welcoming at drop off times'.

The management team and staff reflected daily and had weekly staff meetings to review children's experiences, progress and reflect on what was working well and what needed to improve within the setting. As a result, the management team and staff were knowledgeable about what was happening within the service and where improvements or developments were required demonstrating their capacity for improvement.

We acknowledged that the service had plans in place to support improvement. We found quality assurance processes were beginning to be effective in evaluating the quality of the provision provided. The services Improvement plan and standards and quality detailed and identified areas the service had been working on and what they still want to improve. The service regularly gathers feedback from children and their families which was used to plan the development and improvement of the service. The management team should continue to progress with the areas identified within the improvement plan and consider reflecting on the Health and Social Care Standards and the Quality framework for day care of children, child-minding, and school-aged childcare. This will support the service in reflecting and implementing positive outcomes and experiences for children and families.

The management team and staff team had a vision for the nursery and should continue to implement effective quality assurance processes to help embed and sustain any changes. The management team should develop processes to support staff to meaningfully reflect on their practice through monitoring, observations, and engagement. This would enable the management team to monitor change and the impact to support more reflective practice and improved outcomes for children This will also support sustained and continuous development for staff as individuals and the nursery as a whole. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Areas for improvement

1. To improve better outcomes for children. The management team should develop and implement robust quality assurance systems with a focus on, monitoring children's play and learning experiences, monitoring of staff practice, and evaluating and improving the nursery.

This is to ensure that management and leadership is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards that state; 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

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

Staff were clear about the routines of the day to support individual children's needs and preferences. Staff were motivated in their roles and keen to support the service to continue to develop and improve to ensure positive outcomes for the children in their care. Staff told us they worked well as a team to achieve quality care for children attending the nursery, we found their skill mix and experience complement each other. One parent told us:

'I have seen the staff team grow over time and they are all passionate about outdoor learning all brining their own strengths and skills to the team. I love that my children are cared for by such I diverse team and can learn all different things from each member'.

Staff were respectful in their interactions with each other, creating a positive ethos and role models for the children. Arrangements were in place to support continuity of care across the day. For example, staff breaks were well planned to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

We would ask management to consider how staff deployment and physical management of the site would allow children more freedom to move safely around the site ensuring their individual needs and interests can be further enhanced.

Staff told us they were happy to be at their work, they felt very well supported by management and their ideas for improvements were respected. Children and their families benefited from an evident ethos of respect within the team which resulted in a positive working environment. Parents told us:

'The staff are what makes silver birch. They are warm, friendly and inviting. Never a dull moment and silly enough to have some fun and mess about in the muck. There's no such day as a boring one with them'.

'The staff are very caring and friendly. They know lots about being outdoors'.

During inspection staff communicated well using radios to ensure children were accounted for within the large expansive area. Staff were observed using the radios regularly to communicate if help was required or children were moving areas.

Staff had regular performance development reviews with management which enabled them to reflect on their own practice and identify any training needs. Staff also took responsibility for their own professional development and embraced any new opportunities to learn and embed this into their practice and we could see how staff learning was having a positive effect on experiences for children.

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

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