Harper House Childcare Centre
Day Care of Children

92 Canal Street
Saltcoats
KA21 5JB

Telephone: 01294588761

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 October 2023

Service provided by:
Phoenix Futures

Service provider number:
SP2003003595

Service no:
CS2022000285

About the service

Harper House Childcare Centre operates from Saltcoats in North Ayrshire and is a day care of children service registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children not yet attending primary school at any one time of whom no more than 20 are aged under 2 years.

The accommodation consists of two playrooms, a sensory room, a quiet room and an outdoor play space. It is close to local amenities and public transport links.

The service is provided by Phoenix Futures a registered charity and is linked to Phoenix Futures National Specialist Family Service, Harper House Care Home Service which is registered separately with the Care Inspectorate.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 October 2023 between 09:15 and 16.00. A further visit took place on 27 October 2023 to provide feedback to the management team. One Inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received questionnaire responses from four families
- spoke with two parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed a sample of relevant documents.

Key messages

- Children were confident, happy and having fun
- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children
- Staff and management worked well together creating a welcoming environment for children and their families
- Leadership promoted a shared vision, values and aims used to positively inform practice
- Further development of quality assurance systems is needed to plan for improvement
- Doors linking childcare centre to the main accommodation should be made secure.

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 and support

Children experienced warmth and nurture in how they were supported and cared for to support their individual health, welfare and safety needs. Children were settled in the nursery confident of routines.

Interactions between staff and children were warm and caring. Staff ensured they took time to explain to children what was going to happen and when. Children were supported to express their thoughts and feelings. Active listening from staff to the children supported them to be confident individuals knowing they were valued. This helped children to be confident feeling safe to communicate their ideas and preferences.

An ethos of respect was evident within the service. All children were warmly welcomed into the service. Staff ensured they had a good understanding of each child's individual needs to help them plan for children's sessions. Personal plans were in place for children and regular meetings between families ensured staff were kept up to date working in partnership with parents. We reminded the manager to ensure these are included in the children's personal plans, part of the review process.

Children attended morning and afternoon sessions, going away with their parents for lunch and returning for their afternoon session. We discussed consideration should be given to the number of transitions children could have in their day, the management team agreed this would continue to be reviewed. At snack times staff sat alongside children chatting about food helping to create a sociable experience. Staff should ensure a consistent approach is taken for snack for both sessions to help children develop independence.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were engaged in different types of play throughout the session, such as imaginative, creative, construction, outdoor and role play. Children could lead their own play and learning as staff responded to their behaviour and play interests. Going at their own pace younger children explored sensory play using paint and water supported by staff using playful repetitive language. Older children enjoyed outdoor play exploring the mud kitchen and playing physical and energetic games.

Staff supported children acting as positive role models as they listened to children and encouraging conversations to extend play. They joined in play showing a genuine interest with most staff knowing when to intervene to extend children's learning. We observed children happy and having fun.

Children were beginning to develop their language, literacy, numeracy skills through play with simple songs, stories and rhymes. To further enhance children's opportunities staff should review the environment considering where numeracy and literacy resources could support children's play and learning for example ensuring there is books in each area of play and opportunity for children to mark make making the connection print has meaning.

Planning for play was mostly responsive with staff aware of children's emotional wellbeing and engagement in play. Observations and trackers looked at children progress and helped staff to plan to extend play and

learning for each child's individual stage of development. The manager should continue to support staff in developing the play and learning planning process and staff skills in recording observations. This will support staff to plan next steps in children's development and learning.

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: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in an playrooms that supported children's rights giving children the message they matter. A sensory room had been created helping children to develop and engage their senses with bubble lights, wall mirrors and boards for touch. This supported children to self-regulate reducing any stress or anxiety whilst promoting creative play.

A homely room for very young babies had been created with a cot and suitable resources to enable staff to provide nurturing care and support required for this age group. Furniture and resources helped create a calming space for children. The layout of the playrooms was set out to enable children to engage in a wide variety of play activities on their own, in small or larger groups. Space had been organised to allow children to move around freely.

Secure entry to the service was operated by staff with a separate childcare centre entrance from the family accommodation. As part of registration the provider had been asked to make the connecting door from the childcare centre to the main accommodation secure to ensure children could not leave the childcare centre unobserved and no one could enter the childcare centre without staff's knowledge. Although the provider had taken action to rectify this consultation with the fire department had resulted in changes made being withdrawn. However, the provider should take further steps to find a solution notifying the care inspectorate of action taken to resolve. Management have provided assurance this will be actioned as a priority. See Area for Improvement 1.

The outdoor space was mainly grassed with some paved areas. The area included a pergola used for shade in the summer if needed, a fixed climbing frame and a fixed tepee, a mud kitchen and some loose parts materials had been added. Staff should continue with their plan to further develop this play area involving families and if possible, the wider community to ensure children have the best possible experience.

Risk assessments and checks taken by staff helped to ensure a safe environment for children both indoors and outdoors. We were satisfied that the service had appropriate infection control procedures in place to minimise the potential spread of infection. We observed children and staff carrying out handwashing at appropriate times.

Children's information is stored securely. Managers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure this is managed to keep children's information safe protecting their privacy and dignity.

Areas for improvement

1. The provider should ensure action is taken to prevent the risk of children leaving the childcare centre unobserved and anyone entering the childcare centre without staff's knowledge.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that; "My environment is secure and safe" (HSCS 5.17).

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 manager had successfully led the staff team to have a shared vision, values and aims. Staff placed children at the centre committed to ensure the service provided quality care, play and learning.

Working in partnership with families was key to this service. Staff knew children and their families well. They viewed children as unique individuals with their own needs, personalities and interests. Parents spoke highly of staff and management commenting on the support they offered to them and their child. A parent commented:

'Staff go above and beyond - I feel they need recognised.'

All parents who returned our questionnaire agreed they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the setting and their ideas and suggestions were used to influence change.

Children's achievements were shared and celebrated by the staff team and used to make any changes to help progress and development. This supported children to develop high self-esteem and a positive attitude to play and learning.

The quality assurance system was at an early stage and there was a need to continue to develop approaches to self-evaluation. The manager should ensure staff are involved in any formal self-evaluation to develop the improvement plan. This will support conditions where all people feel confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for the process. To ensure children receive high quality play and learning the manager should continue to implement her plan to develop a suitable quality assurance system. This will help to influence change and make improvements. See Area for improvement 1.

Regular meetings with staff to go over progress and informal monitoring was used to influence improvement. Staff should become familiar with the Quality framework for daycare of children child-minding and school aged childcare (Care Inspectorate, 2022) as a tool to support reflection and evaluation. This will help them to further develop skills in evaluating the impact of their leadership on the progress children make.

Management as agreed should apply for a variation to their conditions of registration to include caring for school age children.

Areas for improvement

1. To further the improvement journey, the service should continue to develop and embed their quality assurance system. This should include but not be restricted to:

a) Monitoring of children's experiences and outcomes in play and learning

b) Review formats by using key self-evaluation questions asking how are we doing – how do we know - what are we going to do next
c) Involve all staff in the development of the improvement plan
d) Support staff in further developing self-evaluation techniques.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "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

The manager made sure that the service was appropriately staffed during the day. Staff had been deployed to ensure adult child ratios were maintained meaning children's individual needs were met by the right number of people. Children's overall wellbeing was helped from staff who knew them well. Staff understood their individual care and support needs and adapted their approaches to suit each child.

There had been some changes to the staff team, and although further time is needed to fully reach their potential the manager had a clear plan on how staff will be supported and integrated into the established team viewing all staff as leaders in learning.

As part of staff induction, a range of training had been accessed relative to the service provided. This included child protection, adverse childhood experiences and food hygiene. Staff would now benefit from accessing specific training linked to their role as childcare workers to support their skills, knowledge and professional development. This will help to ensure children have high quality play and learning experiences. See Area for improvement 1.

Together, staff had developed relationships to support each other by being respectful and flexible in their approaches. Tasks were carried out without any impact on the children. Communicating with each other when carrying out necessary tasks or leaving the playroom contributed to children's needs being met. Staff modelled positive social interaction both verbal and non-verbal helping children to understand relationships. Good working relationships had been established which meant that the children and families experienced a warm, caring atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

1. The provider should ensure staff access training specific to their role as a childcare worker. The use of national guidance specifically for early learning and childcare should also be used as part of staff continuing professional development.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: "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).

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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