Noah's Ark Children's Nursery
Day Care of Children

121 Auchterderran Road
Lochgelly
KY5 9DH

Telephone: 01592 781234

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 August 2024

Service provided by:
SADCO Nursery Group Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2023000116

Service no:
CS2023000183

About the service

Noah's Ark Children's Nursery is situated in a residential area of Lochgelly, close to local amenities including shops, woodlands, parks and schools. The service provides care to a maximum of 40 children not yet attending primary school at any one time; of whom no more than 9 are aged under 2 years. The outdoor space has been taken into account when agreeing the maximum number of children aged 2 to an age to attend primary school. Children must have access to the outdoor space at all times. Adult:child ratios will be a minimum of: under 2 years 1:3, 2-3 years - 1:5, 3 years and over - 1:8 if the children attend more than 4 hours per day or 1:10 if the children attend for less than 4 hours per day.

The accommodation is provided from a purpose built building with three playrooms, office space, sleep rooms, kitchen and toilets. All playrooms have direct access to the garden with a separated area outdoors for younger children and a large outdoor shelter.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 August 2024 between the hours of 09:45 and 16:30. We returned to complete inspection and give feedback on 29 August 2024. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:
- spoke with 8 children using the service
- spoke with/gathered feedback from 29 parents/carers
- spoke with management and staff members
- observed practice
- reviewed relevant documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and enjoying their time in the service.
- Parents highly value the service and the staff team.
- The warm, welcoming ethos contributes to children feeling safe and secure and supports positive connections with adults.
- The whole staff team demonstrate a desire for continuous improvement.
- Sufficiency of resources should be improved to support, challenge and engage children.
- The service should continue to develop and embed quality assurance systems and measure the impact of improvements made.

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

Quality Indicator 1.1; Nurturing care and support

We found significant strengths in nurturing care and support which supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this individual quality indicator as very good.

Families were greeted warmly on arrival by staff who know them well. The strong relationships and effective communication with parents contributed to children's needs being met. Parents told us "All members of staff are friendly and approachable, and care for the children even if they are not in their 'room'. The more senior nursery staff also care for parent wellbeing and will always make time if a parent is needing some emotional support".

Staff were sensitive in supporting distressed behaviours which empowered children to manage conflict and maintain their self-esteem. Children who were upset or unsettled were quickly given physical comfort and reassurance which further enhanced their attachment with keyworkers. One parent told us "It's like sending my child to spend time with their favourite aunties". We suggested the service could now consider developing self-registration to include 'emotional check in' to further enhance children's understanding of feelings.

Children enjoyed healthy meals and snacks and were supported by staff promoting the social aspect of eating together. Children were involved in reviewing and shopping for food. Menus were planned to ensure inclusivity and management of children's allergies, intolerances or preferences. We asked the service to review some of the provision to further reduce provision of processed food across the week. The service should now consider how they can develop 'rolling lunch and tea time' to provide children with more choice over when to eat, along with additional opportunities for children to be more independent in self-serving at other times. We suggested some ideas to help them develop leadership roles for children in this area.

Children's wellbeing needs were met, as allergy information was used effectively. Accident and medication systems contributed to children's continuity of care. Appropriate forms were completed, ensuring information was passed on quickly to maintain children's health. We asked the service to ensure consistency in storing medication within sealed boxes along with a copy of the medication form across all rooms. The service should now consider developing flow charts to support children with asthma.

Quality Indicator 1.3; Play and learning

Creative play opportunities within the nursery and garden supported children's engagement and challenge. They were able to make their own playdough and access paints and other craft materials supporting their self-expression. A range of loose parts play materials outdoors enhanced children's thinking skills and exploratory play. We discussed other ways to further enhance creative play to increase children's enjoyment, curiosity and investigation.

Children enjoyed variety in their play and learning through community links and use of the local environment. For example, they visited the local care home where they enjoyed shared activities such as icing biscuits. These visits were varied, allowing all children across the age ranges to access these. This intergenerational link promoted respect across generations and extended learning.

Children's learning and development was recorded within journals. Monitoring of these was helping to identify gaps such as limited photographs for some children and supporting improved observations. One parent told us "I would love to see more pictures or videos of her at nursery engaging in the no doubt many play experiences Noah's ark offers". Children's next steps were identified, and the views of parents were captured supporting a shared approach to children's achievement. There was scope to increase children's ownership of these as they were currently outwith their reach. This limited their opportunity to revisit and celebrate prior learning, we discussed ways this could be enabled. Journals should continue to be kept under review for consistency to evidence children's progression and make clear links to planning.

The service should continue with their ongoing review of planning to ensure a balance of planned and responsive learning opportunities which are regularly evaluated. This could include clarity of learning intentions and inclusion of children's schema's (patterns of repeatable behaviour in play). This is to ensure that planning is responsive to children's needs and interests.

Most children were confident, curious and supported well by staff who asked effective questions and gave regular praise and encouragement. Children were heard being encouraged to count and identify shapes, colours and patterns in their play. Staff in the baby room were skilled in supporting them in their early communication, promoting language through turn taking, role modelling, repetition, storytelling and singing. Language, literacy and numeracy were promoted well throughout the playroom and should now be further enhanced in the outdoor environment.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2; Children experience high quality facilities

Although risk assessments were in place, these were not always identifying and addressing children's risks of harm. For example, we highlighted frayed matting and limited bark in the garden leading to a tripping risk. Also, the movement of hot food through the playrooms needed to be reviewed and we suggested use of a food trolley for increased safety. We also found that the garden fence provided children with footholds which would enable some to scale the fence and potentially leave the service unnoticed. The staff took immediate action to address this during the course of the inspection. Some written risk assessments need to be reviewed to add further detail to further ensure children's safety. These should be shared with all staff and used to support continuous monitoring of health and safety aspects (see area for improvement 1).

The range and amount of resources available in some areas limited children's engagement and interest. For example, three copies of the same book were available in the story corner and there was limited train track to support meaningful play. We asked the service to consider how they could support children to request additional resources when needed and to ensure choice and sufficiency of resources to meet children's developmental needs. Increased availability of a variety of resources would stimulate and challenge children whilst enhancing their choice and enjoyment (see area for improvement 2).

Children's health and wellbeing was supported due to positive infection prevention and control procedures. The building and areas used by children were clean and welcoming for children and there was a rolling programme of redecoration in place. Staff effectively promoted hand washing with children, reducing children's risk of cross infection.

The indoor environment was spacious, calming and inviting, providing children with places to play and relax at different levels. Rooms were ventilated and remained at a comfortable temperature. Cosy, quiet spaces were available allowing children to rest and relax when they needed. Beautiful, natural wall displays throughout the nursery valued children's learning and enhanced their sense of belonging and ownership of the service. The outdoor play space invited active play through provision of physical play equipment and space to run, promoting children's physical wellbeing. We asked the service to consider further opportunities to enable children to climb as they were actively seeking this.

Children's confidentiality was maintained as staff were confident in ensuring only the right people had access to personal information. Personal information was displayed discreetly or stored securely. CCTV was in place around the building to further promote security and was used proportionally. A policy was in place which ensured families were fully aware of how this was used.

Areas for improvement

1. To support the security and safety of children, the provider should review the outdoor environment to reduce the risk of any potential footholds on fencing and tripping hazards. Written risk assessments should be reviewed to ensure they fully address and minimise potential risks, this includes reviewing the safe transport of hot food across the playrooms at busy times.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'my environment is safe and secure' (HSCS 5.19).

2. To enable all children to be cared for in an environment that meets their needs and supports them to reach their full potential, the provider should as a minimum ensure play spaces offer a sufficient range of resources and materials that are developmentally appropriate to effectively challenge and stimulate children.

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).

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1; Quality assurance and improvement is led well

Quality assurance procedures were having some impact. The manager had developed a plan for monitoring of personal learning journals, and they were working with the local authority teacher to improve planning.

They had previously introduced formal approaches to audit staff practice which should now be re-established. To ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families, the service should continue to develop and embed the quality assurance approaches and direct monitoring. This should include making use of best practice guidance including the 'Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare'. They should now also ensure they measure the impact of improvements made (see area for improvement 1).

An improvement plan was held which was having a impact on practice and was kept under review. This enabled the service to make continuous progress to improve children's experiences. An easy read version was also displayed for parents enabling them to assess progress.

Whole staff team involvement was evident within quality assurance. For example, staff spoke confidently about the current areas for improvement identified for the year ahead. They were also involved in reviews of core provision and the improvement plan progress along with the monthly policy review cycle. This contributed to a shared goal for improvement. We asked the service to ensure that policy summaries were provided to all families for their ease of access, especially the child protection policy. We also suggested the child protection policy be displayed centrally in the building to support staff's quick access.

Feedback from parents highlighted that they received regular communication and opportunities to be meaningfully involved in the service. For example, 'family walks' and quarterly parent group meetings where they could comment on changes in the service along with frequent questionnaires. Parents told us "I get emails regarding parent meetings that I can go to and see what is happening in the nursery and ideas the parents can bring to help develop the nursery further". Changes were effectively communicated and reducing any uncertainty. Parents were able to enter the premises, enabling them to develop relationships with keyworkers or see their children's experiences in the setting. Parental feedback supported development of the service to help children reach their full potential.

An ethos of continuous improvement was evident within the setting. The staff team were enthusiastic about providing high quality care for children and were responsive to suggestions made. Staff recognised each other's skills when talking about how champion roles could be enhanced, therefore shared leadership within the team should now be developed further to support improvements. Staff told us that they felt valued and listened to by both the provider and the management team. This promoted positive change and improvement to support outcomes for children and families.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing and learning and promote the continued development and improvement of the service, the manager should ensure robust self-evaluation and quality assurance is taking place. This is so that improvement is focused on the places that will have direct impact on improving outcomes for children.

This is to ensure that 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? 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 4.3; Staff deployment

Children's choice over where to play was supported by staff positioning themselves well between the indoor and outdoor space. This made the whole space accessible to children at all times, whilst supporting children's supervision. They carried out a visual risk assessment prior to children's arrival contributing to children's continued safety. We signposted the staff to the 'SIMOA' campaign on our website and gave suggestions as to how they could use this to further support children in remaining safe, for example helping them to complete their own risk checklists. Staff communicated well with each other throughout the session to support children's play and ensure accountability of all children at all times.

There was good mix of skills and experience in the team benefitting children's care and support. Some staff members had been in post for a number of years alongside a few more recent staff members. Three staff members were also beginning study towards enhanced qualifications. Staff spoke passionately about their work and were enthusiastic and reflective about their roles.

Staffing levels were above the minimum ratios enabling individual needs to be met. Staff communicated well with each other to ensure appropriate staffing levels were maintained at all times. Breaks were managed well, reducing any impact on children's care. Parents told us "Ratio is very important to the management and staff and it is maintained always to a high standard" and "There are always adequate staffing levels at Noah's Ark. I never leave feeling my child is at risk due to staff shortages".

Children were cared for by suitable adults as robust staff recruitment had taken place. We discussed making use of the national induction resource to further develop the induction process for new staff. This would further contribute to children's positive experiences and outcomes as a result of staff's full awareness of policies, procedures and individualised support strategies.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since registration.

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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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