

First Class Early Learning and Childcare Day Care of Children

Cunningham Building
Macaulay Drive
Craigiebuckler
Aberdeen
AB15 8QW

Telephone: 01224 321 199

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 July 2023

Service provided by:
Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003000319

Service no:
CS2015334855

About the service

First Class Early Learning and Childcare is a day care of children service registered to care for a maximum of 67 children not yet of an age to attend primary school at any one time. Of those 67 no more than 21 children are aged under two years and are cared for in the baby room.

The service operates in the Craigiebuckler area of Aberdeen. The service is within easy access to the local schools and amenities such as library, local shops, walks and outdoor areas. Play areas for the children consist of two large playrooms and two outdoor gardens. Children can access toilet facilities with nappy changing areas for younger children. The gardens provide a flexible spaces for children to explore within a natural environment.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 26 July 2023, Thursday 27 July 2023 and Friday 28 July 2023 between the hours of 09:30 and 17:30 hours. The inspection was carried out by one inspector 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 children and observed their experiences
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice
- Received 21 online questionnaires from parents/guardians
- Received five online staff questionnaires
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- All parents who returned our online questionnaire agree that 'Overall, I am happy with the care and support my child receives in this setting.'
- Staff were caring and offered lots of cuddles for children, helping them to feel loved, safe and secure.
- Mealtimes for children provided healthy options. Staff provided children with safe and positive experiences.
- Children had fun as they experienced play and learning through a variety of planned and spontaneous opportunities.
- Most children benefited from meaningful observations and identified next steps for learning.
- The amalgamation to create a two years to five years room had improved how children used the space and spent their time.
- The baby room should now build on improvements made and develop at a faster pace.
- Transition experiences for all children were caring and centred around their own individual needs.
- The staff team worked well together, which created a positive atmosphere where children could feel secure.
- Children and families were meaningfully involved and influenced changes within the setting.
- Levels of staffing were effective in supporting positive outcomes for children.

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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy and mostly settled. They confidently interacted with staff and each other. Staff approached children in a kind and gentle manner, helping them to feel safe and secure. Interactions between staff and children were warm and caring, with children seeking and receiving reassurance and affection throughout the day. Staff were seen to offer support and cuddles when children were upset or unsettled. This helped to create a nurturing environment for children. All parents who returned our online questionnaire agreed that staff were nurturing and responsive to their child's needs.

Children benefited from staff who took the time to know them and their families. A key worker approach helped to build relationships with children and parents. This was of particular benefit to children and families as they transitioned into the nursery as a baby, or into the next playroom for children aged two years to five years.

We discussed with the manager occasions where staff should be more vigilant in ensuring children who had wet or dirty clothes through play, are changed in a timely manner to ensure children are comfortable. The manager agreed to look into this with staff.

Mealtimes provided children with healthy options that were freshly cooked on site. The chef knew children and their dietary needs well and had built a positive relationship with the staff and the children. One parent told us, 'My child really enjoys the food offered and often asks me to recreate it at home.' Staff sat with children at the tables, supporting them to learn skills in independence and conversation. All staff were aware of the safety needs of children when eating. Rolling meals worked well for the older children. Staff had reviewed and made changes to the position of eating areas to consider how to give children space and reduce noise level. The service of food from the kitchen had been considered so that all children, no matter when they choose to eat, would have a hot meal. Younger children enjoyed group meals, however, at times this could be noisy if children were upset. Staff were mindful of this and worked together to adapt and meet the needs of the children present.

Children were supported by staff to keep safe in the sun. Sun screen was applied at intervals throughout the day for all children. Staff encouraged children in both playrooms to drink water from their water bottle during the day. Children were excited to show us their water bottles in their back packs when they went out to play in the forest. This helped keep children safe, hydrated and ready to learn and have fun.

Sleep and rest times were well organised for those children who liked to nap. Staff were aware of the personal preferences of children ensuring they had their comforters and cuddles. Staff were aware of children who preferred to use quiet areas, such as the sensory corner in the baby room or quiet room in the two years to five years playroom, and were sensitive to their needs.

We identified examples where information held about children's allergy and medication needs were not always consistent across the setting's required paperwork. We raise this with the management team on day one and this was corrected by day two of our visit. We discussed the need for thorough monitoring and quality assurance in this area of practice to ensure children's safety.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the use of personal plans. They contained information that supported staff to plan how children's needs would be met. They considered the wellbeing indicators (which are, Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included) and identified children's strengths and areas of support. Staff worked well with other agencies that were involved in children's care. All parents who completed our online questionnaire agreed that staff knew their child well, including what they liked and what is important for their care.

1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun as they experienced play and learning. Children were engaged in a variety of activities throughout their time in nursery. They were involved in leading their own play throughout the day and used the learning environment well. Children could choose where, and what they would like to play with ease. Many had formed close friendships and enjoyed time playing together.

Planning approaches in the two years to five years room was in the early stages of review and development. Staff were focused on how to be more child centred and plan from children's interest to engage in wider learning opportunities. Some early examples of this had begun to emerge such as children making lava lamps, potion making, planting and growing seeds and learning about their roots. We highlighted some examples where planned activities, although well intentioned, could have been more child led and given children more opportunities for learning. Planning for play in the baby room centred around sensory/messy play. We discussed how the development of the room and resources would further benefit children's play. Both rooms should continue to develop the planned experiences for children to ensure they provide rich opportunities to be curious and learn through their play.

Experienced staff showed an understanding of child development, up to date practice and communication skills with children. Staff treated children with respect and were attentive to what they had to say. Open ended questions were used as a way to invite thoughts and discussion with children. This helps to support their learning.

Most children benefited from meaningful observations and identified next steps for learning. In most cases observations highlighted children's learning during an activity and appropriate next steps would be identified. Observations were linked to areas of development for the child, such as physical development skills or learning new words and phrases. These were captured on an online 'Family app.' We received mixed responses from several parents about how effective this was. For example, one parent told us, ' We do receive sporadic updates on children's learning via the app but I feel the frequency of this could be improved', while another told us, 'Love the little messages I sometimes receive about what my child has been doing that day.'

Children's opportunities were enhanced through some community connections and specialised play sessions. Staff used their individual skills to create sessions including dancing, yoga and P.E. Forest school sessions were led by trained staff in the local community area. These specialised sessions were planned on different days each week taking into account children's varied attendance patterns. This helped support all children to participate. A few parents were unaware that these sessions were currently running. One commented, 'It would be super if Forest Kindergarten returned.'

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

The amalgamation to create a two years to five years room had improved how children used the space and spent their time. Staff spoke about observing positive changes in the way children played and explored. They told us how all children now had more space available to them and could now all access the full playroom benefits with ease. All children had access to the secure back garden supporting a free play ethos. A quiet room was available to the whole group and the toilets were easily accessible to promote independence. We observed that children enjoyed the play areas and could access a wider variety of spaces and play. Children of mixed ages played well together and were well supported by staff.

There was a bad odour from the toilet areas for children on the first day of our visit. This odour was strong and spread into the play room and did not create a nice environment for the children. We raised this with management who told us they had been trying to address this over time. On day two of our visit, extra air fresheners had been put in place which helped to create a more pleasant smell. The provider and manager were dedicated to finding a longer term solution.

The baby room provided a light and airy space for children to grow and develop. Staff had developed some areas within the room including a sensory area and story area. Both these improved spaces benefited children and enhanced their experiences. Staff spoke to us about how children now enjoyed the range of sensory experiences and how, for a few children it had been an important area for them to feel comfortable in and settle into nursery. Children enjoyed having stories read to them in an attractive and comfortable story area. The rest of the baby room should now be developed at a faster pace so that children can fully benefit from a homely, comfortable and well resourced place to be.

Staff worked together well to help maintain a safe environment for children. Staff followed expected infection control procedures at times such as meals and personal care routines. Forest sessions were well organised with safety equipment such as first aid and children's medication brought along. Children were taught safety songs to help them understand what to do in potentially dangerous circumstances while out of nursery. We noted that the double door leading from the front of the building in to the two years to five years playroom was no longer used by parents, but continued to be used regularly by staff. One of these doors was securely locked at all times during our visit, however we asked the provider and the manager to consider ways of improving the safety further around this area.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

A clear set of vision, values and aims were in place which had been developed using feedback from parents, staff and children. This supported staff to work towards shared goals such as providing fun, loving, collaborative and trusting care. Staff used these in conversation with children to promote the vision and ethos further. All staff including bank (relief) staff we spoke to were familiar of them and proud of the work to maintain them.

Children and families were meaningfully involved and influenced changes within the setting. A focus for the setting had been the amalgamation to create the two years to five years playroom. Children and families were involved throughout the different stages of this. Parents were asked about their apprehensions and

then later how they thought the change was going. Staff and parents worked together to alleviate any concerns or to highlight any children who may have needed extra support during this transition. Children were asked what they liked and didn't like about their new playroom. Staff used observations of children's wellbeing to ensure the changes were beneficial and did not have an adverse impact.

A 'you said, we did' approach supported ongoing evaluation and communication between staff and families. Staff used evaluative questions throughout the year to gain feedback. Any actions suggested from these were discussed and whenever possible changes were made. Larger annual surveys continued to also be used to gain information on a wider area of topics and needs.

Transitions for children were a key area of development for the younger children. Staff had worked closely with parents to gain information around any concerns or apprehensions they may have about their child starting nursery, or moving on to the next playroom stage. Some small but effective changes to the transition experience for parents had been changed as a result. Staff also worked individually with some parents and children creating plans of support. This supported parents during these times and as a result transition experiences for all children were kind and caring and centred around their own individual needs. One parent told us, 'The staff know the children well and are always welcoming and make it easier to go back to work.'

A few parents raised with us some areas of concern or suggested improvements. We highlighted these anonymously to the manager. The manager was keen to find ways to provide continuous improvement and work with parents and families directly to overcome any concerns.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

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

Levels of staffing were effective in supporting positive outcomes for children. Each playroom was staffed above minimum staffing ratio requirements. Where there were vacancies the manager was keen to hire the right person for each position. At each stage of recruitment the candidates skills mix and experience was well considered.

The staff team worked well together, which created a positive atmosphere where staff were respectful of one another. This provided a happy, safe and relaxed environment for children. Parents agreed with one telling us, 'Staff really care for and about the children.' Staff were readily available to help and support children throughout the day. They communicated well to ensure the right staff were in the right place within the playrooms. Staff had a rota of tasks to complete, however this did not distract them from the care and needs of the children. Staff were very supportive of each other and were flexible in their work to consider how best to support children in the moment. All staff we spoke to told us they felt supported by the managers and each other. Busier times of the day such as lunch, arrival and departure times were well planned for. Timely breaks gave staff the time to relax and recuperate, and they were planned in a way that did not disrupt the care of children.

Arrangements for staff absences were managed to minimise disruption to children's care. Each child had a key worker and key worker buddy. This helped cover any staff absence and supported continuity of the care of children. Staff 'All About Me' cards were used at the entrance to each play room to help share with parents who was caring for their child and a little bit about them. This helped build relationships between staff and parents and benefited information sharing and the care of children.

Staff were up to date with core training such as child protection, first aid, and food hygiene. Staff were well supported by practice that encouraged their learning and development. Regular supervision meetings between individual staff and leaders helped identify learning needs and provided staff with wellbeing support. Staff were encouraged to complete their training in an early years qualifications.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To ensure high quality care and experiences for children quality assurance and self-evaluation should be embedded into practice. This should mean that:

- Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence changes within the setting.
- Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans lead to high quality care and support.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standard which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance systems' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 18 July 2022.

Action taken since then

Children and families were meaningfully involved and influenced changes in a variety of ways and areas of practice. For example, the manager and staff worked with parents during the development of the two years to five years playroom, transition experiences for younger children and the settings vision values and aims. More information can be found within the body of this report.

This area for improvement has been met.

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?	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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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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