

# Mill O'Forest School Nursery Day Care of Children

Woodview Place  
Stonehaven  
AB39 2TD

Telephone: 01569 763 561

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
12 March 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeenshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000029

**Service no:**  
CS2006137686

## About the service

Mill O' Forest School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 45 children from age 2 years to entry into primary school, of which a maximum of 10 children may be in the eligible 2 - 3 years age range. The service is based within Mill O' Forest Primary School in Stonehaven and is provided by Aberdeenshire council.

The service operates from a dedicated area within the school. The nursery has a separate entrance area which is secure and welcoming. Children have access to a large playroom with kitchen and snack facilities. Free flow access to an outside garden allows children to choose where they would like to play. Other areas of outdoor space are used well and include a mud/nature garden and an outside atrium area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 March 2024 between 09:00 and 17:45. Two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate carried out the inspection.

To prepare for 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:

- observed children using the service
- received feedback from 14 families from our online questionnaire
- received feedback from nine staff from our online questionnaire
- spoke with the staff and management team
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children were happy, confident and settled.
- Children were leaders of their own play and learning and could transport resources to meet their interests.
- Daily access to fresh air and outdoor experiences supported children's health and wellbeing.
- The staff team worked well together to meet children's needs.
- Staff used their skills and knowledge to ensure high quality outcomes for children.
- Quality assurance and improvement planning processes could be further developed to support effective evaluation and reflection.

## 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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very 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?

5 - Very Good

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

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support

Children experienced warm and nurturing care and support from a committed nursery team. Staff were kind and caring when interacting with children and children were seen to be keen to engage with staff, inviting them into their play. As a result, children were happy, engaged in play and were well supported. A parent commented, "My child is happy attending the nursery. They speak positively about their interactions with all members of staff."

Children benefitted from a staff team who knew them well. Staff knew children's individual needs and preferences and adapted their practice to ensure these were considered. Personal plans were in place and were reviewed regularly with parents at least every six months. Personal plans mostly contained quality information supporting staff to meet children's needs. Children with additional support needs had care plans in place. However, these did not always fully reflect staff's knowledge and we suggested these should be reviewed to ensure they accurately reflect children's needs and supports in place. This would ensure children experience consistent approaches from all staff, including relief staff members.

Mealtimes were unhurried, relaxed social experiences which considered individual children's needs and likes. Lunch routines were well considered to ensure children were supported to choose when they ate and develop independence. Children were seen to serve their own food, drinks and put their dishes away. Staff sat with children using mealtimes as an opportunity to model good table manners and supported social interactions. Children benefited from knowledgeable and vigilant staff who supported them to be safe, minimising the potential of choking and ensuring children's dietary requirements are met.

The service had systems in place for the administration, monitoring and storage of children's medication. These mainly ensured the safe management and administration of medications. All medications were signed into the service, however, some permissions contained information for two medications. We advised that each medication should be recorded separately to avoid potential confusion. Staff were knowledgeable about children's health and medication needs resulting in children being safe and well. A parent told us, "Staff follow all medical protocols for my child diligently."

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children were provided with opportunities to develop their play and learning. They were actively involved in leading their play and chose what to play with and where. They had lots of fun and were fully engaged during our visit. Life skills and independence were promoted, as staff encouraged children to try for themselves, for example, when getting dressed for outside play. A parent told us, "Mill O' Forest is large with a lot more space for children to run around and choose what they want to do."

Skilled interactions from staff helped extend children's problem-solving skills and imagination. Children benefitted from a rich continuous provision where opportunities for language, literacy and numeracy development were well considered. An array of interesting, open-ended resources promoted children's curiosity and sparked their imagination. For example, children reenacted a birthday celebration using an

upturned box and pipe cleaners for candles. They counted out candles and sang 'Happy Birthday' before pretending to blow the candles out. As a result, children were having fun whilst developing their imagination and problem-solving skills.

Planning was responsive to children's interests and next steps. Floorbooks were used to record children's experiences and allowed them to revisit their learning. Regular observations were used to highlight children's progress, achievements and to identify next steps. Observations were mainly written well; however, we suggested the service completes regular monitoring as part of quality assurances to support consistency in quality.

Opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to their community. Regular visits to the Library, Harbour, RNLI boat, Witchy woods, Forest Park play park supported children to feel connections to their local community. Visits from local firefighters and police supported children's understanding of people who help us in the community.

## How good is our setting?

**5 - Very Good**

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

### Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was well-furnished, comfortable and well ventilated. We suggested rugs could be added to some spaces to soften the environment. All children had a space to store their things that they could easily access. A parent told us, "The nursery environment is large, open, airy and with loads of different areas for the children to access on a free flow basis. They have outdoor access every day, to a large play area, again with lots of different play opportunities. The facilities at the nursery are excellent, in my view." Children's voice recorded on mindmaps, artwork and photographs were displayed throughout the setting. As a result, children were given a sense of belonging and respect.

The indoor and outdoor environments were developmentally appropriate spaces, offering children stimulating places to play. A range of age and stage appropriate resources were available for children to access. Loose parts and open-ended resources supported children to be creative. As a result, children were busy, engaged and having fun. A parent commented, "I really like that there is so much going on, indoors and outdoors."

Children benefitted from free flow access to the outdoor space. Outdoors offered children a range of resources and opportunities for different types of play, for example, climbing trees, digging, role play and access to loose parts supported a rich outdoor environment. Staff shared plans for the development of the outdoor area and how children had been consulted in this.

Risk assessments were in place and implemented effectively by staff to ensure that the environment was safe for the children attending. Children were encouraged to consider risks and staff were seen to support their understanding of potential risks within the environment. Effective handwashing and cleaning practices supported effective infection control practices. As a result, children's safety was maintained.

Children and families information was kept securely on computer systems or locked in cabinets. Sensitive information was only shared with those who needed the information to meet children's needs. As a result, children's information was protected and storage complied with relevant best practice.

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurances and improvements are well led

The service shared a vision, values and aims with the school. They were displayed at the front entrance and had recently been reviewed with children and families, supporting them to feel valued and included. We suggested the language used in these could be developed to ensure it is user friendly for nursery age children, further supporting inclusion and understanding.

Children and families benefitted from a service that valued their involvement. Regular stay and plays offered parents opportunities to spend time with their children. On our visit, we saw parents had been invited in for tea and cake as part of their 'Mother's Day' celebrations. Parents comments included, "We are kept well informed, we get to visit the nursery and see what goes on (open sessions, stay and play)" and "There have been opportunities to visit the nursery to experience 'a day at nursery' with my child." Children and families were consulted in aspects of service delivery. For example, ideas for new resources. A parent commented, "All the staff are very approachable and willing to listen to your ideas. Regular stay and play sessions are organised where there's a booklet the parents can write feedback or suggestions in." Staff reported that there is a low response rate and we suggested informal ways to gather and feedback information to families.

Quality assurance processes helped support the monitoring and development of the service, including peer observations of staff practice. Staff were using current best practice guidance to evaluate the service, supporting them to identify strengths and areas for improvement. These were being recorded and collated in a floorbook. Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes findings should be continually reviewed and evaluated to track progress and support further improved experiences for children.

Realistic and relevant improvement plan focusses supported positive change and good outcomes for children and families. Goals and success criteria had been identified and we suggested more detail could be included in the plan. For example, how the steps would be achieved and evaluations of the impact of the changes made. This would support the pace of change, reflect progress made and ensure improvement is maintained.

## 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, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff Deployment

Deployment and levels of staff were effective in ensuring high quality outcomes for children. The staff team worked well together and were courteous and respectful to each other. There were enough staff at key times, such as during lunch and at arrival and drop-off, to supervise, engage, and keep children safe and well. Staff communicated well with each other throughout the day, were clear on their roles and the routines helping to ensure a happy, safe and relaxed environment for children.

Parents were seen to be welcomed into the service at drop off and collection times. This supported opportunities for building positive relationships and communication. Regular newsletters and information in

the foyer supported families to be informed of key information and dates. A parent told us, "All information is shared via an info board in the foyer. Home learning is encouraged and supported." However, parent feedback strongly indicated they missed the use of the online communication tool previously used. The service was undertaking steps to rectify this, with a view to further support communication with families.

Skilled and knowledgeable staff supported children's care, wellbeing, and learning. Staff spoke confidently on how they would manage and record child protection concerns. Most staff had completed a range of training opportunities and confidently discussed the impact training had on their practice and supporting positive outcomes for children. As a result, children benefitted from skilled and dedicated staff team.

Staff told us they felt well supported by their peers and management. All staff had benefitted from completion of an induction and newer staff were using 'The National Induction Resource' to reflect on their learning and evaluate their practice. Regular appraisals and one-to-one meetings supported staff to reach their full potential. Individualised goals had been identified supporting staff to further develop their skills and learning. This contributed to a positive staff ethos, further supporting children to be settled and happy.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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



## To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

## Contact us

Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

## Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.