

St. John's Academy Nursery Class Day Care of Children

North Inch Community Campus
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Perth & Kinross Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003016072

About the service

St. John's Academy Nursery Class is a day care of children service which operates within St. John's Academy in Perth. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 85 children not yet attending primary school, of whom no more than 10 are aged two years to under three years.

The nursery consists of a large spacious playroom for older children, a dedicated play space for children aged two to three years, a cloakroom, toilet facilities and a nursery garden. Children make use of the facilities within the school, such as the library. The nursery is close to green spaces, shops and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 11 March 2024 between 08:45 and 17:10 and 12 March 2024 between 08:45 and 15:15. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 using the service
- received questionnaire feedback from five families
- spoke with six families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced kind, caring and nurturing interactions. Staff knew children well and were responsive to their individual needs.
- Children had fun and were actively involved in leading their own play and learning experiences. They were very well supported to develop skills in language, literacy and numeracy.
- Children experienced an enabling environment which promoted independence and choice in their play and learning.
- Families were meaningfully involved in the development of the service.
- The mix of staff knowledge and skills across the playrooms had been well considered.
- Some staff breaks were not well planned and impacted on children's experiences after lunch.

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?	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?

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.

1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, caring and nurturing interactions. They had built positive attachments with staff and sought out support from them. They were offered cuddles and reassurance with warmth and affection which helped them to feel loved, safe and secure. Most families commented very positively on the care provided. Their comments included: "Absolutely fantastic staff, caring, compassionate not only with the children but also parents", "Warm friendly staff, very caring and welcoming ethos" and "Staff are really friendly and attentive to the needs of the children and parents".

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective use of personal planning. Staff knew children well and were responsive to their individual needs. Staff worked proactively with other professionals which supported them to identify strategies of support tailored to children's individual needs. They effectively used these strategies which supported children to achieve their potential. As a result, children experienced care and support which was right for them.

Children experienced sociable, relaxed mealtimes with a positive atmosphere. Their independence was encouraged through opportunities such as preparing snack and self-serving. This helped to build their confidence and life skills. Staff recognised the benefits of developing relationships and promoting learning during mealtimes, with rich discussions taking place. For example, a question of the day promoted exciting discussions about giraffes.

Partnership working with families had been well established. Staff recognised the importance of engaging with children and their families at the earliest possible stage and built positive, nurturing relationships. Ongoing opportunities such as 'eat well, play well' sessions provided meaningful experiences for families to engage in. This contributed to supporting the holistic needs of each child and their family to improve their wellbeing.

Some families came into the setting to drop off and collect children. This supported children to settle into the service. However, not all children experienced this. Most families were very happy with the communication about their child's care. Their comments included: "Staff are fully aware of the needs of the children within the setting and are always available for a chat and catch up if you need to speak with them". However, one family felt they did not get enough information, they told us: "When I pick (my child) up all I am told is that they have had a good day". Children and families would benefit from drop off and collection arrangements being reviewed to enhance communication and support more effective transitions for all children.

1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun and were actively involved in leading their own play and learning experiences. Families felt their children experienced meaningful and interesting opportunities. One family told us: "My child is very happy with nursery and is always full of stories about the day and what they have been learning about and is keen to show us all when they arrive home". Interesting and exciting materials and provocations promoted children's curiosity and creativity. They were enabled to make independent choices about where they played and moved confidently between areas of the playroom and the outdoors.

Children experienced a very good balance of planned and spontaneous learning. Effective use of tracking children's development and progress supported staff to plan intentional learning experiences. Staff were skilled in identifying and responding to children's interests. For example, they added resources relevant to children's current interests to enhance and extend their play and learning experiences.

Children were very well supported to develop skills in language, literacy and numeracy. They independently engaged in mark making and enjoyed reading stories with staff. Younger children experienced singing throughout the day which created a joyful, positive atmosphere and supported their language development. Staff supported children to communicate in a way that was right for them and at their own pace. Children were supported using a range of strategies such as Makaton and visual aids. Personalised strategies were effectively used to support children's individual communication development. Opportunities for numeracy were naturally woven into children's play and learning experiences. For example, staff incorporated mathematical concepts such as exploring measurement when children made their own playdough.

Effective use of observation enabled staff to plan and extend play experiences to support children's development. Younger children's observations were very reflective of their individual progress. For example, they demonstrated children's schematic play, their achievements, and suggestions on how to support and extend learning at home. Older children's observations generally focused on their progress in relation to their next steps. To reflect the depth and breadth of learning, observations could be further developed to capture children's progress across a variety of play experiences.

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.

2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a spacious and bright environment which was clean and well-ventilated. The indoor environment had been very well considered to meet children's individual needs. A dedicated space had been created for younger children which supported high quality care, play and learning experiences relevant to their stage of development and interests. Cosy and comfortable quiet areas offered children opportunities to rest and relax which supported children to self-regulate.

Children experienced an enabling environment which promoted independence and choice in their play and learning. The play spaces were sensitively structured to take account of children's stages of development and learning. Exciting and interesting opportunities promoted children's curiosity, creativity and problem solving. For example, the creative area offered a wide variety of engaging and fun experiences which supported rich learning. As a result, children experienced high quality play and learning.

Children experienced a setting and equipment which was safe, secure, and well maintained. Staff worked with children to identify and minimise risks within the setting. For example, children were involved in risk assessing the garden and made changes to create a safer environment. Children were well supported by staff to make choices about how to keep themselves safe. As a result, children were becoming confident in recognising and assessing risk.

Infection, prevention and control measures were effective. Children were well supported to wash their hands at key times throughout the day. This helped to minimise the risk of potential infection and to keep children safe and healthy.

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.

3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Families were meaningfully involved in the development of the service. They were included in reviewing the vision, values and aims and took shared responsibility in the process. This helped to create a shared understanding of the expectations and aspirations of the setting. Their views were actively sought, valued, and listened to. For example, they had the opportunity to give feedback on the improvement plan through questionnaires and discussions. The leadership team used this information to make positive changes to practice.

Some self-evaluation had been carried out which enabled staff to identify key improvement priorities. There were plans in place to self-evaluate their progress to inform future improvements, however this process was not continuous throughout the year. This meant that there were potential missed opportunities to reflect on aspects of the service to bring about positive change to outcomes for children and families.

Most quality assurance processes supported children to experience high quality care, play and learning. For example, audits of the environment had helped staff to create enabling and exciting play spaces which improved children's engagement. However, quality assurance processes in a few aspects of practice, such as the transition after lunch, were not robust. Children would benefit from these areas being reviewed to identify where changes can be made to improve their experiences.

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.

4.3: Staff deployment

Most staff worked well together to ensure that they were available to support children in areas across the nursery. For example, staff spread across the indoors and outdoors of the nursery, meaning children were supported in each area. Most staff communicated well and worked together as a team. The mix of staff knowledge and skills across the playrooms had been well considered. This meant that children experienced high quality care, play and learning experiences.

Effective arrangements were in place in the event of staff absence, with consistent supply staff where possible. Senior staff supported children if their key staff member was not available. This meant children were supported by a familiar adult and experienced continuity of care.

Some staff breaks were not well planned and impacted on children's experiences after lunch. Whilst children experienced a very positive mealtime with effective staff support, after lunch, they had to wait on other staff to return from their break to support them to transition back to nursery. Whilst children were offered resources to play with during this time, some children became disengaged.

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

In order to ensure children experience a high quality lunchtime provision which meets their needs, is nurturing and promotes independence and responsibility, staff should review the current practice.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state that: 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.' (HSCS 1.35).

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2018.

Action taken since then

Children experienced a relaxed, sociable mealtime. They had opportunities to be independent and responsible, for example, by serving their own food and tidying up. Staff sat and chatted with children which created a nurturing environment experience.

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?	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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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