

The Red Squirrel Children's Nursery Day Care of Children

The Old School House
Glencarse
Glendoick
Perth
PH2 7NR

Telephone: 01738 861 141

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 March 2024

Service provided by:
Red Squirrel Montessorie Nursery
Limited

Service provider number:
SP2015012574

Service no:
CS2015340963

About the service

The Red Squirrel children's nursery is a day care of children service, registered to provide care for a maximum of 52 children at any one time.

The service is provided from the Old Schoolhouse, in Glendoick, Perth.

Older children (3-5 years) and younger children (2-3 years) are cared for in the old schoolhouse which offers each age group a connecting playroom, use of a large art room, toilet and nappy changing facilities and an office space.

Babies (0-2 years) are cared for in a separate building next to the schoolhouse. This building contains, a playroom, nappy changing facilities, and kitchen.

Nursery gardens are at the front and side of the schoolhouse and children access a forest site a short walk from the schoolhouse.

The service is in partnership with Perth and Kinross Council to provide funded childcare.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 and 6 March 2024. 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 and reviewed 11 of our questionnaires completed by families.
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice and daily life
- Reviewed documents
- Spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

Children experienced nurturing, kind and caring interactions from staff who knew them well.

Children and families experienced welcoming, bright, and well-ventilated facilities which were clean and well maintained.

Staff could build on sensory and schematic play experiences to create more opportunities for younger children to be curious, wonder and explore.

Older children would benefit from accessing the forest site for longer periods of time to enhance the quality of their play and learning.

Effective staff deployment ensured children were always well supervised and supported appropriately.

Staff morale was high, and they identified strongly with the service.

To support improvements to be effectively and consistently made quality assurance and self-evaluation systems could be further developed.

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 and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children benefitted from friendly and caring staff who were nurturing in their approach. They treated children with warmth and kindness. Children were trusting of staff as they provided comfort and reassurance when needed, which supported children to feel safe and secure. It was evident that positive relationships had been made. As a result, children felt valued and respected and enjoyed their time at nursery.

Staff had built positive working relationships with other professionals to provide consistent care for children who required additional support. Strategies were in place to ensure their needs were met respectfully and they felt fully included in nursery experiences. While staff knew children very well, a new system of personal planning had recently been introduced and some plans contained limited information about children's changing needs and strategies of support. The service had identified this as an area for development and were working with families, to ensure personal plans were fully completed. This will help staff further to support children in a meaningful way.

Children experienced a nutritionally balanced, homecooked meal. The onsite cook included children in the planning of meals and managed dietary requirements and allergies well as they met with families, to discuss alternative options to menu plans.

Children experienced mealtimes that were sociable and overall, a good learning experience. Staff sat and ate with children engaging them in rich discussions on healthy foods. Babies were supported with feeding and provided with mostly nurturing interactions. Younger children were supported well by staff, however there was scope to offer more opportunities for choice and independence. Older children were provided with opportunities for responsibility and independence as they set the table, poured their own drinks, and cleared away their dishes. However, choice was limited and children in all playrooms experienced periods of waiting. For example, children had to wait until all their peers had finished their first course, before receiving their second course. Following feedback on our first day of inspection, children did benefit from more choice.

Children's rights were respected as personal care routines were carried out using sensitive and warm interactions. We observed staff singing and talking to children with quiet voices as they talked them through their routines. Sleep arrangements respected children's needs and preferences. Staff gently soothed them to sleep using calming music and gently patted their backs. This helped children to feel safe and secure.

Staff understood when medication was necessary, and overall medication was managed well. However, one child's medical information was not accurate. This could impact on staff's ability to respond appropriately should the child require medication. We asked the manager to update the medical protocol with current information.

Effective procedures were in place to safeguard children, staff were knowledgeable on how to respond if they had concerns. While key information was available, we signposted the manager to best practice guidance 'Guide to Chronologies' to support effective practice and ensure if needed, children get the right support at the right time.

1.3. Play and learning

Most staff were skilled in effectively questioning children which empowered them to make their own choices, problem solve and extended their thinking. Staff engaged children in conversations which meaningfully encouraged them to regulate their emotions and express their wishes. This resulted in children that played cooperatively and happily together contributing positively to their emotional wellbeing.

Children participated in planned and spontaneous play experiences that were fun, interesting, and offered opportunities for children to investigate and be creative. Children benefitted from playroom's and forest site's that provided a good provision of loose parts and natural materials to promote curiosity and challenge. Staff were responsive to older children's suggestions of making play-doh and adding materials from the forest floor. Other children laughed and sang as they used a long branch as a broomstick and encouraged their peers to 'Jump on and have fun.' There were very good opportunities for older children to develop their fine motor skills as they used small tongs and pegs to pick up small objects. Older children would benefit from more real-life experiences to promote their imaginary play further.

Younger children were offered some sensory and schematic play opportunities within their playrooms. This could be further developed to enhance their curiosity and support the development of their senses. We signposted the service to best practice guidance, Realising the Ambition: Being Me (Education Scotland, 2020) to support them with this

Children's ideas were listened to as floor books demonstrated that their ideas and opinions mattered. Staff's professional development was led well by the manager, who had a very good understanding of how floor books are used to provide breadth and depth of learning. The service had identified that further work was needed to ensure floor books were consistent in quality across age groups and evidenced progression with learning.

Children's learning and achievements were captured and shared with families on an online digital platform. Observations were individual to children and focused on learning. One parent told us, 'The regular updates and photos which we receive mean that I always feel included in their learning'. Tracking of children's next steps was well managed to identify any gaps in development and curriculum frameworks. However, some next steps to support younger children were too vast and not always age and stage appropriate. Further work was needed to ensure next steps in learning supported younger children to achieve.

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.

2.2. Children experience quality facilities

Children were cared for in a setting that was bright, comfortable, and welcoming as the nursery was decorated with natural furnishings and décor. Families were invited into the nursery and were warmly greeted by staff. This resulted in a welcoming and friendly environment which contributed to children feeling respected and valued.

Playrooms took account of children's stages of development. Resources and equipment were well maintained and easily accessible to children, which empowered them to make choices about their play and learning.

Most children benefitted from daily woodland walks and visits to a nearby forest, which was situated next to the nursery in peaceful and calm surroundings. This meant their health and wellbeing was supported as they comfortably engaged with nature and explored their natural environment. The children told us, 'I like climbing in the forest', and 'I like splashing in the muddy puddles'. The forest sites were well designed, and spaces provided children with high quality play and learning. Children had access to toilet facilities and a shelter to protect them from the elements. However, these were not being used on the day of the inspection. This resulted in older children going back to the nursery for lunch and again for high tea. This meant they experienced a lot of transitions and periods of waiting in their daily routines. We highlighted ways in which the service could overcome some barriers to enable children to spend more time at the forest site. We signposted best practice guidance 'Out to play' to assist them with this.

Children were kept safe as they were aware of the site boundaries and how far they could go within the forest. One child told us, 'This is the red line, you can't go past this, it keeps us safe'. On returning to nursery, children walked in pairs in a line, one child told us, 'You need to wait here, in case there is a car in the carpark.' These approaches supported children to learn how to keep themselves and others safe.

Children experienced a nursery environment that supported their health and wellbeing. Staff were knowledgeable about infection, prevention and control procedures which minimised the potential risk of spread of infection. For example, hand washing routines were embedded in practice and the nursery was clean and tidy.

Children's privacy was protected by the safe storage of their information, including electronic and paper files.

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

Leaders were enthusiastic and committed to improving outcomes for children and their families. The manager was well organised and demonstrated a clear vision and direction for the service. The staff team placed value on the opinions of children and their families and were reviewing their vision, values and aims at the time of the inspection. This will represent a shared vision and contribute to the positive ethos of the setting.

Realistic Improvement planning considered key areas for development within the service. A sufficient start had been made to self-evaluation processes. Staff reflected on their practice together and understood their role in improving children's experiences and outcomes. Partnership with families was a priority of improvement planning and we found children and families had some opportunities to be involved with improvement work within the service. These could be developed further offering more opportunities for children and their families to influence positive change and feel included in developments.

Quality assurance processes had been developed and were having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children. To ensure aspects of quality care and support is not overlooked, as identified within this report, the manager could monitor children's daily routines and experiences. This would support them further to support improvements to be effectively and consistently made. We directed the manager to the Care Inspectorate's Hub and the bitesize session on Quality Improvement to assist with this.

The manager and staff were responsive to our suggestions on how children's experiences and outcomes could be improved. This demonstrated a commitment to their ongoing improvement work.

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.

4.3 Staff deployment

Children benefited from a staff team that were friendly, respectful, and playful in their interactions with children. They used children's names, sang spontaneously, cuddled children and were responsive to their requests and needs. This contributed to children feeling safe and secure.

Staff morale was high, and they identified strongly with the service. They told us they enjoyed their work, felt fully supported and were committed to providing very good outcomes for the children and their families.

Staff had developed meaningful and positive relationships with the families. This meant they were knowledgeable on individual children and the needs of their families. Parents who responded to our questionnaire held the staff in high regard, their comments included, 'Staff are incredible'; 'Cannot fault any of the team, they are all amazing'; 'Friendly, nurturing and accommodating staff' and 'We are thankful for a consistent staff team - these relationships are crucial in the early years'.

Staff had a good mix of skills, and experience to meet children's needs. They told us of training they had attended and were knowledgeable on best practice guidance and how they used this to provide good outcomes for children. The team were motivated, enthusiastic, and clear about their roles and responsibilities. They complemented each other well which resulted in a happy workforce. They had established strong working relationships and a positive ethos of mutual trust which promoted a supportive environment for children and their families. As a result, children were happy and enjoyed their nursery experience.

Staff communicated very well to minimise disruption to children's routines. Their breaks were managed well with consistent staff supporting children at busier times of the day. Effective staff deployment ensured children were always well supervised and supported appropriately.

Staff covering absences were familiar to the children and knew their routines. This contributed to children being provided with consistent care and positive experiences.

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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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