

## St. Devenicks Playgroup Day Care of Children

St. Devenicks Church Hall  
Baillieswells Road  
Bielside  
Aberdeen  
AB15 9AP

Telephone: 07875575863

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
14 March 2024

**Service provided by:**  
St. Devenicks Playgroup

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000316

**Service no:**  
CS2003001735

## About the service

St Devenicks Playgroup is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children aged two to those of an age to attend primary school.

St Devenicks Playgroup is operated from St Devenicks church hall, within the Aberdeen suburb of Bieldside. The setting consists of a cloakroom, large playroom, sensory room and toilets. During the operating times the service have exclusive use of the church hall and garden.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 12 March 2024 between 09:30 and 14:30 and 13 March 2024 between the times of 09:00 and 13:45. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making out evaluations of the service we:

- Spent time with children using the service and spoke to four of their parents/carers
- Received 17 responses to our request for feedback from parents via MS Forms
- Spoke with staff and management
- Received four responses to our request for feedback from staff
- Observed practice and children's experiences
- Reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children benefited from warm nurturing interactions from staff who knew them well.
- Strong connections with families supported meeting children's needs.
- Children had fun as they explored the environment freely through uninterrupted play.
- Outdoor play areas should continue to be developed to support children's health and wellbeing.
- Children and families benefitted from effective improvement planning.
- The management and staff team were committed to delivering a quality service for children and families.

## 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, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children, and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from a team that knew their individual needs and preferences. Staff comforted and reassured a child who was upset, giving cuddles and talking using a soft voice to calm and reassure them. Staff sensitively supported children by getting down to their level and using short simple phrases to communicate positive choices in play. As a result children were safe and happy. A parent told us, 'It's a lovely small setting, where every child gets very individualised care each day.' Another parent commented, 'It's obvious from everything staff say and do that they know my child so well.'

Children and their families were warmly welcomed, helping to build positive and trusting relationships. Parents and carers told us they valued the effective communication they had with the service. They were positive about the online platform used by the playgroup to provide them with information and photographs. Parents told us this had helped settle their anxieties and reassured them their child was well looked after.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. Plans included detailed information on children's interests, preferences and routines and how these would be met. Families were included in developing and reviewing these to ensure information was current and relevant. Staff had a very good knowledge of children's plans, which aided them in providing care and support to meet children's individual needs.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through nutritious food options at snack time. Choice and preferences were respected by allowing children to choose when they ate and where they sat. Where children needed support this was given discreetly and with warmth and encouragement. Children's life skills were supported during snack times as they served their own food, poured their own drinks and tidied away their plates once finished. This promoted a calm, unhurried experience. Children's health was promoted and parental preferences reflected through staff awareness of any allergies or dietary requirements.

Personal care maintained children's privacy and dignity. Interactions at these times were respectful and reassuring for children with lots of singing, chatting and laughter. This supported children's confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Children's safety, emotional security and wellbeing were supported through sensitive arrangements for rest and relaxation. Staff supported children in the story corner as they enjoyed stories and relaxed on the soft seating and cushions. The quiet, sensory room provided another space for children to rest and relax if required.

Children's safety and wellbeing were promoted as staff showed a good understanding in their role of identifying, recording and referring any safeguarding concerns. Policies and regular training were in place to support this. Staff were confident in discussing how and when to involve other agencies to support children and their families.

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children benefitted from opportunities for freely chosen and planned play experiences. They were actively leading their own play and learning, engaged with resources which supported their interests. These included role play in the inviting home corner, one child commented, 'I've made chocolate cake.' One parent commented, 'There's always a great range of activities provided which focus on children's interests.' Another parent told us, 'My child loves to attend and always enjoys all the activities provided.'

Children's ongoing learning and developmental progress was supported by sharing observations and next steps with parents via a digital platform. Observations detailed significant learning and next steps were relevant to individual children. This meant children were effectively supported to learn and progress.

Displays around the environment showcased children's work and creations. As a result children felt valued as they were able to share their learning with parents and friends. This gave a strong message that children mattered and enabled children to take pride in their work and celebrate their achievements.

Staff demonstrated a good understanding of when to involve themselves in a child's play and when to step back. This allowed children to freely explore their environment supporting their resilience as independent learners.

Opportunities for emerging language, literacy and numeracy skills were naturally woven into daily experiences. These included, songs, rhymes and check in name cards. Staff's natural interactions supported numeracy development as children were supported to count pieces of fruit at snack time. Children had the choice to be part of group story time. Staff were skilled at storytelling and encouraged engagement through the use of props and actions. They introduced new words and used carefully selected questions to support children to think more widely about the story and other possibilities.

Children had some access to the local community which included visits to the nearby church. Management recognised the benefits of fostering links with the local community and were exploring ways of developing this further.

#### 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.

Children were cared for in a clean, welcoming and well maintained learning environment. Recent improvements to the setting included upgraded toilet facilities, and the development of a sensory room. These improvements had helped to create a good quality environment for all. Parents and staff told us how the sensory room contributed to children's emotional wellbeing. This offered a safe and secure space for small group activities, rest and relaxation.

Areas indoors were bright and attractively laid out with a range of resources for children to access themselves. Art and craft and role play areas supported children's choice and independent play. Some sensory experiences such as playdough and paint were on offer, however, this could be improved. We discussed the importance of daily access to a range of sensory play experiences. Management agreed to offer more sensory play experiences to support children's learning and creativity.

Children enjoyed free flow access between indoor and outdoor areas. Staff cordoned off an area directly outside the building during the session to accommodate outdoor play. The outdoor environment provided some opportunities for risky, active and energetic play. Children had fun moving and balancing their bodies whilst exploring an obstacle course. However, they lacked opportunities to access a natural environment as the nearby enclosed garden area was not currently in use. We discussed this with management who appreciated this limited children's choice and explained the reasons for this. They agreed to review the situation and implement access to the garden area whenever possible.

Children were kept safe due to staff supervising them closely and counting children at regular intervals. They ensured doors to the setting were secured appropriately when children were arriving or leaving the setting with parents. Risk assessments were in place for the environment and resources. These identified possible hazards and how to reduce the level of risk. Children were encouraged to participate in assessing and discussion in keeping safe. This supported their understanding of how to manage risk.

Children's health was promoted by staff's understanding of infection prevention and control. The service was clean, tidy and well maintained. Handwashing was well supported at appropriate times such as before snack time or after toileting. This meant they were protected from the potential spread of infection.

Children's personal information was stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and any digital information was password sensitive. This ensured families privacy and confidentiality.

## How good is our leadership?

## 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.

The values and aims of the service were positive and were shared by the team. These were reflected in practice and in our discussions with staff. The aims included, 'Welcoming all children to take their first steps in learning away from home.' A strong vision supported staff and families to understand what to expect from the service.

The importance of using the views of parents and children to inform the planning and development of the service was recognised. Children and families views were actively sought through questionnaires, face to face discussions and through stay and play sessions. The service was provided by a parent led committee. This enabled families to be meaningfully involved in making decisions about the service development. Families we received feedback from, agreed that they influenced change within the setting. This led to positive relationships and partnership working to promote good outcomes for children.

Strong leadership within the service promoted a culture of continuous improvement. An improvement plan identified priorities to support the development of the service. Parents told us previous improvement areas had led to improved outcomes for children and families. This included the implementation of an online communication platform and the creation of a quiet, sensory room.

Staff told us they felt 'listened to' and 'supported' by the leadership team. Staff engaged in regular self-evaluation of their practice and improvement priorities through ongoing reflective discussions. They used guidance documents 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare' and 'A Quality Framework for the Daycare of Children, Childminding and School Aged Daycare.' This meant that high quality learning was at the heart of improvements.

The management team carried out monitoring of staff practice through planned observations detailing what went well and highlighting areas for improvement. This ensured that staff were continually encouraged to learn and develop their practice. Staff were positive about how this had supported them to become reflective practitioners to provide support and care to the children.

Parents and carers who provided written feedback spoke very highly of the management team and their approach to developing and improving the service. Some of their comments included, 'The playgroup is run by an excellent committee of parents as well as the two managers. We all feel very involved in the playgroup's running.' 'The staff team at St. Devenicks, particularly the two managers, are some of the most devoted people I have come across.' 'The managers and staff really make the playgroup.'

### 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.

Staff interacted with children and each other in a respectful considerate manner. This provided good role modelling and promoted a relaxed and happy atmosphere for children to enjoy.

Children were supported by enthusiastic, committed and motivated staff. Children were allocated a key worker who maintained records of their development and was a point of contact for parents. This promoted positive transitions for children and good communication with families.

Positive attachments between staff and children were evident. Feedback we received highlighted families felt staff were approachable and knew children and families well. Parents told us, 'Each staff member is friendly, helpful and supportive.' 'My child adores their key worker.' 'The staff are fantastic and they have created a family like feel which my child loves.'

The staff team were stable and consistent, which ensured families knew which staff were supporting their children. There was a positive ethos of attendance within the service and staff had worked within the playgroup for a number of years. Effective arrangements were in place in the event of absence, with consistent supply staff available. This supported high quality outcomes for children.

Staff were flexible and supported each other to work as a team to benefit children. Staff told us, 'We are a small friendly team' and 'We help and support each other.' They shared appropriate information about children to keep all staff informed and ensure continuity of care. They communicated with each other effectively as they moved around the setting. For example, sharing information on children's interests and learning experiences when moving between areas. As a result, children were effectively and safely supervised and experienced continuity of care.

A supportive induction process for new members of staff helped them grow in confidence and feel fully equipped in their role. We signposted the management team to the 'National Induction Resource' to further promote this process. Leadership and modelling of practice from management helped ensure children's experiences were positive throughout the session.

Staff demonstrated commitment to their continuous professional learning and development and this was observed in practice. For example, the implementation of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the

Child (UNCRC). Children's rights were respected and evident in practice as staff regularly consulted with children. This enabled children to feel valued and respected as their views and opinions were listened to.

## 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

The service should review and develop their paperwork relating to personal plans to ensure that the information being recorded is meaningful, clear and allows effective monitoring of children's progress.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - Standard 6: Support and Development.

**This area for improvement was made on 20 March 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. Plans included detailed information on children's interests, preferences and routines and how these would be met. Families were included in developing and reviewing these to ensure information was current and relevant. Staff had a very good knowledge of children's plans, which aided them in providing care and support to meet children's individual needs.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

The provider should consider the variety of resources used within the playgroup to provide quality experiences for children that promoted challenge, risky play and cultural diversity. This should include more natural resources.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - Standard 5: Quality of Experience.

**This area for improvement was made on 20 March 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

A range of natural and open ended play equipment was on offer. Children were able to be creative, problem solve and use their imagination using these resources and have positive play and learning experiences. These included, packets and tins, corks, pine cones and pieces of wood in the role play and construction areas. Pipes, tyres and guttering were available outdoors.

Play experiences promoted opportunities for children to play together, assess and manage risk. These included exploring the climbing frame indoors and obstacle course outdoors. Cultural diversity had been considered through clothing, family photographs and resources in the home corner.

**This area for improvement has been met.**



### Previous area for improvement 3

The provider should ensure that staff are able to identify visitors before they enter the service.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - Standard 2: A Safe Environment.

**This area for improvement was made on 20 March 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

Children were kept safe and secure as staff met visitors at the entrance. Checked their identity badge, where relevant, and ensured they signed in and out of the building. An identified member of staff ensured doors to the setting were secured appropriately when children and families were arriving or leaving the setting. A rota was in place to support this and to ensure all staff knew children and families well.

**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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## 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?	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](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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