

Carleton Nursery School Day Care of Children

Bighty Road
Woodside
Glenrothes
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Fife Council

Service provider number:
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About the service

Carleton Nursery School is a daycare of children service provided by Fife Council in the Woodside area of Glenrothes, Fife. The service is registered to provide early learning and childcare to a maximum of 110 children at any one time, of which no more than ten children can be under three years old. 57 children were in attendance on the days of inspection. The headteacher of the service is also responsible for managing Ladybird Family Nurture Centre in Glenrothes as part of a peripatetic management arrangement.

The service is located in a residential area of the town of Glenrothes. There are a few shops close by as well as local transport links. Children are cared for across five playrooms, one of which is for 'early entrants' who are aged under three years old. The other four playrooms care for children aged around three until they attend primary school. Each playroom has direct access to a large, spacious and well-established outdoor space which is shared between the rooms. There are two nappy changing rooms and two sets of toilets for children to use. Children access the toilets along the main corridor between rooms. There is also a small family room, a kitchen space, laundry room and other space for offices and storage.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 April 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with 57 children
- received feedback from 36 of their family members
- spoke with 22 staff, including the leadership team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with four visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Most children were happy and confident in their play and learning, developing literacy and numeracy skills.
- Most families told us they had positive relationships with staff and that they appreciated the advice and guidance they had received.
- As planned, further improvements to personal planning would help to ensure that all children are proactively supported to achieve their potential and meet their unique needs, rights and choices.
- Children enjoyed playing in the fun and exciting outdoor play space that offered them lots of opportunities to develop new skills alongside a range of experiences in their playrooms.
- The setting was mostly clean, safe and well-maintained, offering children and families a welcoming care, play and learning experience.
- Communication with families should be improved so they feel fully included and respected, including ensuring leaders have positive, trusting working relationships with them.
- Leaders should develop effective systems for quality assurance and self-evaluation which consistently improve children's experiences, including when responding to complaints and concerns from 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?	3 - Adequate
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?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of **good** for this key question, where we identified strengths that promoted positive outcomes and some improvements would maximise children's wellbeing.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Almost all children experienced warm, caring and nurturing support in their daily experiences. Children's emotions were recognised, understood and validated by staff who understood that this would support them to develop emotional resilience. Children were supported to resolve conflict with their peers in a sensitive way. Staff had recently undertaken training on nurturing approaches which had refreshed their knowledge and understanding of how and why children may become distressed or anxious. As a result, they responded sensitively and appropriately to children's actions, emotions and words.

Most families told us they had positive relationships with staff and appreciated the support they offered their children. One parent said, "They have a good relationship with my child and the rest of our family and are very approachable and helpful." A few parents told us that when their children had needed some additional support to meet their unique needs, staff responded sensitively. Several parents told us that communication about their child could be better. They wanted more information about their child's daily experiences as well as better communication on their child's progress. We agreed that there had been inconsistency in communication because staffing had been unstable. We encouraged leaders to ensure that all families receive high quality communication and feedback about their child so they feel fully included and respected in determining their child's care.

Each child had a personal plan which detailed some of their needs, for example, any allergies or dietary requirements. Leaders had recently been working with staff to develop a more formal approach to understanding what specific support children needed, dependent on their needs. This included working with other agencies who could support children to achieve their potential. As a result, most children's needs were being met to keep them safe and healthy. There were some inconsistencies in children's personal planning. For example, it was unclear how several personal plans had been developed in collaboration with children and families. One parent told us, "I sometimes feel that some of the staff do not know my child well." There were opportunities to improve how staff proactively planned to meet all children's needs, rights and choices through personal planning approaches. We encouraged staff to consider how they can record and communicate children's individual needs in a way that supports all children to achieve their potential.

Meals and snacks were mainly nutritional and offered children healthy foods to choose from. Children were independent at mealtimes, serving themselves from a family style platter and washing their own dishes. Some children also helped to prepare the table for meals as part of their learning experiences. It was clear they enjoyed the responsibility of helping adults to care for their friends. These experiences were supporting children to learn skills for life. Mealtimes were calm and relaxed and children could choose when they wanted to eat. Staff sat with children and there were warm, genuine discussions between children and staff at this time. Catering staff were also kind and caring, supporting children sensitively. As a result, we were confident children were having good mealtime experiences that would help them to build positive relationships with food.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were happy and confident as they enjoyed their play and learning. Outdoor play was a particular favourite with children who were able to freely explore fun and exciting opportunities. For example, they climbed trees, enjoyed time on bikes and scooters and joined in planting and growing activities. One child said, "I like that I can go out in the garden on the scooter with my friends and I like to play in the sandbox." Almost all families were also happy with the outdoor play space and some highlighted this as a key strength of the service. There was a good range of play and learning experiences for children in this space. The service had been supported by development officers from the local authority to further develop this area and this was having a positive impact on the quality of children's experiences outdoors.

Staff had been working on developing better opportunities for literacy and numeracy in children's play and learning. This was having a positive impact on children's knowledge and understanding. Staff also had a good understanding that play was an essential support in helping children develop emotional resilience and skills for co-operative play. They sensitively worked alongside children to name their emotions and help them communicate these with their peers. As a result, children were learning skills for life.

Most children's interests were respected when staff planned their play and learning. Staff responded to children's play and learning needs during the day, for example, supporting one child to explore their interest in trains. We discussed with staff ways to improve how they plan children's play and learning to carefully consider children's holistic needs, rights and choices. For example, when staff record what they see and hear in children's play, they could use different techniques and perspectives from different people to inform a wider view of children's experiences. This includes ensuring that families' views are respected and valued in supporting children's play and learning. This would ensure that children are empowered to be fully involved in their own play and learning.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We found important strengths that clearly outweighed areas for improvement in this key question. This contributed to positive outcomes for children and, therefore, we made an evaluation of **good**.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a warm, welcoming and comfortable setting that included some nice, homely touches such as blankets, lamps and other real life resources. There was a good range of play resources available for children to be imaginative and creative. These had been laid out in a way that allowed children to be independent, choosing their own play based on their interests. Most families were also happy with the quality of the environment for play, identifying the outdoor space as a particularly positive place for children to learn and develop. One parent said, "I would say the variety of play areas in the room and the choice to play indoors or outdoors are the most positive aspects." Staff were building on the interesting and unusual resources available to encourage children's problem solving skills and creativity. We encouraged the service to continue improving and maintaining the quality of resources available for play so that children consistently experience high quality opportunities.

Some parents told us they had been concerned about the safety of children at pick up and drop off times due to the routines and arrangements for accessing the building.

Leaders and staff told us how they had changed some aspects of this practice, including creating an additional entrance and having visual reminders for parents about the measures in place to keep children safe. There were also plans to improve this further based on their learning since the new system had been introduced. We were reassured that there had been positive improvements to ensure children were safe during this routine. We encouraged leaders to continue monitoring how well this routine is managed to reduce the risk of children leaving the premises unsupervised.

Staff worked well as a team throughout the day to remove any potential risks such as slip and trip hazards. Leaders told us about planned maintenance work which would make the setting safer. For example, some protruding tree roots in the garden were being removed to reduce the risk of children having accidents outdoors. Staff told leaders if they noticed parts of the premises that needed to be fixed. There was an overview of any outstanding maintenance items that helped leaders and janitorial staff to keep track of progress. It will be important for higher risk outstanding items to be rectified as soon as possible. For example, the door handle into one of the playrooms was loose and this meant it opened if there was a draught. We encouraged the provider to ensure maintenance items were completed in a timely manner so the setting is consistently safe and secure. We encouraged the provider to continue updating some parts of the premises. For example, windows in one part of the building could be replaced and the presentation of the new entrance could be more welcoming for families.

Infection prevention and control procedures were generally well managed and staff encouraged children to be included in these routines. Children and staff washed their hands at appropriate times of the day and each room was well ventilated to reduce the risk of the spread of infection. We asked leaders to consider how often nappy waste is collected and removed from the premises so that any intrusive smells are minimised. This will further improve the good infection prevention and control measures in place to keep children safe and healthy.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We found that improvements need to be made by building on strengths to consistently promote positive outcomes for children. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as **adequate**.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There were a few systems in place to keep families up to date with nursery life. For example, there were informative display boards in the nursery and newsletters were prepared to tell them about any events that were coming up. Several families told us that they would like better communication from leaders. Leaders acknowledged that there had been a significant amount of change for them as a team as well as for staff in recent months. We understood that this had impacted on their ability to fully include children and families in influencing change. We asked leaders to improve communication with children and families. This includes ensuring that leaders build and sustain positive, trusting, working relationships with parents and carers. This would ensure families feel fully included and respected in developing the service. **See area for improvement one.**

Children had benefitted from recent improvements such as changes to the play and learning experiences on offer in the setting. The provider had supported the setting to improve by including two development officers in making changes that impacted positively on children's experiences. They had worked alongside staff to make some play spaces more fun and welcoming. Staff had collaborated with their colleagues to make changes based on meeting children's play and learning needs.

In addition, staff were included in some quality assurance and self-evaluation activities that were beginning to help them reflect on the quality of children's experiences. We discussed and acknowledged the impact of significant change in the leadership team on the consistency of quality assurance and self-evaluation. This had impacted on how quickly improvements could be made. For example, checks of medication records had not highlighted missing information and the quality of children's learning journals was varied. We asked leaders to implement quality assurance and self-evaluation which helps them to consistently offer high quality care and support tailored towards children and families' particular needs and choices. **See area for improvement two.**

We reviewed concerns and complaints that had been raised with the service as part of this inspection. We had asked the service to investigate and respond to a complaint made to us prior to the inspection and we reviewed how the service had managed this complaint. In most instances, staff had responded directly to children, parents and carers. Several parents told us that they had not been satisfied with how their complaints and concerns had been considered by leaders. We found that leaders did not yet have clear oversight of all complaints and concerns which had been communicated by families. We asked leaders to ensure that they have a meaningful understanding of all complaints and concerns. This will ensure they respond quickly and sensitively to children and families' rights, needs and choices. This will also build the confidence of children and families in the leadership of the service. **See area for improvement three.**

Areas for improvement

1. To meaningfully involve children and families in influencing change in the setting, the provider should ensure that children and families' views are actively sought through effective communication strategies. This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring leaders have positive, trusting, working relationships with children and families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that "I am actively encouraged to be involved in improving the service I use, in a spirit of genuine partnership" (HSCS 4.7) and "I am supported to give regular feedback on how I experience my care and support and the organisation uses learning from this to improve" (HSCS 4.8).

This is to ensure staff skills and knowledge is consistent with the Care Inspectorate document, 'Me, my family and my childcare setting.'

2. To consistently deliver high quality care, play and learning for children and families, the provider should implement inclusive quality assurance and self-evaluation activities that lead to continuous improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes" (HSCS 4.19).

3. To enable families to confidently highlight complaints and concerns, the provider should implement robust processes to respond quickly and sensitively to families' views alongside children's needs, rights and choices. This should include, but is not limited to, having a clear overview of complaints and concerns to inform the service's improvement planning and quality assurance processes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that "I know how, and can be helped, to make a complaint or raise a concern about my care and support" (HSCS 4.20) and "If I have a concern or complaint, this will be discussed with me and acted on without negative consequences for me" (HSCS 4.21).

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as **good**, where performance impacted positively on children's outcomes and this outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Most children were kept safe because staff supervised them well throughout the day. Staff communicated well with each other to ensure there was a good understanding of where children were playing and if anyone needed some additional support. For example, changes had been made to the routines at pick up and drop off times to make this safer. We discussed how staff could make further improvements to this routine to ensure they regularly offer families meaningful discussions about their child's progress. This would ensure they feel fully included and respected in making choices about their child's care, play and learning.

Staff told us that they worked well as a team to support each other. Some part time staff had worked flexibly to work additional hours. This meant that the minimum ratios of staff to children were being met and a few children benefitted from having additional support to meet their needs. There was some good information available for any temporary, supply staff to refer to so they could meet children's needs. There had been instability across the staff team due to absence, annual leave and challenges recruiting for vacant roles. Staff were committed to minimising the impact this had on children and families and some stability was beginning to return. A few staff felt that the uncertainty of staffing had impacted negatively on their own wellbeing. We discussed with the provider that the current model may not be sustainable over time. We encouraged them to closely monitor the staffing situation so that children's needs are consistently met and their rights and choices respected.

Most families spoke positively about the staff who cared for their children. One parent told us, "This dedicated team work strongly together to the benefit of all the children who attend the nursery." Children also enjoyed spending time with staff and some had built close relationships with them that helped them to build their emotional resilience. There was a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience across the team to offer children balanced and varied care, play and learning. Some parents were not always sure who was caring for their children on any given day. They told us some staff had not been formally introduced to them. We found that there was limited information about staffing arrangements for families to refer to. We encouraged the setting to ensure families are regularly updated on any staffing changes. We also discussed the importance of maintaining the keyworker approach so that children and families build a strong, nurturing relationship with someone who they can go to when they need support and guidance.

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?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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