

# Firtrees Nursery & Out of School Care Day Care of Children

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
16 May 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Amcol Scotland Ltd

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000911

**Service no:**  
CS2003004432

## About the service

Firtrees Nursery & Out of School Care is provided by Amcol Scotland Ltd. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 288 children up to the age of 16 years. This includes, 21 children aged from 0 to under one year; 33 children aged one to under two years; 50 children aged two to under three years; 144 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school and 40 children attending school. Two hundred and ten children were in attendance during the first day of the inspection and 247 were present on the second day.

Care is provided over one level from 14 spacious playrooms. The service is located next to New College Lanarkshire - Motherwell Campus. The building was specially designed to meet the needs of the number and age of children attending. It has fully enclosed garden areas. Public transport, local parks and community facilities are nearby.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 13 and 15 May 2024. Feedback was provided to the service on 16 May 2024. The inspection was carried out by three 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 and received feedback from 70 of their family members
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- Children and families were warmly welcomed in the service, helping them feel valued and created a sense of belonging.
- Staff knew children well, which supported meeting their needs and wishes.
- Some interactions could be more nurturing to support children's emotional wellbeing and development.
- Children benefitted from a wide variety of play opportunities, which supported their curiosity, imagination and problem solving.
- Improvements to play spaces and materials helped create a fun, curious and challenging opportunities for children to play and learn.
- Staff deployment could be further improved to take account of children's needs at busier periods of the day.
- Nappy changing facilities should be improved to reflect best practice guidance.

**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?	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 evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support.

Staff had built positive relationships with children and families and they were warmly welcomed into the service. This helped provide meaningful opportunities to share information to meet children's needs and supported families to feel included. For example, during daily drop offs and opportunities to come in and play with their child. This contributed to staff knowing children well. Almost all parents agreed and comments included, "The relationships [my child] has formed in nursery with some staff is very strong. [My child] loves going to nursery and this always makes drop off a positive experience", "Our child is welcomed each morning and staff have made an effort to get to know their likes" and "The stay and play days are a great way of having an insight into the day."

Most children experienced warm and caring interactions that helped them feel loved. There was lots of laughter, cuddles and reassurance provided which helped children feel safe. However, at times some interactions lacked warmth and could have been more nurturing to support children's emotional wellbeing. For example, use of unnecessary rules. We discussed this with the manager and they agreed to revisit the importance of high quality interactions with staff (see area for improvement 1).

Information gathered in personal plans supported meeting children needs. For example, interests, medical needs, and daily routines. We found the content in plans were varied and some plans had not been updated in line with guidance. A more consistent approach would ensure meeting children's needs. We discussed this with the manager and were satisfied that a plan was in place to develop children's personal plans.

Children's wellbeing was promoted with regular opportunities for sleep and rest in response to their needs. Staff were aware of the importance of sleep routines and ensuring they were reflective of home routines. For example, use of comforters and white noise. The lighting and temperature was adjusted in sleep rooms, to promote restful naps. Staff were aware of safe sleep practices and some staff had recently refreshed their training. This helped ensure children were kept safe.

Children's personal care was carried out in response to their needs to ensure their comfort. Improvements to nappy changes routines meant this was a more flexible experience for most children. Key workers and familiar staff supported children's personal care, which promoted their wellbeing. Staff told us this was a positive change, which made this experience less task orientated. This practice should be developed more consistently across the service.

Children experienced variable approaches to mealtimes across the service. Babies, who were bottle fed, received a relaxing and nurturing experience, which helped promote positive attachments. Children in the 3-5 rooms experienced relaxed and sociable lunchtimes. For example, children did not eat all at once and play spaces remained accessible, helping ensure children's play was not interrupted. However, we discussed how further adjustments to mealtimes would support children's independence and provide more opportunities for staff to engage with children. In one room some children had to wait too long when they had finished their meal, meaning they became restless. In another room staff were busy serving meals, which meant they became task oriented and interactions were less nurturing. This compromised children's

safety as staff were not always available to respond to potential choking risks. The manager agreed to action this.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

Children were busy and having fun as they explored a wide variety of play experiences, which promoted their learning. They were eager to share their preferences and particular favourites included the mud kitchen and outdoor play. Children developed a variety of skills including their curiosity and imagination as they chopped, mixed and experimented with mud, water and spices as they created their own pretend foods, such as spaghetti bolognese and sausages. Children told us, 'I like outdoors and the mud kitchen. One parent commented, "My little one has loads of fun in nursery and sometimes surprises us (parents) with what they have learned. This environment is great for kids." One child told us they liked "Drawing, painting, shaving foam and outside."

There were plenty opportunities to explore with water, which encouraged children to transport, pour, fill and develop their own ideas, such as washing the babies. A wide variety of pots, pans, utensils, jugs and containers supported children's engagement. Staff ensured the water was topped up when needed to extend play opportunities.

Children's wellbeing was supported through free flow access to the garden areas, which meant children could make choices on where to play. This encouraged them to follow their own ideas as they formed friendships with other children. Staff valued the importance of outdoor play, which helped promote exciting and interesting play opportunities, which helped promote children's physical and emotional wellbeing. One parent commented, "My child loves being outdoors and they always encourage them to play outdoors as much as they like" and a child told us, "I like to run about in the garden."

The service had invested in new developmentally appropriate play resources that supported high quality play. Sensory materials supported babies to develop their senses, building connections in their brains. Resources such as, mirrors, balls, water and textured items promoted children's interest, encouraging them to explore and discover. Children had fun playing in well-resourced home areas, where they developed their imagination, creating hospitals, parties and looking after babies. Children worked together to solve problems and created their own recipes. One parent commented, "There is a fantastic range of play resources in the nursery. It seems to be very child led. I like that my child can access activities that they would not necessary experience at home."

Approaches to planning across age groups supported staff to follow children's interests. Staff considered how their interactions, play spaces and experiences could be tailored to meet children's needs and interests based on their observations. One parent told us, "I feel like the variety of play that's available is fantastic."

Older children, attending the out of school care were consulted and their voices recorded through the use of floor books, helping ensure they felt valued. This supported children to progress in their learning and be enthusiastic about play. Play opportunities could be further developed through high quality interactions. For example, in some rooms, staff were not always able to respond to and join in with play as other tasks needed to be completed.

Most staff engaged enthusiastically in children's play. Shrieks of laughter were heard as staff joined in with ball games. The use of skilled questions helped children extend their thinking and ideas which contributed to their literacy and numeracy development. This was also developed through singing, reading stories and plenty of mark making opportunities. One parent told us, "My child has learned the majority of songs [they] know at nursery and comes home singing almost a different one every week." Children's mathematical concepts were promoted with the use of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) room where

children could choose from building blocks, construction, science and discovery experiences. Many children and families told us this was a favourite place to play.

## Areas for improvement

1.  
To ensure children's positive wellbeing the provider should ensure that children experience consistently warm and nurturing interactions and approaches.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: "I experience warmth, kindness and compassion in how I am supported and cared for, including physical comfort when appropriate for me and the person supporting and caring for me." (HSCS 3.9).

## 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.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

The service had created an environment that helped children feel like they mattered and developed a sense of belonging. For example, playrooms were bright, welcoming and well maintained and there were spacious areas to leave their belongings.

Children's overall wellbeing was promoted through the use of natural décor and soft furnishings, which created calm, cosy and homely spaces. This supported children to relax and feel safe. For example, comfortable sleep rooms, book area, dens, rugs and soft lighting. Well furnished chill out spaces in the out of school care room supported older children to relax after a busy day at school, supporting their choices and wishes.

Overall, most play spaces were well structured to take account of children's interests and stage of development, promoting curiosity and discovery. Play materials were of high quality and accessible to children, which supported them to make choices. For example, a wide variety of books, various art materials, interesting home areas, and construction and building materials. More sensory rich materials and opportunities would enrich play for children with additional support needs. Two parents told us, "My child enjoys all areas in the nursery - their favourites are STEM and outdoor play, but they enjoy the indoor areas too" and they liked "the wide range of resources."

Children benefitted from new physical equipment that generated excitement for children. Popular additions such as, monkey bars, chutes and tunnels helped children to develop their physical skills. This supported children to develop their balance, coordination and experience positive risk taking. Children shared their excitement and showed us what they could do. Many children told us their favourite outdoor activity was the monkey bars and were delighted they could hang upside down. This helped promote their confidence and self-esteem.

A variety of measures were in place to help ensure children's safety. This included, safe storage of hazardous materials, secure entrance systems and finger guards on doors. Risk assessments considered potential hazards and measures were taken to reduce risks. Further consideration should be given to the placement of large boulders and pebbles in the garden areas as these could become slippery when wet.

Smaller pebbles for younger children could be a risk if they were thrown during explorative play. We were satisfied after speaking with management that they would review this.

Robust measures were in place to promote the prevention of spread of infection. This included, maintaining a clean and tidy environment. Children confidently washed their hands before meals and after playing which helped develop good habits for life. Toys and materials were cleaned and sterilised if needed for younger children and bins were emptied regularly throughout the day.

At a previous inspection, we made an area for improvement around nappy changing facilities to ensure they were in-line with best practice guidance. For example, children under two years must have a self-contained designated nappy changing room. We were satisfied that plans were in place to make improvements in the near future. However, as this has not yet been actioned the area for improvement remains in place (see area for improvement 1).

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that children's health, wellbeing and privacy is protected the provider should improve the nappy changing facilities.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected' (HSCS 1.4); and 'If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed' (HSCS 5.4).

### 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.

#### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement well led.

Clear vision, values and aims were in place that reflected the needs of children and families. This included providing a welcoming learning environment, which was well resourced and interesting to support children to reach their full potential. This was reflected in practice and embedded across the service. The setting also valued the importance of working with children and families on their learning journey. The service should continue to strengthen opportunities for sharing progress and involving families in their child's care, play and learning.

Families were invited to share their views which were listened to and acted on. For example, 'question of the month' helped generate information to support the development of care and improvements within the service. This contributed to improving information sharing about children's needs as they moved rooms. The service had been working hard and showed commitment to improving outcomes for children. This was reflected in high quality play observed during this inspection. Parents told us, "We have had many questions over the last year or so about how we feel about the service and ways in which they can improve it" and "We are asked for thoughts on a question each month and feedback is always taken." However, some parents felt they were not involved in a meaningful way to influence developments within the service. The service should develop further ways to strengthen approaches to gathering feedback, to help ensure all families feel included in developments within the service.

An improvement plan was in place which had helped strengthen staff induction processes. This supported staff to build on their skills and knowledge and widen their understanding of their role, to provide high quality care. Mentoring roles were in the early stages of being established and used in practice. New staff would benefit as these processes are further developed.

Staff had a voice in developing the service and contributed their ideas to improvements. Managers involved them in self-evaluation processes and their opinions were shared. This helped staff feel involved and developed a consistent approach to play and learning. Audits of the environment and play spaces had contributed to high quality play experiences for children. Staff reflected on resources and toys needed for children and the layout of the areas to ensure this met children's needs based on observations. One staff member told us, "Over the course of the last year we have made great changes within the nursery. Playrooms have been updated with more natural and open ended resources. Free flow play within the 3-5 area works well and allows the children to explore more resources" and "We have enjoyed introducing lots more loose parts and ditched plastic, this has opened up a new world of open-ended play for the children. It's been a joy to see them use their imagination and creativity." This was reflected in the high quality of play experiences for children.

The manager had taken forward improvements since the last inspection. They had engaged with the Care Inspectorate's improvement team, which had a positive influence on change and outcomes for children. Staff made good use of improvement tools to test and try out new ideas to help get it right. Staff and parents should now be consulted more widely to help develop plans within the service. This would support the service identify priorities for improvement. Further opportunities for staff to develop a deeper understanding of best practice would support more meaningful self-evaluation that would contribute positively to children's care.

## 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.

### Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

Staff had developed meaningful relationships with families, which helped create a positive and welcoming ethos and supported children to feel safe. Many families told us of the positive connection they had with staff that cared for their child. Comments included, "All the staff are very welcoming from the moment you step foot into the building. I feel at ease when speaking to the staff in my child's room and feel they are very supportive" and "The staff know my child well...they are really kind and have taken the time to get to know us a family. They are always so flexible in what we need."

Overall, staff had positive relationships with each other and communicated well throughout the day to help ensure children's needs were met. This included when tasks took them away from their roles. In addition, communication diaries and whiteboards helped staff share key information. Improvements had been made since the last inspection to reduce movement of staff within the service between rooms. This helped ensure children were cared for by familiar adults. Staff supported each other within their teams to help provide consistent care for children.

Most parents were familiar with the staff caring for their child and identified staff as a strength of the service. They described them as "friendly", "professional", "kind" and "welcoming." However, at times,



when staff covered other areas, parents were less familiar and didn't always know the names of staff. This can impact on building trusting relationships to meet children's needs. We asked the service to consider ways to ensure parents are familiar with staff. For example, by displaying photographs of who is caring for their child.

We made an area for improvement at the last inspection to ensure staff were deployed in a way that met children's needs. Whilst we noted some improvements at this inspection, at key points of the day, further improvements were needed to support positive transitions and communication with families. Some children had less adults to provide support over mealtimes and some children moved rooms at the end of day. This meant families did not always get to speak to staff that they were familiar with, and some children were unsettled with the change. We discussed this with the manager who agreed to review practice at key points of the day. Therefore, the area for improvement has been repeated (see area for improvement 1).

During outdoor play staff ensured they spread out across the garden to help provide supervision and support for children during play. This supported children to assess risk and build their confidence. For example, climbing, exploring and moving play materials to support the play ideas. Staff were available to play with children which helped children have fun and excitement in their play.

### Areas for improvement

1. The manager and provider should ensure that staff are deployed in a way that ensures children's needs are met.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15) and 'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me' (HSCS 3.16).

## 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

To ensure that children's health, wellbeing and privacy is protected the provider should improve the nappy changing facilities.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected' (HSCS 1.4); and 'If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed' (HSCS 5.4).

**This area for improvement was made on 22 November 2022.**

## Action taken since then

Plans were in place to improve the changing facilities. We are satisfied this would support the health and wellbeing needs of children. However, this has not yet been actioned. **Therefore, this area for improvement has not been met.**

## Previous area for improvement 2

The manager and provider should ensure that staff are deployed in a way that ensures children's needs are met.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15) and 'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me' (HSCS 3.16).

**This area for improvement was made on 5 July 2023.**

## Action taken since then

Some improvements had been made to staff deployment, which helped provide a more consistent approach to their care. However, improvements were needed at busier times and at the end of the day to help meet children's needs. **Therefore, this area for improvement has not been met.**

## Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

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	5 - Very 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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