

Gorebridge Family Learning Centre Day Care of Children

Gorebridge Beacon
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 April 2024

Service provided by:
Midlothian Sure Start

Service provider number:
SP2003003175

Service no:
CS2003013422

About the service

Midlothian Sure Start, is the provider of Gorebridge Family Learning Centre. The service is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 17 children from birth to not yet of an age to attend primary school.

Gorebridge Family Learning Centre is purpose-built for Early Learning and Childcare, situated in the 'The Beacon', part of Gorebridge community trust. The building provides open plan play spaces, kitchen, children's toilets, nappy changing room, cloakroom and direct access to outdoor play spaces.

Their mission is to help each child achieve their full potential by having valued, confident and collaborative staff who will work with each other and other agencies to provide best quality services to children and their families within the communities of Midlothian.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 23 April 2024 between 09:00 and 16:30. We provided feedback to the area manager and a representative from the local authority on 25 April 2024. 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 last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service and four of their family members
- received ten online questionnaires from parents and families
- spoke with staff and received three online questionnaires from staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children's individual wellbeing was supported, through positive relationships and partnership working with families.
- Children's indoor and outdoor play spaces were stimulating and developmentally appropriate, supporting children's curiosity and health and wellbeing.
- The service had been through a period of change and staffing had an impact on the overall quality of the service.
- The deployment of staff was not always effective in ensuring high-quality outcomes for children.
- Staff training and wellbeing was important to the service.

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?	3 - Adequate

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

Children were happy and engaged in their play. They confidently approached staff for help, whilst staff responses were kind and caring. Parents were positive about the relationships staff had with children. Their comments included, "My child loves all the staff they are amazing" and "The staff truly care about the children". Children were consulted and listened to throughout the day, for example, during play and before personal care. This contributed to children feeling valued and that their views mattered. Some staff could talk to us about individual children and their preferences. Overall, interactions with children were positive. However, to fully meet children's needs these needed to be consistent across the staff team. This will contribute to children feeling secure, confident and happy.

Overall, children experienced an unhurried social lunch time. Weekly menus ensured children's individual nutritional and dietary requirements were met, whilst staff sat alongside children ensuring their safety. Children could choose and self-serve their food and some children were supported to tidy after lunch. Some staff were attentive to children's needs and listened, support was provided where required. Children were offered a choice of water or milk, children who didn't eat were offered different options. The lunchtime offered a social experience for children whilst promoting some independence. Whilst overall experience was positive, children could be more included in the preparation for lunch. We observed children seated at tables too early, with some children becoming unsettled. These opportunities would extend children's independence and responsibility whilst maintaining children's engagement, contributing to an overall positive mealtime experience.

There were many documents, which when taken together, made up a child's personal plan. These were completed in collaboration with families. Families told us, "I'm always discussing next steps for (child) and what we can work on at home and the setting" and "We came up with a plan to take (child) off their dummy and potty train them". There was some duplication of information across files; however, the service was in the process of testing a new personal plan format. Whilst moving through this change, the service should review and consolidate personal plan information to ensure significant information and strategies are clear. This should better support staff to consistently meet children's individual needs. **(See Area for improvement 1)**

Staff commitment to partnership working was effectively supporting children to achieve their potential. Families had opportunities to be involved in their child's play through stay and play sessions, their views meaningfully informed their child's personal plan and staff provided support and guidance to families through daily interactions and a variety of groups. Parents commented, "The staff are all lovely, very understanding and helpful" and "I know I can access groups here". Strong partnerships were formed with professionals including, speech and language therapists and health visitors. The inclusive environment and commitment to partnership working enriched experiences for both children and their families.

Staff were confident in a range of procedures, this included, safeguarding children's well-being, the safe storage of medication, accident and incident reporting. Whilst policies, procedures and children's information were regularly reviewed and updated as required. This ensured children were kept safe and well.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun as they played and explored. The environment was developmentally appropriate and supported free flow which meant children could choose to play indoors or outside. Children were able to lead their own play, learning through the wide variety of resources and spaces. Small and large open-ended resources, such as pinecones, corks, crates and wooden blocks, supported children's choice, curiosity and imagination. We observed children making their own playdough, having fun with foam, sand and water. Whilst the mud kitchen and larger outdoor equipment supported children's independence and development of motor skills. As a result, children were confident in the environment whilst experiencing high quality opportunities for play learning and development. Parents were positive about the children's experiences, their comments included, "My child can come in and out as they please, which is amazing as they love the outdoors, I know they are safe" another commented, "They love messy play, shaving foam fun and painting with tracks".

Planning in the moment had been recently introduced, the local authority early years team and managers from other Midlothian Sure Start settings were part of a group piloting the new system. Planning included 'observations', 'the role of the adult' and 'learning'. Seasonal and cultural celebrations were part of a yearly overview, this supported children's learning of the wider world. Parents told us, "My child's confidence has come on loads and the friendships here are amazing" other comments included, "My child has grown to learn to share and care" and "They are developing well and coming out their shell". Some staff were responsive to children's interests, extending these through commenting and open-ended questioning. This was not consistent across the whole team. Some interactions did not extend imagination and thinking. Planning was in the early stages; staff were beginning to understand what this should look like. Staff will benefit from the ongoing support around planning, this will contribute to providing depth and challenge in children's learning and development. To support staff, we signposted the service to the Care Inspectorate 'Growing my potential' and 'The voice of the infant' best practice guidelines. **(See Area for improvement 2)**

Some staff had a good understanding of child development and play, they skilfully used this to provide quality interactions, play and learning experiences. Children benefitted from daily opportunities to develop their language, literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Books, songs, rhymes and stories were enhanced with the use of props and visuals. Observations of children's learning was recorded on 'blossom' an online app. Some observations captured children's learning and progress. We discussed with the service reviewing observations to ensure children's learning, progress and next steps are recorded. This will ensure children are supported to achieve their full potential. A few parents shared with us they would like to see more photos and updates on the blossom app. Other comments included, "My child is always happy when I pick them up and tells me how much fun they have had" whilst another said, "My child is happy and well cared for".

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children receive consistent individualised care and support, information gathered about children, should be used to develop appropriate strategies to meet children's needs and support developmental progress. These strategies should be shared with all staff to ensure a consistent approach to care and support.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

2. To support children's learning and development, the manager and staff should ensure children experience high quality interactions, play and learning.

This should include but not but not limited to, ensuring staff are knowledgeable and trained in using effective commenting and questioning to scaffold learning and extend children's thinking. Whilst ensuring high quality observations and next steps are recorded to support children's learning, development and progress.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling' (HSCS 1.30); and

'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator 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 setting was clean, comfortable, warm and inviting. Decoration and high-quality furniture created inviting environments for children to play, rest and relax. Spaces and equipment, such as mats, sheets and blankets, supported children's individual sleep routines. Children's sleep monitoring sheets were in place and up to date. This contributed to an overall calm, safe nurturing environment. Small touches, such as children's all about me books and visuals for daily routines, developed children's sense of belonging, whilst supporting children's literacy and independence. This contributed to children feeling that they mattered.

Both Indoor and outdoor environments were developmentally appropriate spaces. The well-resourced playroom provided opportunities for children to explore, create, transport, build and develop motor skills. For example, the block play space and sensory area provided children with opportunities to develop their current interests, imagination and curiosity. Large glass open doors provided plenty of natural light and ventilation indoors. Children had fun as they moved freely between the playroom and outside. Outdoors, they confidently navigated steps, an obstacle course made from large loose parts and climbed on and off of a large bucket swing. Opportunities for children to explore their natural environment, develop their current interests and choices, resulted in confidence and enhanced wellbeing. Parents were positive about the overall environment, comments included, "They love being able to go out to play with the bike and swing" another said, "they can come in and out as they please which is amazing as they love the outdoors and is safe".

The setting was safe, secure and well maintained. The service had systems in place for reporting and maintaining provision and overall environment. A secure video entry system ensured children's safety. Staff worked together and procedures were in place to ensure children were always accounted for. Boundary fencing in the garden, high handles on doors and the number of staff available meant children's safety was promoted. Parents were positive about the safety of their children, feedback included, "Staff are very attentive" and "Children are watched very well". Daily procedures were in place to identify and remove risks across the environment. This ensured broken and damaged equipment, resources and furniture, were removed to ensure children's safety.

Good infection prevention and control was in place, children were familiar with handwashing and nappy changing routines, staff washed their hands throughout the day. Surfaces and areas, such as the kitchen, toilets and nappy changing room, were clean and well maintained with appropriate storage in place. The overall environment was clean and tidy, as a result, children were kept safe and secure. Children's information was available to staff and key confidential information was kept in a locked filing cabinet in the main office. This ensured the safety of children's confidential information.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator 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 are led well

The service is part of Midlothian Sure Start. They aim to build the foundations for a happy childhood that serves a lifetime. The vision, values and aims of the service reflected the aspirations of children, families, partners and the wider community. The service provided a range of support and signposting for local families, this included financial advice, community pantry and breastfeeding groups. Whilst perinatal classes were held in the family room delivered by health professionals. This sent a supportive and welcoming message to parents. Parents were positive about the support provided by the service. Their comments included, "They go above and beyond" and "The staff truly care about the children" and "There are lots of different groups to attend". Trusting caring relationships had been developed, contributing to positive outcomes for all.

Children and families were involved in ongoing feedback which informed some improvement and development of the service. Children's views were sought throughout their daily experiences. This was visible in displays, observations and planning. Parents were encouraged to feedback in a variety of ways. These included, survey monkey, stay and play and family group work feedback. A parent commented, "Staff are very approachable; I feel like I can say what I'm thinking". The service used feedback to develop group sessions and support individual children and their families. However, there was limited meaningful evidence of this driving service improvements forward. The service could review their improvement plan with staff, children and families and use feedback to inform improvements. This will ensure children and families are meaningfully involved in ongoing development and improvements of the service.

Quality assurance processes and improvement plans were in place. However, organisational leadership changes resulted in new roles and responsibilities for some staff, whilst ongoing management absence contributed to the service going through a period of change and uncertainty. Although quality assurance processes were in place, improvement plans were yet to be reviewed and there was limited meaningful evidence of the impact. The area manager and the early years support teacher shared ongoing improvement priorities. These included, developing high quality observations and interactions, these aligned with the introduction of 'planning in the moment'. We observed these were in the early stages, whilst staff will benefit from leadership support to fully embed these into practice. The leadership team could continuously review improvement plans and evidence the impact on children's outcomes, whilst supporting staff to build on their strengths using current research and best practice guidance. This will ensure children and families reach their full potential.

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where the strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Parents were positive about the level of staffing and the care children were provided. A parent commented, "There is always staff outside and inside, the children are watched very well". Although parents were positive and enough staff were available across the day to ensure children's safety, the approach to staffing was not always outcome focused. The service had gone through a period of change. Management absence created uncertainty. Arrangements in place for management absence and deployment of staff did not always consider the skill mix of the team and the overall impact to children's outcomes. The playroom leader was part of core daily staffing - limiting time to reflect, mentor and support less experienced staff to develop and build their knowledge and skills. This meant that children did not always experience high quality care and support from knowledgeable, trained and skilled staff. **(See Area for improvement 1)**

Staff communicated with each other when tasks took them away from their responsibilities, ensuring children's safety. However, the deployment of staff at busier times in the day did not fully support consistent interactions, learning and development. Staff changes and the skill mix of staff resulted in disruption to children's routines and daily interactions. For example, over lunchtime the deployment of staff could have been better planned for. Some staff were unfamiliar with the children's routines. This meant, at times staff became task focused, limiting children's engagement and independence in their daily routines. Consequently, children did not always experience consistency and continuity.

Some staff were qualified with a range of strengths and experience. A training calendar was in place to support ongoing continuing learning and professional development. Staff commented that training, "helped me understand when to step back and allow the child to investigate or develop on their own" another said, "helped me respond to the children and helped to improve my practice". Staff were supported to access high quality training, for example, some staff had undertaken training in 'Henry' (Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young). The training programme provided staff with the knowledge and skills in healthy eating and the benefits of physical exercise, whilst promoting emotional wellbeing to support families. Although there was a good training calendar in place the impact of staff training is limited due to the current ongoing staffing absence.

Staff wellbeing was supported through incentives and support packages such as, mentoring and an 'employee assistance programme' offering a free and confidential helpline with 24-hour support. Regular meetings and small touches included, tea, coffee and a selection of goodies were available in the comfortable staff room. The area manager was in based in the service one day per week and available by phone at other times, as were other centre managers. Staff were positive about the support they received. They told us, "I know if there is anything I need support with there is always someone I can contact" and "we have regular catch-up meetings". This contributed to the staff team feeling supported and valued in a time of change and uncertainty, contributing to positive staff wellbeing.

Areas for improvement

1.
For children to experience high quality care and support to meet their needs, the provider should ensure that long term staff absence is planned for and staff deployment considers staff's knowledge, skills and experience.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27); and

'I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency and continuity' (HSCS 4.16).

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?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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