

# Thrive Childcare and Education Dunblane Nature Kindergarten Day Care of Children

Ramoyle  
Dunblane  
FK15 0BD

Telephone: 01786 821 950

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
13 June 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Thrive Childcare and Education  
Limited

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002955

**Service no:**  
CS2007167757

## About the service

Thrive Childcare and Education Dunblane Nature Kindergarten is registered to provide a care service to a total of 83 children at any one time aged from birth to primary school age; of whom 19 are aged under 2 years; of whom 15 are aged from 2 - 3 years; of whom 29 are aged from 3 years to primary school entry and; of whom 20 are of primary school age children.

The service is located within a residential area of Dunblane, Stirlingshire and is close to schools, parks, woodlands and other amenities.

Children receive care in two separate buildings within the same grounds. Children aged two to five years are accommodated in one building and school aged children in the other. Babies are cared for across both buildings in two separate playrooms. All children have access to gardens that surround the premises.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 11 and 13 June 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 using the service and received feedback from 17 of their family members spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

## Key messages

- Children experienced warm and caring interactions, helping them to feel loved, safe and secure.
- Staff took time to get to know families and children and knew their needs well.
- Personal plans had been developed and contained important information about children care. Plans should now be developed consistently for older children.
- Children's wellbeing, learning and physical skills were supported through regular outdoor play and visits to local woodlands.
- Play experiences provided opportunities for children to be curious, creative and imaginative.
- Approaches to self-evaluation were in the early stages and have contributed to the development of play spaces. This should now be embedded to support a culture of continuous improvements.
- The number of babies attending the service had increased. Leaders should continue to review the provision for babies to support their care, play experiences and wellbeing.
- Some areas would benefit from more attention to help prevent the potential spread prevention of infection.

## 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.

Children received nurturing care and support from staff that took time to get to know their needs. This helped children feel loved, safe and secure. One parent told us, "the staff, they are caring and supportive. They provide updates during the day and a thorough update on pick up. I always come away knowing my [child] has been well looked after and had a positive experience."

Children received cuddles and comfort when needed. Staff were responsive to their cues and recognised when children needed support. For example, if they were tired or if they had hurt themselves when playing. They offered this in a sensitive way ensuring children were respected and their voices heard.

Personal plans in place for most children gathered important information to help meet their needs. For example, information to support their emotional wellbeing and medical needs. Plans for school age children were still being developed to ensure children can be more involved in creating their plans. Leaders should review plans to ensure they are developed consistently across the service.

Families were welcomed into the service helping to sustain positive relationships and connections between staff and children. Parents commented positively about the care their child received. They told us, "my child has settled into the service and the staff are always very friendly and welcoming" and "the staff are lovely and genuinely care about the children."

Overall, children experienced relaxing and sociable mealtimes. Older children had a rolling lunch which meant they came for lunch when they were ready, which supported their choices and wishes. Staff sat with children and engaged in conversations, promoting their language development. Children developed independence as they were encouraged to serve their own meals and drinks. Recent changes to catering arrangements meant that meals were temporarily provided from an external caterer. Whilst meals were nutritious, children were getting used to the different menu. The service were currently recruiting a new chef to help ensure consistency and familiarity for children, supporting their preferences.

Staff were familiar with children's sleep routines and recognised when they required additional or earlier naps. This meant that children were able to sleep in response to their individual needs, contributing to their overall wellbeing.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

Children benefitted from a wide variety of open-ended materials and natural resources to support their curiosity and problem solving. For example, sand, mud kitchen and large tunnels. One parent told us, "I think the different types of play and setting that's been explained to me, that are available to my child is so varied, I'm always amazed how many ideas they have and how wide the variation the learning and play settings my child gets" and "the kids have open access to the outdoors and there are many open ended opportunities for play, including a mud kitchen, things to climb, and lots of odds and ends for imaginative play. They often get involved in making a fire and cooking with it, which sounds absolutely lovely!"

Children had daily opportunities to play and explore in the surrounding garden areas, which promoted their physical development and wellbeing. Families told us that outdoor play was a strength of the service and this reflected their ethos. Children told us they enjoyed playing outdoors. One child told us, "I like playing outside and getting messy with paint." School aged children enjoyed stopping off to play physical games at local green space after school. Children told us, "we like to play hide and seek" and "it's really great, I love it garden area."

Children enjoyed regular visits to nearby woodland areas as part of the forest school approach. A dedicated staff member led on these opportunities, supported by other staff, to encourage children to explore and learn about the world around them. This generated enthusiasm about plants and wildlife, which encouraged children to develop an appreciation for nature. Children enjoyed planting, identifying insects and were learning about pond life. Some parents told us about the benefits of the woodland experiences. Comments included, "the nursery provides forest school sessions which my child absolutely loves. They have a strong outdoor focus" and "I love how they go outdoors often regardless of the weather. I know when there are lots of messy clothes in the bag it means [they] have had a great day!"

Babies' sensory skills were developed as they explored a wide variety of play materials, helping them build connections in their brains. Resources such as, mirrors, balls, ribbons and musical instruments promoted children's interest, encouraging them to explore and discover. Leaders were in the early stages of developing an additional play space for babies and had plans to improve outdoor play opportunities.

Meaningful opportunities for developing literacy skills were evident across the setting. For example, many areas for drawing, painting and using chalk. In addition, a wide variety of books available to children helped support their interest in stories and finding factual information to extend their knowledge. This encouraged them to develop an understanding of print in a variety of contexts. As a result, children were making good progress in early writing skills. One child eagerly showed us their drawings of monsters.

Approaches to planning had been recently developed and this supported staff to extend children ideas and interests. Staff used skilful interactions to help children extend their thinking and solve problems. Whilst this had a positive impact, it was in the early stages. Staff should work together to become more familiar across the setting.

## 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.

Children were cared for in play spaces that were bright and well ventilated. All children had dedicated space to store their personal belongings, helping them feel like they matter. Children accessed their belongings when needed to and when getting dressed for outdoor play. This supported them to be independent.

The use of soft furnishings helped create cosy spaces for children to relax and chill out. For example, bean bags, sofa, rocking chairs and book areas. This helped support children's emotional development.

Most children had free flow access to the garden area supporting their choices and independence. Most babies had access to a small decking area and at times the larger garden. The manager shared plans to develop and extend outdoor space for babies. This included maximising the quality of children's play through increasing the variety of toys and materials. We agreed this would support their development and provide a safe space for them to play and learn.

Indoor play spaces provided a curious environment for children with age appropriate resources to meet needs and interests. For example, arts and craft, small world, construction and playdough. One parent told us they liked "the creative play indoors and in the forest." We discussed that consideration could be given to increasing some materials in the garden area to support exploration in the sand pit and mud kitchen. For example, more utensils for digging, mixing, stirring and measuring.

Safety measures had improved since the last inspection and a variety of measures were in place that contributed to children's safety. This included a secure entrance, detailed risk assessments and supervision of play spaces. In addition, the garden areas had been developed and reorganised, to help ensure children could take positive risks to support their confidence and self-esteem.

Some infection control practices prevented the spread of infection. For example, children and staff washed their hands regularly throughout the day. However, some areas would benefit from more robust cleaning procedures. For example, flooring in the changing area and regular cleaning of soft furnishings. An area for improvement was made at the last inspection in relation to safety and infection control. We have re-worded this to reflect progress that has been made (see area for improvement 1).

## Areas for improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing and to ensure they experience care in a clean and comfortable environment, the provider should ensure robust measures are in place for cleaning and maintaining play spaces and materials.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.' (HSCS 5.24).

## 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 are led well.

The service had a clear vision in place that reflected the aspiration of children and families. This included embedding the use of natural and real materials to support children's curiosity and opportunities for experiencing risky play. Many parents told us they were happy with the time children had to spend outdoors and comments included, "the team genuinely care about the children and, as a result, the children are genuinely fond of the team. I also like the time dedicated to outdoor play to develop the children's knowledge of nature" and "I love seeing my child outside when I pick them up. It seems whenever there's a chance they are always outside and I really appreciate that."

Leaders were committed to securing positive outcomes for children and families and they welcomed feedback throughout the inspection process to support improvements. Recent developments within the service had contributed to the development of garden spaces. Leaders were in the early stages of using improvement tools to support staff to trial changes, evaluate the service and identify areas for improvement. They should continue to develop systems to help staff reflect on practice, to promote positive outcomes for children and families.

The service communicated with families through a variety of ways. This included informal chats at drop off and pick up's, newsletters and online platforms. Families' views about the quality of communication from the service was varied. Some families were happy with the information they received, however, a few families told us they would like more communication about their child's day. We discussed this with the manager and they had identified they needed to improve their online systems to support this process.

Monitoring and auditing systems in place had contributed to improving the safety and play experiences for children. This included, thorough risk assessments, review of play spaces and monitoring of staff practice. The manager should continue to ensure monitoring of the service leads to positive changes.

### 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.

Children were cared for by friendly, caring and nurturing staff, who had developed meaningful relationships with families. This helped create a positive and welcoming ethos and supported children to feel safe. Most parents commented positively about the relationships and care provided by staff. They described them as "caring", "friendly", "welcoming" and "loving."

Staff worked well together and they had developed positive relationships with each other. They communicated well throughout the day to share important information to meet children's needs. One parent told us, "staff know the kids well and are very patient and caring."

Recruitment of additional staff since the last inspection helped ensure there were enough staff to meet children's needs. In addition, this meant that there were regular opportunities for children to access trips in the local community and woodland area. Staff were relaxed and had time to spend playing and engaging with children, which supported their wellbeing. However, we discussed that routines at the end of the day could be reviewed to further support positive transitions and improve communication with families.

Recent changes to the baby room provided opportunities for younger babies to receive care and attention, supporting them to build positive attachments whilst settling in the environment. Older babies had opportunities to explore new play spaces with the support from familiar staff. Plans were in place to review keyworker systems to take account of the increased numbers of babies. This was in the early stages and we discussed the importance of sharing this information with families.

Staff had participated in some training to help keep children safe. For example, child protection and first aid. Further opportunities to develop staff skills included brain development and supporting children regulate their emotions. This supported staff to plan for children needs. Moving forward the service should continue to identify opportunities for learning to support staff in their role.

## 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 are protected from harm, the manager and provider should make sure that children receive care in a safe and clean environment.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'my environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19) and 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24).

**This area for improvement was made on 26 July 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Thorough risk assessments were in place contributing to a safe environment for children. Staff supervised children during play and supported them to be aware of risks. Some monitoring and cleaning checklists supported a clean environment for children. However, some areas needed more attention to help prevent the potential spread of infection. **Therefore, we have reworded this area for improvement to reflect the progress made.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure that children experience consistently positive outcomes, the provider and manager should make sure that quality assurance and monitoring processes lead to sustained 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) and 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

**This area for improvement was made on 26 July 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Leaders had developed improvement plans and quality assurance systems that supported monitoring and auditing of the service. This had contributed to improving children's safety and developing the garden and play spaces. This should continue to be embedded to help support continuous improvements. **Therefore, this area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure that children receive consistently good care, the provider should ensure that staff are deployed in a way that meets children's needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: '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 26 July 2023.

#### Action taken since then

Additional staff had been recruited and they were deployment effectively to meet children needs. Staff practice was monitored and they had opportunities for training to support them in their role. **Therefore, 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                     | 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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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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