

Stramash Outdoor Nursery Day Care of Children

Hilltops
Ganavan Road
Oban
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Telephone: 01631 566 080

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 June 2024

Service provided by:
Stramash Social Enterprise

Service provider number:
SP2011011702

Service no:
CS2011301594

About the service

Stramash Outdoor Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children at any one time, where no more than 40 are aged three years to those not yet attending primary school and no more than seven are attending primary school.

Stramash Outdoor Nursery is a daycare of children service. The service operates from a woodland site, on a hillside and lower field near Ganavan, close to Oban. Two huts on the woodland site provide warmth and shelter and an indoor space for the children to enjoy a range of different activities. The service operates throughout the year.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 3 June 2024 to Wednesday 5 June 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector 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.
- Reviewed parental responses to an online questionnaire.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing care and support.
- Children enjoyed the space to play and have fun with their friends.
- The service communicated and engaged well with families and worked collaboratively with them and other professionals who may be involved in a child's care and support.
- Work had began to improve the quality of the information recorded in personal plans including meaningful observations and next steps.
- Children enjoyed relaxed, unhurried, sociable snack and meal times.
- There were appropriate numbers of staff working at all times to support the individual needs of children and the layout of the environment.
- Substantial work had been completed to ensure the setting was safe, secure and well-maintained.
- There was a full risk assessment in place for the setting which was routinely reviewed and updated to support children's safety and wellbeing.
- Quality assurance processes need to be embedded to secure sustained improvements across 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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
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?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, active and having fun with their peers on the days of inspection. Natural friendships had formed between children in the nursery supported by staff. We observed children being caring and inclusive in their play with each other. Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. We observed positive interactions, and appropriate cuddles and comfort offered when needed. Staff had established secure and respectful relationships with children, which contributed to them feeling safe and secure. Feedback from parents supported this. Comments made included, 'I feel like the staff really care about my child as an individual', and 'The staff have created a lovely warm and nurturing environment. They show genuine care and interest in all of the children and take time to form strong bonds with the children and their families.'

Staff chatted with parents when they dropped off and collected their children. This helped staff to build relationships and keep up to date with the children and the families needs. However, some of the feedback we got from parents told us they would like more information about their child's day and their experiences while at nursery.

Staff knew the care and support needs, preferences and routines for the majority of the children attending. They were able to confidently tell us about the needs of individual children. Following the inspection in June 2023, a requirement was made in relation to the development and use of written personal plans for each child. As part of this inspection we sampled a number of personal plans. It was not always clear whether children had made any progression and whether next steps had been identified. There was also no record of when reviews were taking place. A number of parents highlighted that they were not involved in their child's personal plan or it's review. Some parents would welcome greater involvement and more information about their child's progression and learning. The requirement will therefore be continued. We signposted the manager to a guide for providers on personal planning, to support the development of personal plans to ensure strategies for care and support were captured clearly and targets and next steps identified. This would ensure children receive consistent care that is right for them.

Children enjoyed calm, relaxed, unhurried rolling snack and lunch times. They were able to have snack and lunch at a pace which was right for them. We saw that staff and children sat together during lunch. The children enjoyed their lunch and the opportunity to chat to each other. Staff praised and encouraged the children as they ate and were on hand to help them as needed. Lunch was a sociable experience where the children were able to develop their independence and social skills.

There were sleep mats available for children to access to allow them to comfortably rest and relax in designated areas within both the lower field and the upper area of the site. We observed children resting in one of the bell tents in the lower field where they were protected from the weather. Resting and sleeping children were supervised appropriately with regular checks being completed by staff.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

We observed children having fun and who were engaged in their play in a purposeful and meaningful way. We also saw some examples of staff effectively extending and building on children's play and learning. However, we identified missed opportunities where skilled intervention and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills, and promote development of imagination.

On several occasions we observed children who were not being sufficiently stimulated or challenged. An area for improvement made following the full inspection in June 2023 identified the need to extend the range of resources accessible to the children to promote their continued learning, development and enjoyment. We acknowledged that some improvements had been made to the setting. For example, there was structures and resources which supported the development of children's gross motor skills. However, children would benefit from additional quality resources being made readily available to encourage their imaginative play, spark curiosity and increase the opportunities to extend and consolidate their learning through play. A review of resources available should be carried out to ensure that there is sufficient breadth and balance of resources including loose parts, natural and open-ended resources available to enrich children's experiences. Language and numeracy opportunities could also be developed further across the nursery. The setting should be inviting to children, provide opportunities to interact with print, text and numbers and ensure that they are challenged at the appropriate level for their stage of development and learning.

We recognised some quality play, learning and development was taking place. However, there was scope to continue to develop the quality of written observations of children's experiences to ensure they were evaluative and focus on children's learning. Quality observations were not routinely being completed. Many contained only limited evaluation of children's progression and achievements. As a consequence, information was not effectively being used by staff to plan appropriately to meet children's individual needs, show progression in learning and identify next steps. The manager and senior staff should continue to support all staff to develop their skills and understanding in relation to monitoring and tracking children's learning and progress. This would add value to the children's experience and ensure they are fully supported and challenged.

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities.

Following the previous inspections, substantial work had been completed to ensure that the site used by the children was safe and secure. Ensuring the safety of the children while in their care was a priority for the management team and all the staff. Parents recognised and appreciated the work which had taken place over the last 12 months. Comments made included 'The nursery has added lots of new things to play on and has really put a lot into developing the bottom field', 'In the last few months it seems Stramash has been offering more and more varied play experiences', 'The nursery has added lots of new things to play on and has really put a lot into developing the bottom field', 'the improvements which have been made have been strong and impactful' and 'Adam and the staff have all worked so hard over the last few months and we have seen massive improvements'.

There was a maintenance calendar in place, a system to report any repairs and damaged items were removed. Daily checks of the site were completed prior to children arriving. Staff had completed risk assessment training and risk assessment and health and safety were standing items on the agenda for staff meetings. There were risk assessments in place which were regularly reviewed.

The service had recently erected two large bell tents in the lower field to provide children with protection from both the sun and the rain. We discussed with the manager, the need to put in place risk assessments for the tents. These risk assessments should, as a minimum, include the location of the tents in relation to other resources and the identification of any potential risks, for example, the guy ropes as trip hazards.

There was a range of large structures within the field which offered children opportunities to develop and extend their gross motor and problem solving skills. Children were also learning the skills of risk assessment to keep themselves and their friends safe. For example, there was a climbing frame with monkey bars which was particularly popular with many of the children. Children also enjoyed being able to climb a tree and take turns on the various swings hanging from it.

As stated previously, the range of loose parts and open ended resources which would support the development of fine motor skills, numeracy, literacy and language was limited. During the inspection we talked with both the management team and staff as to how they might introduce a range of rich and stimulating play resources to support and develop children's learning. Consideration should be given to how and where to store resources to ensure they were protected from the elements whilst also allowing children to independently access them.

Since the last full inspection, new nappy changing facilities had been constructed in the lower field. These provided children with a warm and comfortable space for their personal care and supported their privacy and dignity. Toilet facilities had also been increased to ensure that they met the recommended number of toilets for the number of children attending.

Appropriate infection prevention and control practices were in place and minimised the spread of infection. For example, in the areas used for serving food, staff followed best practice guidance and carried out effective cleaning of tables before and after children ate. We observed children being supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing at appropriate times during the day.

Children's safety was well managed as staff were attentive and alert to children's movements. Tools such as updated registers, regular headcounts and good use of walkie talkies by staff helped children to move safely around the setting. Children's security and safety was respected because of the measures in place.

Effective arrangements were in place to ensure children and families' personal information was stored securely. Paperwork was stored securely within locked cupboards. This ensured confidentiality was maintained and complied with best practice guidance.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this quality indicator, as several important strengths taken together just outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The manager and staff fully engaged in the inspection process and took on board the advice and support offered and appreciated the signposting to various websites and best practice offered. They demonstrated their commitment to the service and were motivated to make improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children. This was highlighted by the improvements which had been put in place since the previous inspection. At the time of the inspection, the manager had been in post for approximately eight months. They were beginning to lay foundations and were knowledgeable about aspects of the service which required improvement.

Following the inspection in June 2023, a requirement was made in relation to developing and implementing effective systems of quality assurance. Although some progress had been made to meet this requirement, work was still needed to implement and fully embed a robust system of quality assurance. The requirement will therefore be reinstated with a new timescale.

For the last year, the improvement plan for the service had been focussed on meeting the requirements and areas for improvement identified following the previous inspection. Significant work had been completed to meet the priority action points around the site, its safety and the resources and experiences available to the children. We discussed with the manager the development of the current improvement plan for the service and the identification of priority action points. All relevant stakeholders, including children, their families and staff, should be actively involved in the process of identifying the priorities. This would allow them to feel included and to show that their feedback was valued.

We discussed with the manager the importance of using self-evaluation tools robustly and routinely to support the ongoing improvement of the service. More thorough and formal monitoring and auditing should be carried out to support evaluation and improvement. Routine auditing should include detailed audits of accident and incidents to minimise risk, regular audits of the administration of medication records to ensure policy and procedures are being followed and the regular audit of personal plans to ensure children's wellbeing and individual needs are known and being supported. Monitoring of the nursery, including the environment and staff practice should continue to evolve with a focus on improvements and enhancing outcomes for children.

Some monitoring of staff practice had taken place, however, this was not robust enough to secure progression. Support and supervision arrangements were still in the early stages and staff appraisals were to be completed. This did not ensure that individual staff were supported to identify their strengths and learning needs. The manager acknowledged the need to establish a more formal system to monitor staff practice and to provide effective support and supervision for each individual staff member.

The manager recognised the value of staff routinely coming together and there were now regular full staff meetings. These offered the opportunity for the manager and staff to reflect on their practice, identifying what they do well for children in their care and highlight areas for development across the service. Staff were positive in their feedback about these meetings and the opportunity offered to them to be involved in the ongoing evaluation and development of the service.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.3 Staff deployment.

Children benefited from a caring and nurturing staff team who were enthusiastic and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. Staff were warm, friendly and responsive in their approach and demonstrated positive team working, which promoted a happy and secure environment for children. They modelled positive social interactions, both verbal and nonverbal, supporting children to develop an understanding of relationships.

The manager recognised that continuity of care was important to ensure high quality outcomes for children and took this into account when deploying staff. Busier times of the day, such as mealtimes or drop off and pick up times, were identified and planned for. Staff were flexible and breaks were planned to minimise the impact on children whilst making sure that staff had time to rest.

Staff were appropriately deployed throughout the day and worked well together to ensure that they were available to support children across the setting. Good use was being made of walkie talkies to support effective communication between staff. Staff communicated when a task took them away from an area, for example when they had to support children with personal care and accessing toilet facilities.

There was an induction programme in place which supported new members of staff and helped them to feel welcome and valued in the team. Staff shared with us this involved a tour of the setting and reading the service's policies and procedures. An informal system of mentoring for newer staff involved senior staff checking in with them at the end of the week. We discussed with the management introducing a more formal mentoring and support system and making greater use of good practice guidance including 'Early Learning and Childcare - The National Induction Resource' to support new staff in their role and understand the expectations placed upon them.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 18 August 2023, the provider must ensure children's care, welfare and development needs are met by developing children's personal plans and ensuring staff use this information effectively. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure that:

- a) Personal plans reflect children's current needs and outline how staff will meet the children's health, welfare and safety needs.
- b) Personal plans are reviewed, in conjunction with parents, at least every six months or sooner depending on the individual needs of the child.
- c) Assessments of risk, when required, are developed and routinely reviewed.
- d) Strategies of support for individual children are developed and implemented by staff.
- e) All staff have an appropriate understanding of each child's current needs and use this knowledge to fully meet them.

This is to comply with Regulations 5(2)(a) and (b) (Personal Plans) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states 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) and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This requirement was made on 2 June 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

As part of this inspection we looked at a sample of personal plans. Although some improvements had been made, children's overall wellbeing was not supported through effective use of personal planning. Parents commented that they were not routinely involved in the development and the review of their child's personal plan.

It was not always clear if children had made any progression and whether next steps had been met. The service should ensure that personal plans are routinely reviewed, kept up to date and reflect children's current needs, wishes and choices.

This requirement was not met and will be reinstated with a new timescale of 1st October 2024.

Not met

Requirement 2

By 18 August 2023, the provider must ensure improved practice and outcomes for children by implementing effective systems of quality assurance. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- a) The management team are supported to be able to undertake effective quality assurance.
- b) Staff are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding around self evaluation processes and are involved in the systematic evaluation of their work and the work of the service.
- c) Clear and effective plans are in place for maintaining and improving the service.
- d) Regular and effective support and supervision for all staff is implemented.
- e) The management team effectively monitors the work of each member of staff and the service as a whole.
- f) Clear systems are in place for children and their families to provide feedback and to be actively involved in the evaluation of the service provided.

This is to comply with Regulation 3 Principles and Regulation 15 (a) and (b) Staffing of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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

This requirement was made on 2 June 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

A change of manager and changes to the staff team had impacted on the introduction and implementation of effective systems of quality assurance.

Further time was required for the systems of quality assurance to be fully embedded and for improvements to the service to continue to impact positively on outcomes for children.

Further detail about the progress made can be found under – Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

This requirement was not met and will be reinstated with a new timescale of 1st October 2024.

Not met

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 promote children's continued learning, development and enjoyment, children should have access to a wide range of resources and experiences which are challenging and suitable to their individual interests and stages of development. There should be a sufficient amount of resources to enable children to make independent choices and engage in deep and meaningful play.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 2 June 2023.

Action taken since then

The manager and staff had continued to review and develop the range of resources available to children. They had introduced several larger resources and structures which predominantly supported the development of children's gross motor skills.

The manager and staff should now consider the introduction of more varied resources including maths materials, resources supporting language and literacy skills and fine motor materials. Consideration should be given to the storage of these resources to allow ready access by children.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children to achieve, the provider should improve the approach and skills of staff in relation to planning for children's learning and tracking and monitoring their progress. Staff should be supported to develop their understanding of how to effectively observe and assess children's learning in order to plan quality learning experiences and meaningful next steps.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

This area for improvement was made on 2 June 2023.

Action taken since then

The manager advised that staff had completed some training in relation to completing observations and senior staff were responsible for the monitoring of personal plans, observations and next steps.

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a sample of children's personal plans, observations and next steps. We found that quality observations were not routinely being completed. Many contained only limited evaluation of children's progression and achievements, and did not include next steps.

The manager and senior staff should continue to support all staff to develop their skills and understanding in relation to monitoring and tracking children's learning and progress. This would add value to the children's experience and ensure they are fully supported and challenged.

Comments from parents highlighted that they would appreciate more detailed feedback about their child's learning and development on a regular basis.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's play and learning staff should:

- a) Further develop their knowledge and understanding of child development, relevant theory and practice.
- b) Continue to build as a team on their experience and expertise to fully meet children's needs through high quality interactions, extending children's thinking and widening their skills to support them in developing their curiosity, creativity and leading on their play and learning.

This is to ensure care, play and learning is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 29 September 2022.

Action taken since then

Since the inspection in June 2023 there had been a change of manager as well as several changes of staff. This had impacted on the Area for Improvement being met.

Although we observed some examples of staff effectively extending and building on children's play and learning, we also saw missed opportunities where skilled intervention and effective questioning could have further extended children's curiosity, problem-solving skills, and promote development of imagination.

Further time is needed for all staff to become confident in meeting children's needs and extending their play and learning through high quality interactions.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

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?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	3 - Adequate
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
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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