

Thrive Childcare and Education Musselburgh Nature Kindergarten Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
24 May 2024

Service provided by:
Thrive Childcare and Education
Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003002955

Service no:
CS2015338420

About the service

Thrive Childcare and Education Musselburgh Nature Kindergarten provides a daycare of children service to a maximum of 100 children not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is close to local transport links, community services and outdoor spaces.

The service has a number of playrooms located on the ground floor. During this inspection, children did not use the top floor of the building. The large back garden is separated into two play spaces for both older children and children aged two to three. Children from each playroom have their own section to use. Babies have their own garden, which is accessed directly from their playroom. Throughout the service, there are toilets and changing facilities. Other areas include offices, the kitchen and staff facilities across two levels.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 21 from 09:10 until 18:10 and Wednesday 22 May 2024 from 09:10 until 18:15. We spoke with one of the staff team by telephone on Thursday 23 May. 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 the children using the service and received feedback from 38 of their families
- spoke with eight staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Children had positive relationships with the staff caring for them.

Children enjoyed a rich variety of outdoor play experiences including visits to local resources supporting them to learn about their local community and nature.

Staff deployment should be reviewed to ensure that children have consistently high quality experiences.

There are a number of areas for improvement from previous inspections which need to be addressed to support more positive outcomes for the children.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
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?

3 - Adequate

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff were warm and kind in their interactions. When children looked for support after hurting themselves or having disagreements with peers this was handled sensitively. Staff showed care for the children and helped them to feel valued. One parent said: "We get a sense (our child) feels happy -its welcoming. Relationships staff have with children is a real strength."

Interactions throughout the nursery could be further enhanced using symbols in the environment and consideration of hand signing. This could support effective communication, empowering children to have their voice heard.

Children enjoyed some story times reading fiction and relaxing in the story corner. Children also enjoyed sharing some books about nature, which helped them to revisit recent outings to see birds at the beach. The children would benefit from staff being able to support their interest in stories more throughout the day.

Children were supported sensitively with toilet training and accidents on the whole. Staff need to be mindful of children's stage of development when supporting them with personal care. For example making use of changing stations where children were using nappies to support their privacy and keeping spare underwear for children having accidents to avoid using pull-ups when they were past this stage of toilet training.

Staff told us about new strategies for transitions between rooms for children starting in new rooms. This included better communication between the rooms and support visits with current and new key workers helping children to feel safe. The area for improvement made at a previous inspection had been met as this was focused on transitions between rooms. There was still room to improve transitions into the nursery from home through personal planning.

'All about me sheets' had been completed for children recently. It was not always clear how this information, gathered from families, was being used to meet children's needs in the nursery. We saw information about children's experiences for the day being shared with families helping to provide consistency of care. Children's learning journals were not consistently completed and it was not easy to see how they were achieving as learners. Overall, personal planning needs work to ensure that it is being used effectively to meet individual needs and supporting individual development consistently across the nursery. There was an area for improvement at the last inspection and this will be repeated in this report. See area for improvement 3 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' below.

Where children had identified medical needs we saw that they had separate care plans to support the administration of medication. These were not always completed in line with current best practice. Work should be done to improve the records of actions to take in an emergency to keep children safe. There was an area for improvement made at a previous inspection and this will be repeated in this report. See area for improvement 4 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' below.

Children enjoyed most of the meals and in some rooms were supported to be independent and learn new skills. We saw some interactions with staff which supported children to have a positive social experience. Parents raised their concerns about the quality and size of meals. The service had reviewed them to provide a second afternoon snack. However, we did not see this working well for children with the additional disruptions to their play and small portion sizes. This should now be reviewed to ensure that it supports children to have positive mealtimes and a varied and balanced diet. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection which has not been fully addressed and is repeated in this report. See area for improvement 2 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' below.

The staff we spoke with about Child Protection were aware of their role in protecting children. A recent incident highlighted that some staff need more support to identify safeguarding issues and what actions to take if they have concerns. The service shared a plan of how they would support staff to improve their knowledge and practice in this area to ensure children's safety.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

We saw children having fun engaging in a variety of play experiences which supported them to develop.

Children particularly enjoyed their time in the outdoor space in pre-school and toddlers. They had opportunities to learn new skills like climbing, balancing and swinging. Children were focused searching for minibeasts and had great success finding spiders. We saw that this was well supported by staff who had brought in resources to help them identify their 'catches' and develop a respect for nature. All children had the opportunity to spend time outdoors during the day and at times this was free flow and supportive of children leading their own learning. There should be more consideration of how this could be facilitated throughout the day to ensure that children who want to be in the outdoors can be.

Babies had an inviting garden space that sensitively supported them to explore and experience appropriate levels of challenge. Staff facilitated children learning how to assess risks for themselves through climbing on loose parts. This helped children's physical wellbeing and encouraged them to be active. Sensory experiences of sand and mud were enjoyed and gave children opportunities to scoop and transport - supporting their problem-solving skills. Further work should continue to consider other aspects of play and learning for the youngest children to help them to experience a range of play that supports their needs and developmental stage.

All children had opportunities to explore their community and natural environment in their local area. One parent commented "I think the addition of forest school/lead is a good one". Children enthusiastically shared their experiences from previous outings and the walks happening during the inspection. We saw that they shared their learning with their peers and staff on return and had brought back 'treasures' from the beach. This included sea creatures and shells which they showed and talked about. This was helping children to learn about where they lived and develop a respect for nature.

Parents highlighted that they felt the resources could do with a refresh, one commented: "Update resources as some might feel a little overused and repeated." The indoor environment had a variety of opportunities however some areas could be further developed to provoke interest and curiosity. This will support children to engage in different types of play and learn new skills.

Some experiences were planned in response to children's interests for example the 'bug hunting'. These experiences were supportive of children's individual development. More could be done to ensure that

observations, planning for individual development and next steps were more meaningful and consistent across the nursery. Some parents did not feel involved in discussing their child's care play and learning. One commented: "More feedback/interaction on how child has been would be great."

We saw examples of staff using questioning effectively to promote children's curiosity and supporting their learning. This was not consistent across all experiences. Further development of staff skills in questioning could help children achieve better. The service should consider how they monitor and support the use and quality of observations as part of quality assurance and staff development.

Where additional supports for learning had been identified staff told us they discussed how they would be managed within their room. Information to meet children's individual needs had been gathered from families and professionals working with children, however, these were not being used consistently to support children to achieve. More could be done to ensure that personal planning is used effectively to support children to achieve. The area for improvement made at the last inspection has not been addressed and is repeated in this report.

See area for improvement 3 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' below.

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 setting had been repainted and the windows had been refurbished to maintain the space. This had brightened up the rooms. Rooms were well ventilated and had plenty of natural light, making them generally pleasant spaces to be in. Some areas had resources removed for maintenance and had not been made homely again. The provider should ensure that staff are supported to make the spaces more attractive, homely and comfortable, for the children, after maintenance work is finished. Staff should ensure that provocations and core resources are replenished to support children's play and learning.

A parent commented "(the) place needs to get more resources and more interesting activities where child's interest could be met, they also need a quiet corner." Staff shared how they had developed some spaces and we saw that some areas were more inviting and cosy.

During our visits some children in the pre-school room showed that they wanted to rest or sleep. There were limited spaces for children to rest and none where they could lie down flat. Staff borrowed beds from the toddler room for children to rest however there was no designated space for sleep so other children were playing around them. Sleeps were also disrupted by the opening and closing of rooms for snacks and meals. Staff should continue to develop the spaces in the playrooms for example to provide sleep and rest spaces for older children.

See area for improvement 1.

Staff told us that there were less plastic resources in the playrooms, however, they had not always been replaced and some areas lacked interest due to missing resources. The indoor spaces had some areas which were interesting and inviting, however, more work could be done to ensure that this was consistent across the nursery.

Changing spaces and toilets on the whole were clean and well maintained. We saw that staff were in place

to provide deep cleaning and support care staff with this. Maintenance records showed that appropriate areas had been identified and overall action had been taken to maintain an appropriate safe environment. For example, dealing with emergencies like blocked sinks. There were some sinks which should be highlighted for maintenance as their surrounds were becoming difficult to keep clean. Staff were using gloves and aprons when supporting children with personal care, helping to prevent the spread of infection.

We saw good support of handwashing before meals and snacks however children only wiped hands and faces clean after meals. Children should be supported to wash their hands after meals to prevent the spread of infection.

The outdoor spaces were developmentally appropriate with a good variety of play opportunities and we saw that staff used the local community to add to children's experiences. One parent commented, "Children have a great time day to day. My (child) enjoys the games, playing outdoors, being with her friends". Gardens were secure and staff were vigilant about the location of children in and outdoors through the use of walkie talkies and whiteboards. To ensure children's safety, quality assurance processes should continue to evaluate practices for safe movement throughout the nursery.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing the provider should provide opportunities for older children to rest and sleep throughout the day. This should include, but is not limited to, providing safe sleep spaces where children can lie flat and sleep without disruption at times which suit them.

This is to ensure I experience high quality care and support that is right for me, and is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice (HSCS 4.11) and 'I am recognised as an expert in my own experiences, needs and wishes (HSCS 1.9).

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Staff were clear about some of the priorities for the nursery as these were discussed at staff meetings. Staff had been included in evaluation and improvement processes through the services improvement floor books. This was leading to some progress being made. However, the pace of change was slow meaning in some areas no improvement had been made. For example mealtimes had been a focus, however there were still areas to improve in children's mealtime experiences.

The staff team were committed to providing a quality service in line with the nursery aims and handbooks. They had developed their own improvement floor books for their rooms to support them to improve the developmental play spaces. This had improved some areas, however more work was needed to ensure that this was consistent across the nursery.

Families told us that staff are "friendly and welcoming", some felt that they were kept informed about what was happening in the service and others felt that this was not happening as well for them. Some of the families who responded to our survey did not feel that they were involved in a meaningful way in the service. Four of the 38 families said that they were not satisfied overall with their child's care. One family

commented: "(They need) more resources, more non-agency based staff, better quality meals." The service could better involve families in developing the service to support them to address the areas they are unsatisfied with and improve outcomes for all children and families.

All staff told us that they felt well supported by their immediate managers on a day to day basis. They said daily check-ins helped them to feel valued and listened to. This helped to address any immediate issues in the service and keep children safe.

Improvement plans for the service are at the early stages of having an impact on children's experiences. Issues with staffing levels and deployment had impacted on the management team's time to focus on improvement work. The acting manager and new deputy had been completing audits of paperwork, systems and practice in the rooms. Staff told us they found these constructive and supportive. Some were not yet effective in picking up inconsistencies in practice for example the medication audits.

The outstanding areas for improvement and the gaps in current practice highlighted that the area for improvement made at the last inspection around quality assurance had not been fully addressed and this is repeated in this report.

See area for improvement 5 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' below.

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

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

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Some parents were not confident that there were always enough staff in the service to meet their child's needs. One commented: 'general support and supervision is lacking with the older children' another said 'they seem to be doing as best they can but it seems like there are not enough staff and they struggle to stay on top of what all the children are doing'. There were missed opportunities for staff to meet children's needs during the day. At times staff were too busy with tasks to see children wanting attention. It was clear that there were periods of the day when staff were stretched and could not spend time playing with children and supporting their learning. One parent commented 'It's chaotic at drop-off and pick-up. At times it's so loud in the room you can't hear important information'. We witnessed some busy collection periods where staff missed children's cues for attention. Background noise during some handovers was loud and would be challenging to ensure that information was shared effectively with families.

Ratios were met and at times additional staff were provided to meet additional needs however, this had not always had a positive impact on children's experiences. Children benefit from having consistent care from adults they have built positive relationships with. Managers covered regularly in rooms and the service used a high number of bank and agency staff, which meant permanent staff were further stretched. Vacancies across the nursery were impacting on how well rooms were led. The organisation is currently trying to recruit into these permanent roles. Displays shared pictures and information about staff caring for children. This helped to keep parents informed about changes to the staff team. However, parents told us that they didn't all feel that they had a strong connection to the team caring for their child. The service should continue to review how they share staffing changes with families to help them feel well informed about who is caring for their child.

We heard staff communicating with each other throughout the day to identify where children were and who was to go on a break or needed to support a child with personal care. Staff were focussed on head counting children for safety and this was difficult to manage as rooms were opened and closed for snack and mealtimes. This had an impact on children's play experiences as their play was often disrupted to allow for staff to close off areas. This meant children did not always have extended periods of play allowing them to build new skills and engage in deeper play. This could be better planned across the day to help children to access spaces safely at all times. The balance of children's needs, staff skills and levels, routines and free flowing activities needed to be reviewed to improve the children's experiences and quality interactions across the day.

See area for improvement 1.

Staff told us they were well supported by managers who checked on them throughout the day. This support to ensure that they had their breaks helped them feel valued. It gave them time to rest and recharge during their shift which was essential to their wellbeing.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to have consistently high quality experiences across the day, the provider should review the staffing levels and deployment. This should include but is not limited to, implementing staffing levels which ensure safety and wellbeing, staff skills and knowledge, room routines and individual children's needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me (HSCS 3.16) and 'I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency and continuity (HSCS 4.16).

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 support children's wellbeing, the manager and staff should ensure transition arrangements are well-planned, nurturing experiences.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure' (HSCS, 3.10) and 'I experience stability in my care and support from people who know my needs, choices and wishes, even if there are changes in the service or organisation (HSCS, 4.15).

This area for improvement was made on 26 May 2023.

Action taken since then

Better transition processes between rooms had been established. Staff had planned for individual children and gave them more time to settle. New key workers had been visiting children in their rooms and their current key worker visited their new room with them. This helped the children to feel safe during the process of moving to their new room. Links with the schools children will be attending after nursery were being established to support children moving on from the nursery. There is still work to be done with children's personal planning to support them during this process which we outline further under key question 1.

This area for improvement is **met**.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children have a positive eating experience, the provider should review and improve the mealtime experiences. This should include but not be limited to safe opportunities for children to be more independent during mealtimes, access to high quality nutritious meals and improved staff interactions that promote a calm and social experience.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I take part in daily routines, such as setting up activities and mealtimes, if this is what I want' (HSCS, 2.21) and 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS, 1.35).

This area for improvement was made on 6 July 2022.

Action taken since then

Some mealtimes gave children opportunities to be independent, like scraping their plates and pouring water, however this was not consistent across the nursery.

On one occasion children had snack with no plate, which did not reflect a respectful experience.

Mealtimes on the whole were settled but children had to wait as small sittings took place. The mealtime experiences could be further developed. Children mostly enjoyed the food, however there was limited access to fruit and vegetables during our visit. The meals should also be reviewed in line with nutritional guidance to ensure these are giving children opportunities to develop a taste for healthy foods like fruit and vegetables.

This area for improvement is **not met** and is repeated in this report.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's wellbeing, development and progress, personal planning approaches should be further developed to ensure detailed support strategies and next steps are in place and used by staff to sensitively and effectively support children.

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 area for improvement was made on 26 May 2023.

Action taken since then

Personal planning was not being used effectively to meet individual needs. Most children had new 'all about me' documents completed by parents. We could not always see how the information in these was being used to support children through their daily care consistently across the nursery. Entries in learning journals were limited and did not always show how children were progressing.

This area for improvement is **not met** and is repeated in this report.

Previous area for improvement 4

To support children's medical needs and overall health and wellbeing, the provider should review the recording systems in place for the management of medication. Systems including quality assurance processes must be robust, consistent and effective.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective' (HSCS 1.24).

This area for improvement was made on 26 May 2023.

Action taken since then

We reviewed the medication permission and administration forms across the nursery and found that many were not completed in line with current best practice guidance, for example missing dates of administration, or no strategies for dealing with emergency situations. Audits had been introduced however these were not yet effective in identifying where there were gaps in information to keep children safe.

This area for improvement is **not met** and is restated in this report.

Previous area for improvement 5

To further develop the quality of the service and enhance outcomes for children, the provider should ensure that quality assurance processes, improvement planning and self-evaluation are further developed and embedded. The processes should identify strengths and areas for improvements, with the development of clear improvement plans and monitoring to support positive outcomes for children and families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) 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 area for improvement was made on 26 May 2023.

Action taken since then

The improvement plans for the service were at the early stages of having an impact for some aspects of the work. In many areas progress was slow and not yet improving children's experiences. As detailed in this report some of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection had not yet been addressed. Monitoring had been introduced for some areas of practice. This was not yet effective in addressing inconsistencies in practice.

This area for improvement is **not met** and is repeated in this report.

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	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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