

Dalmahoy Woodland Family First Nurseries Limited

Day Care of Children

Hags Road
Kirknewton
Edinburgh
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Telephone: 07471196829

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 July 2024

Service provided by:
Family First Nurseries Limited

Service provider number:
SP2022000087

Service no:
CS2022000125

About the service

Dalmahoy Woodland Family First Nurseries Limited is an outdoor nursery registered to provide care to a maximum of 30 children aged three years to not yet attending primary school.

The service is provided from an outdoor location using the woodlands areas within the village of Kirknewton.

The manager is also the manager at The Old School House Family First Nurseries Limited.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 1 July 2024 between 09:15 and 16:30. One inspector carried out the inspection.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous assessment reports of the registration process, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service and some of their families
- considered feedback from eight families through an online form
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents relating to the care of children and the management of the service.

Key messages

- Staff were nurturing and caring which enabled positive relationships with children and their families.
- Children benefitted from relaxed, unhurried meal times which supported their independence.
- Children followed their own interests and their learning was enhanced through effective questioning from staff.
- The outdoor environment was safe and well maintained.
- The management team were dedicated to the ongoing development of the service, to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- The staff worked well together to ensure appropriate support and supervision of 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?	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 experienced warm and caring approaches from staff who knew them well. Staff listened to children and were responsive to their needs, offering comfort and reassurance when needed. This enabled children to feel valued, respected and safe. One parent commented, 'The staff are caring and trustworthy. We know all of them by name and our daughter loves them'.

Snack and mealtimes were a positive sociable experience for children. They could choose when they ate, which allowed them to enjoy uninterrupted play. Children had opportunities to develop important independence skills, such as collecting their own plates, pouring their own water, and tidying up when they had finished. Staff sat with children which provided a role model to encourage positive eating habits and social interaction. This resulted in relaxed, unhurried eating experiences for children.

Children were supported to understand and express their emotions through a variety of resources and planned activities, including daily emotion check ins. This enabled children to develop their ability to understand their feelings, which provided them with important emotional literacy skills.

Personal plans supported children's individual care and support needs. Strategies to support positive outcomes were regularly reviewed to ensure children's needs were met. The service worked proactively with other professionals to support children and families. For example, they had developed positive relationships with health visitors to support children in the service. Some personal plans took account of the wellbeing indicators which supported children's overall wellbeing. We discussed the benefits of using the wellbeing indicators within all children's personal plans. This would allow staff to fully consider how all children can be enabled to grow and develop to reach their full potential.

Staff practice supported children to understand their rights. Staff had included articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) around the play spaces. For example, article 31 was displayed in the story corner, to enable staff to explain to children that they have the right to relax and play. Each article was translated into a different language with the country's flag used to identify the language. This promoted diversity and cultural awareness and enabled children to learn how to value individuality and promote respect for others.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Children were actively leading their own play through a variety of open-ended play opportunities. For example, children were playing in the sand pit and mud kitchen area. There were lots of utensils for children to use, such as measuring and mixing spoons, pots and pans, and scales. There were recipe cards for children to make stick stews, conker cakes, or flower salads. This promoted children's imagination and creativity and supported their learning in literacy and numeracy. One parent commented, 'The staff are caring and conscientious and take pride in their job, making sure children are always involved and learning new things'.

Staff carefully observed children's interests and used effective questioning to extend children's play and learning. For example, some children were using binoculars to look for birds in the sky and trees. Staff provided a 'bird viewer', which allowed children to identify the birds they were seeing. There were many 'viewer' cards available to support children to identify types of wildflowers in the woods and different trees. One child confidently identified the tree types we saw when we explored the wider forest. This responsive approach to children's interests enabled children to take control of their own learning.

This fully outdoor service encouraged children to make connections with nature to support creativity and curiosity. For example, children collected leaves when exploring in the wider woodland and used a pestle and mortar to crush the leaves to make paint. Children benefitted from opportunities to learn valuable life skills as they were growing seasonal fruit and vegetables and learning how to care for them. These play and learning experiences were helping children develop confidence, social skills and enhance their awareness about nature.

Planning approaches were child led and responsive to children's interests which supported them to feel involved and empowered. Floorbooks were used to keep photographs and evaluations of children's previous learning experiences. This allowed children to revisit their learning and build upon their interests. Staff were keen to establish more formal approaches of sharing their own observations of children's play with each other. This would allow the team to work together to provide further opportunities for children to explore their ideas and challenge their thinking.

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 outdoor setting provided children with opportunities for exercise and fresh air every day. The base camp provided some sheltered areas to allow children to enjoy all of their play experiences outdoors in all weathers. The shelters provided a warm dry space for children and staff to come together, to eat, and to relax. The wider woodland where children explored, provided opportunities for children to challenge themselves. For example, children showed us the structures they play on in the woods and showed us the den they were building and trees they liked to climb. The different areas allowed children to choose how they spent their time.

Children experienced challenging and fun play experiences in a safe way. Risk assessments were in place which helped the service identify control measures to minimise potential risks. Children were involved in risk assessing their play experiences as staff knew children well and supported them to develop skills at their own pace. One parent told us, 'The staff are all lovely and caring and I feel they know my child and their personality very well'. Staff spoke with children about risks and used positive language to build children's confidence. This allowed children to develop their self-esteem and enjoy challenging play in a safe way.

Some effective infection control measures were in place, with children and staff handwashing before lunch and after using the toilet. We discussed ways to encourage more hand washing during the play session, for example, when children come back from exploring the wider woodland. This would further minimise the potential spread of infection.

The management team were keen to conserve the environment they used and reduce the negative environmental effect of the service. They had completed an environmental impact assessment to recognise their ecological impact. This allowed them to take measures to minimise the impact on wildlife through respectful decision making about the areas used within the wider woodland. Children understood the area used within the wider woodland would change due to this. This helped children develop their environmental awareness and respect for nature.

Children had access to two toilets in the base camp and they had a portable toilet which was taken when exploring the wider woodland. They had a pop up tent to provide privacy. The two toilet cubicles in the base camp were separated using a shower curtain. We explained this was not suitable to maintain effective privacy and dignity. The service advised they would ensure there were doors fitted. We found there were cleaning materials in the children's toilet that children could access. The manager told us the bottles had safety caps, however we asked for these to be removed and kept out of reach of children (**see area for improvement 1**).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's safety and wellbeing, the provider should ensure all cleaning materials are kept out of reach of children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which states that: 'My environment is safe and secure' (HSCS 5.17).

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 management team were dedicated, committed, and passionate about delivering a high quality service for children and families. They had established a positive working relationship with the small staff team. All staff worked well together which created an ethos of trust and respect. This resulted in a happy, safe and supportive environment for children to play, learn and flourish.

Some self-evaluation and quality assurance processes were in place to highlight areas for improvement. For example, the manager was regularly reviewing accident and incident forms to identify any trends and areas of potential risk or concern. The staff team were using environmental toolkits to self-evaluate their resources and the quality of spaces for play. The manager should continue to develop their self-evaluation processes using current guidance documents and frameworks. The skilled and dedicated staff team should be supported to find ways to reflect on their practice and service together. This would enable them to identify areas for development. Empowering the staff to lead on areas that match their interests, skill set and experience, would further enhance their commitment and dedication to providing a high quality service. This would enable children to benefit from effective learning experiences based on best practice guidance.

At the time of the inspection, the management team were reviewing their vision, values, and aims of the service. They were consulting with children, families and staff, to ensure the service met their wishes, needs, and choices. The management team were committed to doing their best, and were keen to ensure the service aims were meaningful, relevant, and informed practice. One parent told us, 'The service are always open to suggestions and they act upon them'. This demonstrated that the management team valued the voice of families.

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

The staff engaged positively throughout the inspection. They worked well as a team and were respectful towards each other. One parent commented, 'I have found every member of staff to communicate well, they are professional and helpful with any request or query I have had'. Another parent commented, 'The nursery is well staffed with good continuity, so both myself and my child know the staff by name when we arrive'. These positive relationships and continuity of staff, allowed children to develop strong, secure attachments with staff providing their care.

The staff team had a range of experiences and skills which were used well to support the needs of individual children. They communicated well with each other and worked well as a team. All staff were aware of where children were playing when exploring the wider woodland and worked together with constant headcounts. This allowed for effective supervision and support for children and allowed them to freely explore the woodlands safely.

There was effective deployment of staff for most of the day at the base camp. Staff supported children's individual interests and worked well at busier times of the day, for example meal times. We discussed with the management team the need to ensure there is effective supervision of all areas under the shelters at all times. The management team should work with the staff to ensure they are proactive in recognising where there are gaps of supervision and ensure they are remedied. This would ensure children are safe and have opportunities for high quality engagement and interaction.

Staff took part in annual appraisals, which provided opportunities for them to talk about their strengths and developmental needs. Staff told us they felt well supported and valued in the service. They were making good use of the ELC National Induction Resource to promote reflective practice and identify the standards and guidance which underpins their practice. The staff were committed to their professional development and recognised the importance of continuing to develop their skills. This will allow them to provide consistent high-quality outcomes and approaches for children.

All staff had completed paediatric first aid training. This demonstrated their commitment to children's safety and would allow them to respond quickly in an emergency.

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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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