

Little Bugs Day Care of Children

Lower Parkhead
Hopetoun Estate
SOUTH QUEENSFERRY
EH30 9SL

Telephone: 01383279380

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 July 2024

Service provided by:
Little Bugs Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2021000052

Service no:
CS2022000093

About the service

Little Bugs nursery is situated within a large woodland area in the Hopetoun House estate in the hamlet of Abercorn in West Lothian. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 34 children at one time age from 2 to 12 years of whom no more than 15 are aged 2 years to under 3 years.

The accommodation is provided from a base camp area within which there is an outdoor cabin known as the 'Pheasantry' which houses the office space and indoor play space for children. Additional wooden buildings housed toilets, nappy changing and a kitchen area. On the adjacent second site, a yurt was used for shelter and indoor play experiences. There were also toilets and nappy change area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 June 2024 between 09:00 and 17:45 hours. Feedback was provided to the service on the same day. Two inspectors carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with 10 children using the service
- spoke with/gathered feedback from 14 parents/carers
- spoke with management and staff members
- observed practice
- reviewed relevant documents.

Key messages

- Consistently sensitive, nurturing and respectful interactions from staff contributing to children's sense of security and wellbeing.
- Children's natural learning from their encounters in nature provoking their curiosity and sparking their interests.
- Busy, engaged children who were happy and having fun in their play.
- Strong and reflective leaders who create a shared ownership within the team for continued improvement whilst being innovative in promoting outdoor play, wider within the sector.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1; Nurturing care and support

Children were warmly welcomed into the setting and enjoyed responsive, respectful and meaningful interactions from staff. This built their trust and enabled them to feel secure, confident and included. They settled quickly and made choices about where they wanted to play. Staff consistently empowered children during their interactions by asking them what level of support they needed and providing encouragement. Children were also supported to collaborate, learn from and assist each other, such as helping each other to climb and sharing their personal knowledge. This enabled children to be successful learners.

The dignity and rights of every child were maintained as staff were respectful in their interactions to support nappy changing and toileting issues. Also, children were consistently addressed by their names and staff had a strong knowledge of them as individuals and any specific strategies for support used.

Staff's calm, quiet and respectful communication provided children with models of positive and gentle behaviour. This enhanced children's ability to interact positively with each other, along with staff support to regulate their own behaviour and respond appropriately to the behaviour of others. Children were knowledgeable of the four service principles and were able to tell us these. One of these was 'we care about each other' which was used consistently to help resolve any conflicts.

Families were supported to be involved in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing through the use of the 'family' app and open mornings/evenings along with general discussions. This valued parents' input and expertise and meant they were able to help shape targets and see children's progress and successes.

Staff routinely encouraged children to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. For example, when walking through the campsite and encountering nettles, they were reminded how to attend to a sting and discussed how to handle nettles to prevent stings.

Children's wellbeing and comfort was provided for. This included appropriate opportunities to meet children's need for sleep, rest and relaxation. The site provided different 'hidey holes' where children could go to feel hidden and rest or be alone. In addition, they put up hammocks in clearings and children were able to make dens. A shelter was available which enabled children to rest or sleep on low beds when needed. Staff should now ensure they remain vigilant to when children need this opportunity, especially younger children who may not be able to verbally request this.

Children enjoyed a range of healthy meals and snacks, some of which came from plants they grew and tended. This supported them to develop an understanding of food that was good for them and where it came from. Children's water bottles were always accessible, ensuring they remain hydrated. Children were able to choose when to eat and were able to eat at a relaxed pace. Staff were present in the poly tunnel to support the social experience of eating together and children's self serving, minimising risks for children with allergies.

Quality Indicator 1.3; Play and learning

There were regular opportunities for children to develop their language skills as they enjoyed book bug sessions, had access to books and writing opportunities, and singing was heard across the site. Children were also able to learn about numbers, technology and science through the use of natural materials and spaces were developed to explore woodworking, measure aspects of the weather and learn about emotions.

Learning about the natural world was a real strength, as children were able to explore this in depth. Parents told us about the opportunities to engage with local wildlife and how this extended their children's learning. They told us "This environment has led to an explosion in our child's interest in the world around her. The children have regular opportunities to learn about gardening, woodwork, how to safely climb tyres and trees, about gravity through rolling objects down the hill etc. One of the most enriching experiences have been around animal care". Staff shared examples of where the children found rare newts and how children were involved in reporting this. Children regularly explored off base camp to encounter other animals such as deer and pheasants. These opportunities increased children's knowledge and understanding of the natural world. Children were also quickly supported in their research through the use of digital technology and staff's own knowledge and understanding. We heard discussions about how nettles can be made into string and children used apps on nursery mobile phones to help them identify minibeasts.

Children's physical wellbeing was promoted through the enhanced opportunities for active play and robust systems for the management of medication, accidents and allergies. These were acknowledged by parents, evidencing they were kept informed and supporting children's continuity of care. The extensive grounds over two camps along with additional acres of land, enabled children's ability to understand and manage risk and contributed to developing a healthy lifestyle.

Children were busy and purposeful in their play and exploration. They demonstrated curiosity about their surroundings, for example picking up different sticks and hitting them off different trees and talking about the sounds these made. Staff regularly asked questions which helped to extend and challenge children's thinking.

Children were achieving as their learning and development were assessed and evaluated through planning and reflection. Staff should continue to work with the local authority in refining planning approaches whilst maintaining the balance between responsive and planned provision to meet all children's needs.

There was some scope to build children's capacity as leaders with responsibilities such as supporting with snacks and lunches. We suggested children may benefit from having 'helper roles' such as writing the snack menu to further promote literacy and challenge for some, along with being involved in setting the tables. This would recognise and celebrate children's efforts and build responsibility along with further independence.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 2.2; Children experience high quality facilities

Systems were in place to identify, record and manage risks to children, which were also carefully balanced with identifying the benefits.

This enabled effective management of the site whilst enabling children's risk awareness and enriching their play experiences.

The layout and design of the setting supported children's access to different types of indoor and outdoor experiences and shelter from extreme weather. The 'pheasantry' building provided a cosy space with a range of play resources to support breadth of learning. The spaces indoors and out, supported children's participation and engaged them in both built and natural environments. The service should now continue with their own plans to further enhance provision in the yurt on the second site. This would provide children with more opportunity to access other play items they could use to extend and enrich their outdoor learning.

Children benefitted from having lots of space and freedom to explore the two large sites. Perimeter fences were in place, along with a secure entry gate which was managed by staff and monitored with proportionate use of CCTV. Although overall supervision of children was very strong, we highlighted two gates on one site which should be reviewed in regard to further increasing their height and potential footholds. The provider raised this immediately as priority work. This is to ensure that children are unable to leave the setting the unnoticed.

Children were encouraged to become environmentally aware and responsible for their immediate and wider surroundings. They recycled what materials they could and were encouraged to plant, grow and harvest their own food. Staff actively encouraged children not to waste materials such as when drawing on paper and one of the service principles was about caring for the setting. This raised children's awareness of ecological issues.

Resources and equipment were sufficient in number and in good condition, enabling every child to engage in their play whilst enjoying variety and challenge. However, children mostly chose to explore the setting and its natural materials, for example making friendship bracelets out of sticky weeds. Children were able to move resources freely from indoor and outdoor spaces which enhanced their play further, for example bringing the guitar out and having singing sessions.

Practices for infection prevention and control were in place, reducing children's risk of cross infection. Storage and preparation of food was managed well and children were encouraged to wash their hands at regular points and were able to tell us when they should wash their hands. Staff encouraged children to sign a song to ensure hand washing was carried out for an appropriate length of time. Staff were also mindful of hand washing when preparing and serving food and after helping children blow their noses. We reminded the provider to ensure continued supervision and promotion of handwashing to ensure all children do this consistently at key points.

How good is our leadership?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent, where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for children/people.

Quality Indicator 3.1; Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The ethos of caring was evident throughout the service as the four principles were clearly displayed at the entrance, were evident in practice and known by all staff and children. When asked what the rules were, one child quickly and in detail told us these principles. We also heard staff remind children of these during their play. These principles were embedded and strongly influenced positive consistent practice.

The strong self assessment and quality improvement processes in place resulted in staff who had high aspirations and were confident in their capacity to support children to reach their full potential. Staff very confidently discussed their role in quality assurance and demonstrated knowledge of best practice to support this. The manager had been inspired to develop a self-evaluation toolkit based on key best practice documents such as 'my world outdoors' which was an innovative approach. This was used by all staff members on a regular basis to highlight areas of strength and improvement, whilst enabling them to become more familiar with best practice guidance in an active way.

High levels of passion about outdoor learning supported leaders to promote this wider within the sector. The provider had now developed their own learning association which brought together the learning opportunities they already offered to actively support the parents, ELC (early learning and childcare) sector and families within the community to develop their understanding and practice of outdoor play. The service was working closely with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland to develop sector level policy and best practice on outdoor learning provision. The service also regularly worked with the local schools supporting learning for sustainability via webinars and management regularly delivered training to ELC students at college and university level. They had aspirational plans to deliver an upcoming outdoor learning festival, open to all early years staff, showcasing their own and wider practice and knowledge. This would also allow their own staff to increase their own knowledge through the sessions on offer. They had already considered how they would measure the impact of this on their own provision and the wider sector through planned evaluation. We considered this aspect to be excellent practice. This demonstrated the capacity for improvement at both a local and wider level.

Management and staff demonstrated mutual respect and worked collaboratively to challenge and learn from each other. The strong leadership from the provider and manager created a reflective ethos across the team. They were actively encouraged in giving constructive feedback to each other on their specific champion roles and areas for improvement. This enabled the high levels of confidence amongst the team on their involvement in self evaluation, further reflection on practice and whole team ownership of quality assurance.

The owner and manager were passionate about providing high quality outdoor play and learning for all children. They regularly reflected on practice and provided opportunities for parental feedback. For example, they recently revised the transition experience for children as a result of parent feedback and their own observations. This led to quick and positive changes, ensuring a relaxed pace which met individual needs. Almost all parents highlighted they felt involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service and told us "Little Bugs regularly ask for feedback from parents and involve the children in decision making. Parent forums allow parents to discuss different issues" and "We often receive parent polls where we can vote on any changes".

The manager robustly monitored all aspects of provision through the use of a detailed quality assurance calendar and a full range of monitoring systems in place. These quickly picked up issues and supported communication to address these or make improvements.

Staff performance was regularly evaluated by management with monthly supervision sessions and annual appraisals. Information from these supervision sessions enabled ongoing evaluation of staff performance which was linked to the improvement plan and used to create a training plan. This enabled the service to tailor quality professional learning opportunities to meet staff's, children's and service level needs. In addition, they provided four staff wellbeing evenings throughout the year which ensured staff felt valued. Staff told us they really enjoyed working at the setting and felt very well supported by a strong management team.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3; Staff deployment.

Staffing arrangements enhanced children's safety, learning and development. Staff deployed themselves well to monitor and support children. In addition, a bird type 'call' was used to alert children to all come to a central point when required. This ensured they maintained an overview of children at all times, whilst still allowing them freedom to roam and explore the site. A robust system for ongoing head counts and effective use of walkie-talkies to regularly communicate children's positions meant all children were accounted for at regular points throughout the day.

Children's needs were met by staff who knew them as individuals as the service used regular supply staff along with staff from the sister service. This meant children experienced continuity of care in the setting. Levels of staff were managed well across the day due to the high staff to child ratio. This meant there was limited impact on children's experiences during staff breaks, and busy periods such as the handover of children was managed safely.

Safe recruitment of staff had been carried out robustly, ensuring that staff were suitable for the role. Newer staff spoke about their induction which was completed over a period of six months using the National Induction Resource. This led to staff feeling confident about their role and responsibilities and supported effective practice to enhance children's outcomes.

Staff were good role models to children as they engaged them in conversations and supported them to share and recall their own experiences. They took an interest in children as individuals and used this knowledge to enhance their relationships and children's comfort. One parent told us "We love little bugs, staff are always there to help, my child loves to play, and they have lots of time and patience, my child cannot wait for the nursery day to start" and children said "I love my teachers".

Staff drew upon their personal skills as singers and musicians to enhance outcomes for children. Staff also shared their learning and were currently supporting each other by sharing their skills in the use of Makaton and 'sign along' supporting whole team learning. This was enabling communication with a number of children who spoke various different languages. This contributed to positive outcomes for children through increased play and learning opportunities.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	6 - Excellent
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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