

# Seahorse Nursery Day Care of Children

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Cockenzie  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
31 July 2024

**Service provided by:**  
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**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003012

**Service no:**  
CS2003012099

## About the service

Seahorse Nursery provides a daycare of children service situated in Cockenzie, East Lothian close to local schools, shops and other amenities. The service is registered to provide care for a maximum of 35 children, aged 0 to five years between the hours of 7.30am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

The nursery is a detached two-storey house situated directly opposite the harbour in Cockenzie, East Lothian. The service provides accommodation over two floors with babies, toddlers cared for on the ground floor and children aged two-to-five years cared for on the first floor. There is a kitchen, office, staff room, toilets and nappy changing facilities and children can access an enclosed back garden.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 29 and Tuesday 30 July 2024. The inspection was carried out by one early learning and childcare inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the service registered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with and observed children using the service
- contacted families and staff through Microsoft forms to gather their views
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- We observed positive relationships between children and staff with lots of warm, nurturing and caring interactions.
- Staff had worked hard to make mealtimes an extremely positive experience for children.
- Children were happy and engaged in their play and learning experiences throughout our visit.
- The manager had worked hard to ensure quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement planning were developed and it was beginning to have a positive impact on the outcomes for children and families.
- Staff appraisals should take place to identify the professional development needs of the staff team.

## 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 benefitted from staff who were consistently nurturing towards them. Staff valued children and clearly enjoyed spending time with them. This approach helped build strong and trusting relationships, and children felt secure, safe, and loved. Interactions were enhanced by staff who actively listened to children and who got down to their level. This showed children they were respected and included.

Staff knew children very well and each child had a personal plan. These were completed in partnership with families. Staff had recorded strategies to support children's individual needs and, where necessary, additional support plans had been created. We discussed with management that information on support strategies needed to be more detailed. Staff should evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies to ensure children's individual care and support needs were met. We shared that the majority of parents felt included in developing their child's care plan, however some parents felt they needed more time to complete these fully. The manager agreed to review this. Parents comments included "The staff spent a lot of time with my child building relationships and ensuring that they know them well. Staff cater for their individual needs" and "My child required additional support and staff have been great at supporting them and following advice from outside agencies. They have a written plan that I had a chance to review at the parent consultation a few months back". Another parent commented "I like that the service ask me to review my child's personal plans every few months to ensure that the information is up to date and accurate. I like that staff contact me to discuss any changes that they have observed and ask if there is anything I would like to update from home".

The service had worked hard to creating a positive mealtime experience for each age group of children. Children were independently making choices and enjoyed social interactions in a relaxed, unhurried environment. Staff supported these interactions by sitting with children, facilitating conversations, and offering encouragement. Staff were knowledgeable about potential choking hazards and encouraged children to take small bites which kept them safe from potential harm. Food choices aligned with current guidance and alternatives were offered to those who were not keen on the meal provided.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the safe storage and recording of medication. Staff were knowledgeable about safeguarding and understanding of their role in protecting children from harm. The manager was in the process of making sure staff updated their child protection training. Accident and incidents were appropriately recorded and shared with parents. The manager carried out audits of these documents to ensure children were kept safe.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children actively led their play and learning throughout the day. They were happy, confident and most were engaged. Children benefitted from a good quality play and learning environment. Some children had opportunities to lead their play, with a balance of spontaneous and planned activities. Some planned learning was informed by children's ideas and developmental needs, allowing staff to extend experiences.

The management team should carry out detailed audits of planning, observations and next steps to ensure children's learning and development was meaningful and provided them with appropriate challenge.

Staff were beginning to adopt a questioning approach to encourage and support children's play and learning experiences. Management should continue to provide training opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge of skilful interactions and how to promote the language of learning. This will enable them to have more challenging conversations with children to support their learning and development.

Literacy and numeracy were well supported across the service through a range of experiences. Staff understood the importance of language development and provided a variety of activities to support this. In the younger children enjoyed sharing books with staff throughout the day. They frequently sang together as they played. Older children were developing confidence in learning early literacy and numeracy skills. There was a newly created STEM area that was being well used. We saw children mark making, writing their own names and recognising some numbers in the environment.

Online learning journals kept families updated with their child's learning and development. Most observations were well written and all had next steps identified. To ensure staff were planning for children's individual progress, next steps should contain more details and evidence how children are progressing in their learning. Staff should develop their knowledge and understanding around recording children's significant learning and development needs. This would allow staff to assess children's achievements, progress and provide children with sufficient challenge.

Staff in the pre-school room had begun to audit the quality of the learning environment, they should continue to implement changes to the environment both indoor and out. Attention should also be paid to ensuring that resources were available to allow children to scaffold their play. Staff in the under 3's should begin to use the good practice documents 'Realising the Ambition', 'Voice of the Infant' and 'Growing my Potential' to enable them to assess the environments from a child's perspective. This would support them to develop care and play environments indoors and outdoors which were safe, nurturing and enabled engagement with play and learning.

## 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.

### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced an environment that was well maintained. The provider had a running programme of refurbishment to ensure the building was safe. There were some homely touches, soft furnishings and furniture appropriate for the ages of children. There was enough space for most children to play and we saw that they moved confidently within the space available. Children played independently or cooperatively in groups which helped them to build positive relationships with their peers and develop their social skills. Resources were maintained, safe and accessible to children. Most parents stated that they were happy with the nursery environment and some comments included "Small and personal nursery, most of the staff are lovely and really seem to care for the children. Lovely old building and nice outdoor space" and "It is small, friendly and well equipped indoors and outdoors". One parent stated they felt the interior was quite dated and the staircase from the pre-school room was very steep, we shared this with the provider.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through daily outdoor play. Due to the layout of the building, free flow access to the garden was not possible. Staff valued the positive impact of outdoor play and promoted it in all weathers. The garden was a lovely area that allowed children to run around, develop their physical skills, be creative and enjoy quieter moments in the outdoor classroom. To ensure children's choice was promoted and limit interruptions to children's play, we have asked the service to review staff deployment. This would support opportunities for outdoor play and allow children to access the garden throughout the day. Children also had opportunities to go out in the local community visiting the harbour, park and using the local forest for outdoor learning. This supported children to develop meaningful connections with their own and the wider community.

Parents all agreed that their children had access regular access to the outdoors and some comments included "The vegetable garden has been incredible, also the outdoor adventures to the local areas are brilliant, the amount of time they get to spend outside is brilliant learning all about animals and bugs, plants, vegetables etc indoors they provide great activity's too and have themed learning throughout the year eg. Seasons, holidays, different animals etc" and "The Outdoor Adventures have been fantastic for my child, who are in their element playing in the woods, making things and playing with mud! They only do that for a few weeks of the year unfortunately - they would definitely have benefited from more frequent forest play. The garden at seahorse is good, and they go out every day in all weathers which is great, but the forest adventures are really fantastic. More of that would be awesome".

Staff carried out daily checks of rooms and risk assessments were in place this helped to ensure spaces were safe for children Maintenance records ensured that any equipment and damaged items were repaired or replaced. This helped to keep children safe.

Infection control measures were understood and implemented effectively by staff. Handwashing routines were embedded and staff protected children by providing a clean and hygienic environment. Children accessed handwashing facilities out with the playroom this did not support good practice around infection prevention and control. The service should review handwashing facilities within the playrooms.

## Areas for improvement

1. The service should review the handwashing facilities within the playrooms, this would support good practice around infection prevention and control.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishing and equipment' HSCS 5.22).

## 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

There was a vision and values statement available on the nursery website. This helped people to understand the ethos of the service and what they considered important to meet the needs of children and their families.

A quality assurance calendar had been implemented, meaning audits were carried out regularly and were supporting the manager to identify where improvement was needed. For example in ensuring personal plans were updated and that there was consistent support for individual children. However, we identified that at times written strategies did not always provide clear information around the support required for individual children. The manager also shared that some aspects of quality assurance had not been completed. However these will now take priority, allowing the management team to assess the quality of the service and identify where improvements were needed. This meant that self-evaluation was ongoing which influenced a culture of continuous improvement.

The manager had spend time building on staff's knowledge and understanding around implementing positive changes to the service. An improvement plan influenced by staff and families suggestions and ideas identified relevant areas for development. The manager had documented these changes through a well informed floor book, most staff were knowledgeable about the improvement journey. The manager should now begin to review the impact improvements have had on the service, this would support the pace of change and ensure improvements were maintained.

Children were kept safe by effective recruitment checks and processes that were completed for new staff prior to them starting in the service. Staff induction had been reviewed that supported staff knowledge and awareness of their role and responsibilities. A mentor was identified to provide further support to new staff by working alongside experienced team members who could share best practice.

All parents strongly agreed or agreed that they were happy with the service provided. Some parents were happy with the level of engagement. However, others stated that they felt consultation had been limited or not effective. This was shared with the management team who agreed to look at further ways to engage with parent and carers. One parent commented "I would like to say a special thanks to the provider and the senior leadership team. I have had a lot of changes in work and they have been super supportive in helping to accommodate these when they can. The nursery has helped my child to learn and develop at their own pace and I can't thank the staff enough for all their support. It really does make a difference going to work and knowing your child is in good hands. Thank you".

## 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

Staff demonstrated genuine warmth, kindness and interest to the children they cared for. This resulted in children who were settled, happy and confident. The nursery was a small and homely environment with an established staff team. Parents spoke highly of the staff team and comments included "I speak with all the staff in my child's room and they are all extremely helpful and informative" and another stated "Staff are always friendly and interested in how my child has been at home. You can see they really care". Another parent commented "I have had a great relationship with the key staff involved in my child's care. Always welcomed warmly and they seem to genuinely care about my child" and "Everyone is professional, Friendly and they make my child feel safe". This showed that staff were developing trusting and positive relationships with families.

The service was appropriately staffed during our inspection. The management team provided support in playrooms when required and covered in periods of staff absence. Staff worked well together sharing tasks throughout the day and communicating children's whereabouts effectively. Consideration had been given to busier times of the day, such as mealtimes. This meant that staff received appropriate breaks to keep them refreshed, and that the quality of children's care and support was not affected.

Due to the layout of the nursery we have asked the service to review staff deployment particularly around supporting opportunities for outdoor play. This would provide children with a greater choice when deciding to play indoors or out, supporting their individual needs.

Staff meetings were led well and supported the sharing of information and experiences. They also provided opportunities for staff to influence and progress the service improvement plan. Staff appraisals and support meetings had not taken place for some time. We have asked the manager to undertake these as a matter of priority, and ensure staff are accessing training relevant to their role. Staff should be supported to reflect on and evaluate their learning and the impact of this on their practice. This would ensure children were cared for by staff who were reflective of their practice and aware of current guidance.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).



Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	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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