

Apple Tree Nursery Day Care of Children

46 Balhousie Street
Perth
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Telephone: 01738 561 083

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 September 2024

Service provided by:
Apple Tree Nursery

Service provider number:
SP2011011481

Service no:
CS2011282021

About the service

Apple Tree Nursery is a day care of children service, registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children aged 0 to an age to attend primary school, at any one time.

The nursery operates from a two-storey semi-detached house, close to the city centre of Perth. The children are accommodated within two playrooms on the ground floor. These are designated for different age groups of children. The upper level was not in permanent use for children. They can access this area for quiet time or focussed activities, when accompanied by an adult. There is an office and a separate staff room. The children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor area that is accessible from each playroom on the ground floor. The nursery has a secure door entry system in place.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 3 and 4 September 2024 between 08:30 and 17:00. One inspector carried out the inspection.

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.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with six children using the service and one of their parents or carers
- received 16 completed questionnaires from families and eight from staff
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Children benefitted from a respectful, caring setting where staff interactions were kind and supportive. All staff welcomed children and families warmly into the service, promoting an inclusive ethos.

The pace and flow of the day was attuned to children's needs and wishes, supporting them to feel settled and engage well in their play and learning.

Staff successfully created highly engaging opportunities for children. Language, literacy and numeracy was fully embedded throughout and well facilitated by staff.

Children benefitted from a setting that was furnished and decorated to a very high standard. Within the playrooms, lighting and various fabrics were used to soften spaces, providing a real sense of warmth and comfort.

The manager effectively raised standards by empowering and motivating staff. Staff were encouraged to read up to date research and best practice, to reflect on their practice and enhance children's outcomes.

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?	5 - Very Good
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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children benefitted from genuine positive attachments with staff and other children. Staff always led with kind and warm interactions. This enabled children to feel safe, happy and ready to play and learn.

A commitment to wellbeing and nurture ensured children were settled and content within the service. A parent reflected on their experience, "We are so lucky to have our child at Apple Tree Nursery. It's a home from home! We couldn't be happier with all the [staff] and how they engage with our child, so warm and nurturing. We can relax at work knowing they are in the best possible care, developing and thriving with such wonderful experiences". This demonstrated that staff had successfully promoted a supportive ethos within the setting, ensuring that all children and families felt nurtured and cared for.

Staff knew children and families very well, further supporting positive attachments. A holistic approach to children's care ensured that their support was planned to meet their individual needs. Staff took part in regular meetings to share relevant information such as, changes in routines or developmental needs. This ensured children remained at the heart of the service. Families were fully involved in the planning of children's care and support. One parent told us, "The 'All About Me' form has provided opportunity to share more information on stages and successes at home with development and put in next stage info we would like for nursery to assist with". As a result, practice reflected family's personal preferences.

Children experienced relaxed and unhurried snack and mealtimes. Staff recognised the rich opportunities that came from daily experiences such as these. They sat with children, supported conversations and responded effectively to their needs. As a result, children were able to develop key skills such as, communication and decision making. Children were proud to have the responsibility of lunch helper. This role included getting the tables ready for everyone's lunch. They were also able to develop their independence through some self-serving of their lunch. This impacted positively on their health and wellbeing.

Medication was well managed in the service. Medication was stored safely and supported easy access in case of an emergency. Paperwork enabled staff to understand children's health conditions and how best to support them. A small number of documents did not follow best practice, for example, recording of expiry dates and parent signatures after staff reviewed medication. The manager actioned this quickly and updated paperwork by the time of feedback. This ensured that children requiring medication were given safe and effective treatment.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

All children were seen to be engaged in their play and learning and having fun as a result. Staff provided a very good balance of spontaneous and planned play opportunities, which drew from children's needs and interest. This created a rich and inclusive learning environment. All children were able to lead their own play as the environment promoted choice and independence. As a result, children were happy and fully immersed in their play and learning.

Children's play and learning environments were enriched with a variety of language, literacy and numeracy. Staff facilitated these opportunities well, for example, during snack times and through skilful tracking of children's developmental needs. This was also extended further to include parents and families. Parents told us, "Home link bags provide us opportunities to learn fun things at home with our child and feedback to the nursery". This impacted positively on all children's play and learning.

Children were empowered by staff who were responsive to their interests. The learning environment and planning approaches centred around children's voice. Staff used observations and mind maps to record and keep track of their views and opinions. Parents and carers were also invited to add to these as they wished to share their views. As a result, children and families were confident in sharing their ideas as they trusted staff would listen and act upon them.

Most staff demonstrated a very good understanding of child development and relevant theories. They applied this very well to practice, resulting in children benefitting from skilled interactions. For example, they often used effective questioning to extend children's interest and explore problem solving. As a result, high quality experiences were created for all age groups to support them achieve their full potential.

Children's experiences and outcomes were recorded within individual folders, digital learning platform and group learning floor books. These included, photographs and observations that illustrated children's play and learning. Individualised next steps ensured targets were realistic and manageable for children. Staff used effective tracking systems to ensure children developed a broad range of lifelong learning skills. Parents told us they were, "Always kept up to date with anything they have noticed about my child's development and progress of their next steps. We are involved in making our child targets etc through frequent updates of the All About Me forms and parent contact meetings". As a result, children were progressing well.

Children's play and learning was enhanced through positive experiences in the community. For instance, they visited local parks, museums and nearby shops. Parents commented, "Our child's most memorable one was going on an outing and coming "home" to nursery on the public bus. They speak of this often and recount their day. It was a very special trip for them and has stayed with them". Another shared how visitors from the community would often visit their child such as, "Sing and sign, music class with Selkie Music School and visitors for stay and play sessions, including Bookbug and drama group". This positively impacted on children's sense of belonging and broadened their experiences.

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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was furnished to a high standard. Staff used their knowledge and experience to create spaces that met children's care, play and learning needs. Children were able to move freely within their playrooms, ensuring they had ample space to play and learn. Each area of the nursery was welcoming and comfortable, this supported a homely environment. Sofas, enclosures and soft furnishings provided moments for rest and relaxation for children as and when they needed it. Parents commented, "[Staff] are kind and respectful and are great for hosting events to welcome parents and families into the setting". As a result, there was a strong ethos of inclusion within the setting.

The indoor environment was well structured and took account of children's stages of development. Children were given ownership of how these spaces were designed. Staff gathered their views and opinions to ensure their interests were at the heart of design. For example, the home corner had been transformed to enable children to enact the story of 'A Squash and a Squeeze' as a result of their interests. This showed children that their views and opinions mattered.

Children were able to access outdoor spaces daily, both in the setting and beyond. Staff fully supported free flow play between the indoor and outdoor environments. This enabled children to have further choice in how they play and learn. While outside, children had access to a very good range of toys and games to promote high quality play and learning. One parent told us, "Apple Tree's Garden was one of its biggest selling points for us. Both our children love the garden and its extensive range of activities". This promoted an exciting and stimulating place for children to play and learn.

All parents strongly agreed that their children were safe whilst in this setting. We found the environment and equipment to be safe, secure and well-maintained. Staff encouraged children to share their thoughts and opinions when completing risk assessments in a fun and engaging way. This enabled staff to have a deeper understanding of the safety of the environment from the child's perspective.

The setting was clean, tidy and well organised. Children were familiar with handwashing routines to keep them safe and healthy. One nappy changing facility no longer met current best practise guidance, as the under two-year-olds changing facilities was not designated for only that use. This increased the risk of the spread of infection. The management team took prompt, remedial action to minimise risk to children by stopping any other use in that area. We signposted the management team to 'Space to Grow and Thrive' and 'Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders) guidance' to promote safer toileting and changing facilities.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children and families benefitted from a shared vision, values, aims and objectives that positively informed practice. Consultation of these was an ongoing commitment to ensure they remained reflective of the children, families, staff and wider community. They were well presented within the hallway to share with everyone. As a result, the ethos in the service was warm, nurturing and fully inclusive.

An ethos of inclusion was successfully created and sustained. Children and families feedback was gathered continually to inform children's care, play and learning as well as the development of the service. Parents told us, "We are regularly invited to provide feedback about what we are happy with and to request anything we would like to change or add with regard to learning, experience or mealtimes, etc." As a result, children and families felt meaningfully involved and could influence change within the setting.

Quality assurance, including a self-evaluation and an improvement plan, were in place and led to continuous improvement. The management team worked well together to raise standards and address where support could be given to staff, when necessary. For example, monitoring enabled gaps in staff practice to be identified and targeted support was promptly put into place. This positively impacted on children's experiences and outcomes as a result.

Staff were enthusiastic and engaged in development opportunities. For example, leadership roles such as, numeracy champion and digital learning lead, empowered staff to confidently improve the setting. They skilfully applied theory to ensure any changes positively impacted on children's outcomes. This ensured their care, play and learning needs remained at the heart of decision making.

Reflective practices were fully embedded throughout the staff team. Evaluations were found to be honest and valuable in raising standards. Staff told us they felt appreciated and listened to by management, which enabled them to feel empowered. This contributed to a very good cycle of continuous improvement in the service.

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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff were warm, welcoming and engaged positively in the inspection process. It was evident through discussions that they were committed and enthusiastic professionals. A staff member told us, "As a team we all have a great relationship with each other and all the children and their families. This all adds into the setting and how well maintained and safe the setting is". We found evidence of effective teamworking throughout the nursery. As a result, children received high quality care, play and learning experiences.

The knowledge and skills of staff across the whole day had a positive impact on children. They used their initiative to ensure children were safe and well supported. Staff at all levels of experience were observed engaging well with children, ensuring they were down at their level, listening to them and valuing their views and opinions. Staff were keen to support one another and communicated effectively to ensure the children were well cared for.

The levels of staff were effective in providing high quality care and support. The deployment of the staff team enabled them to be fully engaged and present in children's care, play and learning. We observed staff maintaining very good supervision through effective communication. A parent told us, "The [staff] make caring for the children look and sound so effortless but very much effective in providing learning and development". As a result, staff were able to follow children's needs and interests without compromising on other's experiences.

Families benefitted from an open-door policy, where they were welcomed into the service to see the environment and get to know staff. Any changes to staffing, such as children's keyworkers, were well considered. The management team ensured there was an appropriate time for staff to provide a detailed sharing of information at the end of the session. This ensured children and families experienced consistency and allowed positive attachments to be formed.

Parents knew staff within the team and were able to share the positive impact staff had had on their children's experience and outcomes. A parent told us, "The [staff] at Apple Tree are warm, friendly and approachable. It is clear that they enjoy their work through their constant creativity and enthusiasm". Another commented, "My child has a fantastic bond with staff and loves going to nursery. They have staff who care about them, who listen to them, who help them and who have fun with them! They always come out of nursery well looked after and with a smile".

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 the safety of children attending the service, staff should carry out regular audits of accidents and incidents to identify common features and actions put in place to minimise the risks to children.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states: 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20).

This area for improvement was made on 23 July 2019.

Action taken since then

Audits of accidents and incidents were in place. These were well detailed to identify themes. The manager used this information to celebrate successes and target improvement. We suggested where times of incidents and quality of first aid or treatment received would strengthen their auditing. The manager was keen to consider this further.

This area for improvement has been met.

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?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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