

Little Trees Day Care of Children

Campus 3, Balgownie Science And Technology Park
Balgownie Drive
Bridge Of Don
Aberdeen
AB22 8GW

Telephone: 07427587324

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 September 2024

Service provided by:
Little Trees Children's Nursery Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2023000170

Service no:
CS2023000268

About the service

Little Trees is situated in the Balgownie Science and Technology Park in the Bridge of Don area of Aberdeen.

The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 64 children at one time, aged from 0 to an age to attend primary school, of whom no more than 18 are less than two years of age. There were up to 38 children present during the inspection.

The service is provided in a large building, close to local facilities, bus routes and green spaces. Children are cared for in three playrooms, which each have toilets and nappy change areas accessible to children. A large garden is accessed from the playrooms, with the youngest children having a dedicated garden space. A soft play area in the centre of the building is used by children with support and supervision from staff.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 17/9/24 between 09:30 and 17:00 and 18 September 2024 between 08:30 and 16:30.

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:

- spent time with children using the service and spoke to six of their parents/carers
- received 15 responses to our request for feedback
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced kind, nurturing interactions with staff who knew them well.
- Staff were being supported to develop their skills in planning, assessing and observing children's play and learning.
- Children experienced clean, fresh, well-resourced surroundings.
- Children benefitted from significant improvements to the outdoor areas since the last inspection.
- Staff worked well together to provide consistency for children. Where gaps in care were identified, staff adjusted their practice to promote improved experiences.
- Quality assurance practices were effective in identifying areas for development to promote positive outcomes for 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. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, nurturing interactions from staff, who comforted children when this was needed. For example, one child was upset on arrival and a staff member cuddled them to help them to settle. This helped children feel loved and cared for. Parents spoke highly of the friendly, welcoming staff, with one parent telling us "My child appears happy and content when attends."

Children were cared for by staff who knew them well. They were able to discuss children's needs and used information, provided by parents, in personal plans to help meet these. 'My Story' sheets provided staff with an overview of each child's key needs and preferences. Some personal plans held more information than others about how children were being supported. We encouraged more consistent recording of support strategies to help to ensure that these were known to all staff to promote continuity of care for children.

Children were well supported during personal care routines. They had opportunities for developing independence, with staff supporting children to wash their own hands at key times of the day. Nappy changing was carried out respectfully, taking children's individual needs and preferences into account. This helped children feel supported and cared for.

Children enjoyed pleasant mealtimes. Babies ate in their own room, using suitable tables, chairs. Older children enjoyed mealtimes in the recently reappointed dining room. Meals were provided by an external caterer and met nutritional guidelines. Children were encouraged to be independent and were supported appropriately for their ages and abilities. Older children served themselves and cleared away their own dishes. Staff sat with children throughout mealtimes, helping to promote a safe, sociable lunch time experience.

Children's sleep routines were managed well. Children were able to nap when they needed to, and staff followed parent's wishes. Babies slept in cots and used their own comforters from home. When a child was bottle fed before their nap, staff cuddled them in a blanket to provide a nurturing experience. Children were familiar with the routines and well supported by staff at these times.

Children's medication was mainly stored and recorded appropriately. We suggested some small changes to forms used to record medication to make the information clearer. We also identified that in one case, the storage and recording of medication did not adhere to guidance. The manager addressed the issue immediately and agreed to review practice so that guidance is fully met at all times going forward. This will further promote children's safety and wellbeing.

Children's care needs were supported by staff working well with other agencies. One parent provided feedback that the service "are keen to engage with other support services for the children and are amazing at adapting to their needs." Support from the local authority was well received by management and staff, and the service fully engaged with the inspection process. Where appropriate, staff liaised with health professionals involved in children's care. This supported their understanding of children's needs to support continuity of care.

Staff had a good understanding of child protection procedures to help promote children's welfare and keep them safe.

Families had opportunities to be involved in the service. They were invited to Stay and Play sessions, and the manager told us of a recent open day enjoyed by families. Some parents had offered their help with the recent work to upgrade the outdoor play area. This supported families to feel listened to and included in the development of the service. Management were considering ways of developing this to support more families to be involved.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children benefitted from spontaneous play opportunities where they chose how they wanted to play. Staff joined in children's games, balancing with them on large tyres in the garden, and going on an imaginary bus journey. A group of children were encouraged to put worms they had found in a wormery. This gave children the message their ideas mattered and supported them to follow their interests. There were, however missed opportunities for promoting further learning for children. Staff responded kindly and praised children's efforts, however, did not always engage in conversations that would extend their thinking. Staff were being supported to develop their skills in this area. They had attended training, and more was planned to improve their skills in effectively supporting children's play.

Planning for children's learning varied throughout the setting. Staff in the baby and toddler rooms used an established format for planning children's activities. Planning for children in the three to five age group had very recently been changed to a new system, and it was too early to assess the effectiveness of this. Evaluation and observations of children's learning varied across the setting with some staff being more confident than others. Some parents commented that they found observations shared with them on an online platform helpful, whilst others said they would prefer more information. Planning, evaluation and observation of children's learning had been identified by the service as an area for development. Training was planned to further support staff's skills and knowledge in promoting meaningful learning opportunities for children.

Opportunities for children to learn language, literacy and numeracy skills could be further developed. Children had some opportunities, such as drawing, counting, and looking at books. Staff modelled appropriate use of language and vocabulary, however we did not always see agreed strategies being used to support children's language development. Opportunities for children to practice language, literacy and numeracy should now be embedded throughout all areas of the setting to further promote children's learning and development.

Children were able to play outdoors. Babies were taken out at key times of the day, and older children could access the outdoors at most times during the session. This gave children opportunities to enjoy fresh air and develop physical skills. A member of staff was due to attend a course on promoting outdoor play and learning. This will help develop staff's knowledge in supporting children to achieve their potential through outdoor activities.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced clean, fresh surroundings. Playrooms were bright and airy and were furnished and resourced appropriately. Children had access to a range of play resources. These were presented attractively and were easily accessed by children. Recent refurbishments to the indoor areas included a room being developed as a dining room for children. This provided a pleasant, comfortable space where children could enjoy their meals and snacks.

Children benefitted from significant improvements to the outdoor areas since the last inspection. All areas had been tidied, and old and broken equipment and resources had been removed. A fence had been erected around the perimeter of the grounds, resulting in a secure area. The outdoor space used by the baby room had been extended and cleaned. Babies now enjoyed a larger and more inviting outdoor area. Improvements were ongoing and the smaller outdoor area, used by the older children, had yet to be developed. All visible hazards had been removed, however, providing a safe play area. Parents told us they are looking forward to the development of the outdoor areas being completed to provide consistently positive experiences across all areas.

Some new play resources had been acquired and staff were continuing to develop these. We encouraged them to consider wider use of loose parts and real-life resources as they move forward, to promote children's curiosity and imagination.

Children's safety was promoted as entry to individual playrooms was secure. However, at times it was possible for visitors to access the main hallway unsupervised. The management team were keen to ensure that parents felt welcomed into the building but agreed to review their processes to promote children's safety at all times.

Staff used risk assessments to help identify potential hazards and actions to reduce these. In addition to the overall risk assessments for the settings, staff carried out assessments of the outdoor play areas twice daily. These identified where actions were needed to minimise hazards. Where resources and equipment had been identified as needing to be mended or replaced, this had been reported to the manager who had taken appropriate action. These measures helped provide a safe environment for children. The manager oversaw all risk assessment practices to ensure that these were effective and resulted in positive outcomes and experiences for children.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported by infection prevention and control measures. This included correct procedures being followed during nappy changes and mealtimes. We observed some staff not always washing hands after helping children wipe their noses, however, and management agreed to remind staff of the importance of this in minimising the risks of cross infection.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children were cared for by a staff team with the shared ethos of providing a welcoming, nurturing environment. The service aims were displayed, and management recognised the importance of keeping these current. They were consulting with staff to update them and planned to consult with parents.

They were also considering ways of including children. This will ensure that all stakeholders have opportunities to be involved in shaping the vision, values and aims of their service.

Families had opportunities to become involved in the development of the service. Parents told us their suggestions and feedback were sought when the service was planning the garden refurbishment. The manager told us that not all families responded to feedback questionnaires and events for parents, such as the "Parents Pow Wow", had been poorly attended. They were considering different ways to gather parents' and carers' views and planned to develop children's meetings. This will help ensure that all children and families are encouraged to participate in evaluating their experiences.

Positive experiences for children were promoted through quality assurance practices. These had been developed since the last inspection and were positively impacting children's outcomes. Team meetings and individual meetings with staff gave opportunities to discuss practice and identify professional development needs.

Evaluation of the service had identified areas for improvement. These were recorded on an improvement plan, which set out clear objectives. The manager reviewed the progress of developments regularly to assess their effectiveness in improving children's outcomes and experiences. The staff team's involvement in this was in the early stages. We encouraged management to develop self-evaluation practices using best practice guidance such as the Care Inspectorate's "Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged children" and Education Scotland's "Realising the ambition: Being Me". This will help ensure children's experiences are fully evaluated to promote further developments and positive outcomes.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

4.3 Staff deployment

Children were cared for by staff with a range of skills and knowledge. More experienced staff supported newer staff to understand and develop their roles. Staff told us they enjoyed working together and felt that teamwork was one of their strengths. The staff team should continue to strengthen and consolidate their cohesive working practices as they define and develop their roles.

Children experienced continuity of care between home and the setting. When children were dropped off parents were welcomed into the setting. Most parents were given feedback at the end of the day, however we observed that this was missed for some. Parents visiting the setting met with the manager to share information prior to their children settling in. These measures reassured parents that staff cared about providing positive outcomes for their children.

Staff worked together to provide consistency for children. When staff were absent, regular relief staff, or staff from within the setting covered. Parents commented that they feel they know the staff caring for their children well. Most staff breaks were planned to minimise disruption to children. On day one of the inspection, some staff went on a break during children's lunch time, which resulted in children having to wait to have their needs met. On the second day staff had made improvements and organised breaks to ensure sufficient staffing was in place to provide more consistently positive experiences for children.

Children's supervision and support was promoted through positive communication between staff.

They let each other know when they needed to move away from children. This ensured that sufficient staff were available to promote positive experiences and ensure children's safety. When staff left for breaks, they passed on relevant information to help to ensure consistent care for children throughout the day.

Children were protected by the setting's recruitment practices. Management mainly followed correct procedures for safe recruitment. Where they had misunderstood how to implement one pre-employment check, they immediately adjusted their practice to fully comply with guidance. New staff were supported through an induction programme, using the Scottish Government's National Induction Resource. This, alongside mentoring from senior staff supported their confidence in their roles. These measures gave assurance that staff were recruited safely and supported to understand their roles and responsibilities.

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 promote children's safety, wellbeing and development the provider should improve the outdoor environment. This should include but not be limited to ensuring all areas, equipment and resources are safe and well maintained.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22); and 'My environment is safe and secure' (HSCS 5.17).

This area for improvement was made on 22 January 2024.

Action taken since then

The manager and staff had carried out significant improvements to the outdoor area, which were ongoing. All areas had been tidied, and old and broken equipment and resources had been removed. A fence had been erected around the perimeter of the grounds, resulting in a secure area. The outdoor space used by the baby room had been extended and cleaned. Babies now enjoyed a larger and more inviting outdoor area. Improvements were ongoing and the smaller outdoor area, used by the older children, had yet to be developed. All visible hazards had been removed, however, providing a safe play area.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote children's safety and wellbeing, the provider should improve risk assessment practices. This should include but not be limited to:

- a) ensuring that all staff have a full understanding of how to carry out and implement risk assessments to identify and minimise risks for children
- b) auditing of risk assessments and staff practice by management to ensure all hazards are identified and removed.

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

This area for improvement was made on 22 January 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff used risk assessments to help identify potential hazards and actions to reduce these. In addition to the overall risk assessments for the settings, staff carried out assessments of the outdoor play areas twice daily. These identified where actions were needed to minimise hazards. Where resources and equipment had been identified as needing to be mended or replaced, this had been reported to the manager who had taken appropriate action. These measures helped provide a safe environment for children. The manager oversaw all risk assessment practices to ensure that these were effective and resulted in positive outcomes and experiences for children.

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? | 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 |

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.