

Flexible Childcare Services - NESCOL Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 September 2024

Service provided by:
Flexible Childcare Services Scotland
SCIO

Service provider number:
SP2019013370

Service no:
CS2019376983

About the service

Flexible Childcare Services - NESCOL is registered to provide an early learning and childcare service to a maximum of 30 children at any one time not yet attending primary school, and of those 30, no more than six may be aged under two years.

The service is accommodated in a self contained unit within the grounds of North East Scotland College (NESCOL) - Fraserburgh Campus. The children have access to a large playroom, quiet room, and outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 09 September 2024 between the hours of 08:55 and 16:20 and 10 September 2024 between the hours of 09:00 and 16:10. The inspection was carried out by an inspector 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:

- Spoke with children during their play.
- Received 13 parent/carer online questionnaires.
- Received three staff online questionnaires.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Observed practice and daily experiences.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were settled and happily engaged in play and learning.
- Children led their own play through a well-balanced mix of activities both indoors and outside.
- Children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well.
- The staff team were motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to continue to take on training to develop their practice.
- Outdoors should be further developed, allowing children access to more open ended resources, literacy, numeracy and cosy spaces.
- Where appropriate, meaningful next steps for children should be planned, taking account of how this is shared and brought forward into future planning.

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 nurturing care from staff. Most children were settled, relaxed and confident. When children needed comfort or requested cuddles, we saw that staff were responsive to their needs. Positive attachments had been formed which supported children to feel secure and loved. Our observations highlighted, on occasion, staff could be more mindful of younger children who were playing on their own for periods of time. This had been picked up on by the manager during recent observations and they were reviewing staff deployment and the use of spaces to ensure all children are supported well.

Staff knew children well and were able to confidently discuss their interests, likes/dislikes and support that was in place. Parents felt they had a strong connection with the staff. One parent said; "All staff at the nursery are fab, they all have a caring attitude and have a strong connection with [my child] to ensure [they have] a good nursery experience. Which [they do]." Another said; "All staff are there for me, they comfort me and make sure I have a positive day. The manager is very hands on".

Personal plans were in place for all children. The wellbeing being indicators were being used which ensured they were gathering meaningful information, supporting children to receive care and support that is right for them. Care plans were in place for children with additional support needs and identified strategies to support staff to tailor individual care. Since our last inspection plans were now being evaluated and reviewed regularly with families to ensure they contain relevant and up to date information. As a result, staff had access to key information allowing them to consistently offer children care and support tailored to their needs.

Mealtimes had been an improvement focus. Staff sat with children supporting them as they ate which provided a nice social experience. Children ate food that was nutritious and supported their preferences and dietary needs. There were some opportunities for children to develop independence through serving food and drinks. We highlighted that there was scope for this to be developed further, particularly at snack time. Parents told us their children can choose from a range of healthy meals and snacks which reflect their individual, cultural and dietary needs.

Medication was stored safely and securely, easily accessible to staff but out of the children's reach. Medication records sampled contained relevant information to help staff with safe administration. We found however, that forms should more detailed information, particularly around the use of inhalers. We asked that the service ensure their auditing systems takes this into account, to ensure information provided, is clear for staff.

Children slept when they needed to, in quiet cosy spaces, and in the quiet room as part of their daily routine. The setting was equipped with mats and cosy spaces where lights could be dimmed and gentle music played. Staff took time to sit with children to settle and supervise them which supported the children rest safely. We asked that they considered using sheets on the mats for additional comfort. Parents told us that their children could rest, sleep or relax when they needed to.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun and were engaged throughout the inspection. Staff were responsive to children's interests and supported their choice in where they played.

The pace of the day was relaxed and unhurried, which meant children had time to explore their ideas. Children had opportunities to lead their play and we saw children problem solve as use their imagination. We saw children experiment with sending cars down drain pipes. They placed the drain pipes at different angles against reels and enjoyed catching them at the bottom. The children went on to test out different objects like toy animals. They experimented with dropping the animals in from the other side and tipped the pipes to get them out. Children were using the range of resources available to them well, supporting their curiosities and thinking skills.

Interactions were patient and encouraging from staff. During discussions with children, staff adapted their pace and language, which supported children's understanding and language development. Some staff were skilled in using open-ended questions to support children's learning. For example, when the children were sending objects down the drain pipes and an object got stuck, staff asked questions like 'what could we do'? We discussed how this could be developed further throughout the team to ensure learning is meaningful and provides appropriate challenge for children.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were evident within children's play experiences. Children engaged well with real resources in the home corner such as a calculator, phones and the type writer. Adults sang and read stories with children spontaneously and in groups. Children would benefit from books and mark making materials being made available throughout the environment. This would enhance the opportunities available for literacy and numeracy within play spaces.

Planning processes were in the early stages of development. We noted that changes aimed to help staff promote a balance of planned and responsive learning experiences for the children. This included the development of floor books, which further supported the evaluation of learning and highlight the children's input. We discussed the benefits of the families and children being fully involved, encouraging life skills, such as questioning, memory, investigating, and explaining.

The 'Caerus App' was used to capture children's learning and share observations. Staff had recently accessed support and training on writing observations and next steps. Most of the observations we sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress. Staff should now consider planning meaningful next steps were appropriate, thinking about how this is shared and brought forward into future planning. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Children had benefited from more connections with the wider community since our last inspection. They had visited a local care home regularly, went to the shops to buy snack, enjoyed walks in the community and exploring local parks. This contributed to children's sense of belonging and supported them to have new opportunities out with the setting.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's learning and development, the manager and staff should ensure children experience high quality play and learning relevant to their age and stage of development.

This should include ensuring staff are knowledgeable and trained in supporting children's learning and use this to plan meaningful play experiences.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation, and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling' (HSCS 1.30).

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

Children experienced an environment that was well-furnished and well-maintained with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Children's artwork and photographs were displayed, providing children with ownership of their setting as well as creating a sense of belonging. Resources were of a good quality and soft furnishings, such as rugs, cushions and blankets, provided cosy spaces for children to rest during their busy day.

The lay out of play spaces ensured that children could move around areas with ease and could access resources independently. Children were confident in moving around these spaces to explore their ideas and interests. Resources were age/stage appropriate and children had the freedom to transport these to extend their play further.

Children had free flow access to outdoors most of the day which benefited their health and wellbeing, extended their play and learning and gave children choice in where to play. Children explored minibeasts, used loose parts to problem solve and to climb and jump. They played imaginative games using the magnifying glasses. All parents told us their children had the opportunity to play outdoors. One parent said their child enjoyed; "Playing at the park, playing with bubbles, learning to balance, jump over hula hoops, gardening". Another said; "All different kinds of play is presented at nursery. Such as learning about snails, making food, playing together with friends and forming friendships. The list goes on."

Outdoors could be further developed, allowing children access to more open ended resources, literacy, numeracy and cosy spaces. This was currently on the settings improvement plan and we discussed how this could be driven forward utilising leadership roles. **(See area for improvement 1)**

Systems were in place to support keeping children safe. Risk assessments helped staff to mitigate risk and enhanced children's safety. The service used the Care Inspectorate's SIMOA campaign. Children were encouraged to consider risks and staff were seen to support their understanding of potential risks within the environment during their play. When drawing a picture, a child told me; 'this is for Simoa'. When asked who Simoa was, they picked up a purple elephant and replied 'this is her, she keeps us safe'. This supported the children's understanding of risk and keeping themselves safe.

Infection control measures were understood and implemented effectively by staff. Overall, handwashing routines were mostly embedded.

However, staff should ensure all children are supported to wash hands following mealtimes. Staff protected children by providing a clean and hygienic environment and PPE (personal protective equipment) was used at appropriate times such as nappy changing and food preparation. This contributed to keep children safe and well.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's learning and development, the manager and staff should ensure the environment is equipped and resourced to facilitate children's imagination, enquiry, and curiosity. This should include literacy and numeracy, sensory play, and creative play.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I can access a range of good equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes, and choices' (HSCS 5.23).

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 improvements are led well

Since our last inspection, the setting had put plans to update their vision, values and aims again, this time involving staff, children and families. This would support everyone to feel valued and included and ensure that they are meaningful, capturing the needs and wishes of those using and working in the setting.

Children's and families' views and suggestions about their care, play and learning were valued by staff. The feedback we received from parents highlighted that they felt they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Informal approaches such as a closed Facebook group was used for polls and to ask questions. More formal, questionnaires were used by the setting. Feedback from a recent Microsoft survey, had highlighted that the service should look at communication with parents and how information is shared daily about the children. The service were working on the 'Careus App' being used more effectively and we saw that hand overs shared good information about the children's day. The setting had shared their plans in place to support this development on a whiteboard in the cloakroom, which ensured parents felt listened to and to create a collaborative approach to improvement.

Staff told us they felt well supported by leaders in the service and were motivated to improve the service provided. The leadership team shared plans to further include staff in driving change, including developing champion roles and participating in peer monitoring. This would support the team to feel empowered and more involved in driving forward improvements.

A quality assurance calendar was in place and included audits of paperwork and staff practice. These were mostly effective in identifying areas requiring improvement, having a meaningful and positive impact outcomes for children.

An improvement plan identified relevant and meaningful areas for development.

A self-evaluation floor book was being used to document improvement planning and captured progress made involving everyone. Since our last inspection, this system now allowed the team to acknowledge their successes and help to measure the impact improvements have had. This supported the pace of change and ensured improvement was ongoing.

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 towards the children they cared for. This resulted in children being settled, happy and confident. One parent told us; "They all are very welcoming when I drop off my child in the morning, and in the afternoon. I feel really comfortable with leaving my child at Nescol Flexible nursery". Another said; "My [child] is always greeted warmly, staff are always on hand to ensure that [they are] comfortable and always attend to [their] likes/dislikes to make sure [their] day is at nursery is enjoyable".

The leadership team recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed at all times. Overall, the deployment of staff was effective, and they were flexible in their approach, communicating well with each other. Staff moved with children, to support the running of the service and the needs of children. We highlighted that, on occasion, staff should be more mindful of younger children playing on their own for periods.

Staff were appropriately qualified. Some were working towards gaining further qualifications and had a good knowledge of child development. They were able to discuss how they had identified individual areas for development and were supporting children with their social skills, personal care, speech and food and nutrition. One parent told us; " My [child] loves going there to see the staff and the other children, I like taking [them] there as they have managed to take [their] speech on so much and he's learning so much." Another said; "The access to fruit and veg, my [child] struggled to eat it at home and being a nursery [they] now love it and we have managed to get [them] to eat it daily!"

Staff were committed to their professional development to ensure they delivered a high-quality service and improved outcomes for children. Staff had undertaken a range learning, included formal training, professional discussions and self-directed reading. This supported staff to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, children's care, play and learning was informed by current research and best practice. We would encourage the team to continue to reflect on their professional development, making use of the training logs that were available. This would support them to evaluate the impact training had and allow them to identify further training needs.

Staff inductions had also supported staff knowledge and awareness of their role and responsibilities. The setting were already using the 'Early Learning and Childcare National Induction Resource' to encourage questions and reflection. This supported staff to have a good understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and effective ways of working.

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 children's learning and development, the manager and staff should ensure children experience high quality play and learning relevant to their age and stage of development. This should include ensuring staff are knowledgeable and trained in supporting children's learning and use this to plan meaningful play experiences.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation, and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling' (HSCS 1.30).

This area for improvement was made on 6 September 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff had recently accessed support and training on writing observations and next steps. Most of the observations we sampled identified learning which helped staff to assess children's achievements and progress. Staff should now consider planning meaningful next steps were appropriate, thinking about how this is shared and brought forward into future planning.

This area for improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's learning and development, the manager and staff should ensure the environment is equipped and resourced to facilitate children's imagination, enquiry, and curiosity. This should include literacy and numeracy, sensory play, and creative play.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I can access a range of good equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes, and choices' (HSCS 5.23).

This area for improvement was made on 6 October 2023.

Action taken since then

Outdoors could be further developed, allowing children access to more open ended resources, literacy, numeracy and cosy spaces. This was currently on the settings improvement plan and we discussed how this could be driven forward utilising leadership roles.

This area for improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support positive and improved outcomes for children and families, the provider should ensure effective quality assurance systems are fully embedded into practice. This should include, but not be limited to, ensuring effective quality assurance, self-evaluation, and improvement plans are in place which involve staff, children, and parents and lead to continuous improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 6 September 2023.

Action taken since then

An improvement plan identified relevant and meaningful areas for development. A self-evaluation floor book was being used to document improvement planning and captured progress made involving everyone. Since our last inspection, this system now allowed the team to acknowledge their successes and help to measure the impact improvements have had. This supported the pace of change and ensured improvement was ongoing.

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

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