

Mid Annandale Playcare Day Care of Children

Harcourt Place
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 September 2024

Service provided by:
Mid Annandale Playcare Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003002738

Service no:
CS2007143645

About the service

Mid Annandale Playcare provides a daycare for a maximum of 86 children under 16 years of age, of whom - 24 children may be under 3 years old, of whom no more than 9 may be under two years old and 62 children from 3 years upwards.

The service is in partnership with the local authority to deliver Early Learning and Childcare. The service is provided by a voluntary Board of Directors.

The service is based in a purpose built facility which is conveniently situated close to local shops, parks and schools. Children are cared for in four playrooms and enjoy their meals in a separate lunch room. Children benefit from access to a large, secure outdoor area.

At the time of our inspection there were 147 children registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23, 24 and 25 September 2024 between 08:30 and 18:00. 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:

- spoke with and observed children using the service
- received electronic questionnaires from 39 of their families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm and kind care from staff who knew them well.
- Children were happy and busy at play during our visit. A new planning approach to enhance children's play and learning experiences was in the early stages of implementation.
- Children experienced an environment that was warm, bright and homely. Their needs had been considered when recent improvements had been made.
- The whole staff team engaged well with the inspection process. It was clear to us that they were motivated to provide a good service for children and families.
- Whilst staff worked hard to meet children's needs. At times, staff deployment was not sufficient to meet the needs of all children at the right time.

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?	3 - Adequate

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/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind and caring interactions from staff who knew them well. We observed children happily approaching staff for reassurance and support. Staff comforted children with cuddles, and could confidently discuss their individual needs and preferences. As a result almost all children had formed positive relationships and felt safe and secure.

Children's health and well-being was promoted through an unhurried and sociable lunchtime. Children enjoyed a hot nutritious meal or a packed lunch from home. Children were supported to help set up a pleasurable dining environment, this created a sense of ownership of their mealtime experience. Children in all playrooms were encouraged to clear away their own food and plates. This promoted the development of their independence from a young age. Staff sat with children and chatted about their day, providing support when required. We advised the service to consider ways to ensure the lunch room remained calm and relaxed during periods of transitions. This would enhance the positive impact of children's mealtimes.

Children were comforted sensitively to sleep by staff who were responsive to their individual routines. As a result, children were well-rested and happy. We asked the service to consider changing the area where children sleep in the two to three room to reduce the noise level and increase privacy for children who require a rest.

Staff were well informed to meet children's care and support needs through an overall good use of personal plans and daily routine booklets. All about me booklets were in the process of being developed for all children. This would help include their voices clearly in their personal plans. We found some inconsistencies in the quality of the information included in some personal plans and reviews. One parent told us, "Anytime the personal plan has been updated it has been done over the phone and I don't know how to get access to view or update their personal plan." Whilst another parent stated, "The personal plan is discussed regularly and feedback is given frequently through the personal plan phone call, 'family app' and verbal feedback. I feel that the feedback from the nursery is very accurate for my child." We discussed the importance of ensuring that all children's plans include clear information, strategies and accurately monitor children's progress. These should be developed and reviewed in partnership with children and their families. This would ensure that all children are supported to reach their full potential and all families feel included.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were happy and busy during our visit. They were self-selecting resources to lead their own play and learning, confidently moving around playrooms independently. As a result, almost all children were engaged and having fun.

Play and learning could have been enhanced through the provision of more provocations and invitations to play. This would spark children's curiosity, increase the quality of play experiences and add depth to their play and learning. This had been identified by the service prior to the inspection and new planning approaches were in the early stages of implementation. We could see that the new planning format was

more responsive with clearer processes to link with children's individual interests and experiences. The management should continue to embed and monitor the impact of planning approaches across the service. We discussed the importance of including clear evaluations. This would support staff to clearly monitor all children's progress in their learning and development.

Children had fun whilst engaging in holistic play opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills. For example, children had fun using recipes in the mud kitchen, mark making on whiteboards, regularly singing songs and enjoying stories. Children would benefit from more opportunities to develop their numeracy skills through cross curricular areas of the playrooms. Whilst staff were positive and encouraging in their interactions, they would benefit from further training and support in developing their skills in effective questioning. These are questions used to encourage children to think deeply and develop their problem solving skills. The management team told us they had identified that staff would benefit from this prior to the inspection. This would help staff to offer challenge and extend children's play and add depth to their learning, supporting them to achieve their full potential.

Children had regular opportunities to play and learn in their local community. One parent told us their child enjoyed, "going to the park to play or find leaves for craft activities." Another parent told us their child had experienced, "Bug hunts and research (counting the spots on the ladybirds), sensory walks (hear, smell, see, touch), the nature Reserve in Lockerbie, the train Station, playing in the garden at MAP and planting flowers." Children attending during school holidays also regularly went on day trips. As a result, children were meaningfully supported to build connections with their local and the wider community.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. All playrooms were well ventilated with plenty of natural light and homely furnishings. As a result, children were comfortable and happy. Children's needs had been considered when making recent improvements to the environment. For example, the garden had recently been extended to provide a large outdoor grass area to enhance the quality of outdoor experiences, and a bright new lunch room had been developed for children to enjoy their meals. This meant that children knew they mattered.

Children moved around large play spaces with ease. We observed children independently access resources indoors and outdoors. As a result, children were confident in leading their own play. Children's experiences could have been enhanced through an increase in the quantity and variety of creative and sensory resources. This would promote curiosity and support the development of their creative thinking and problem solving skills.

Children benefitted from daily opportunities to be active outdoors. Most children enjoyed free flow access to fully enclosed outdoor play spaces. This supported children's health and well-being. The outdoor space was well designed to provide children with plenty of space and opportunities for active play. This helped children to develop their physical and motor skills. During our visit we observed children having fun climbing trees, riding bikes, running, jumping and laughing. One parent told us, "My child spends a lot of time outside in nursery, no matter what the weather is, whether it's sunny or raining, the nursery make sure he is in the appropriate clothing and loves splashing in the puddles, on the climbing frame, on the bikes and also

going out into the local community." As a result, children were able to develop their physical and motor skills whilst learning about their own limits. We advised the service to consider developing the outdoor environment to include more cross curricular resources and spaces for children to rest and relax if required. This would support children to reach their full potential whilst enjoying the benefits of being outdoors.

Overall, the environment was clean and well-maintained. As a result, children experienced an environment that was safe. Maintenance and repair procedures were in place. We discussed the importance of ensuring all areas requiring maintenance are included in written records and followed up within appropriate timescales. The personal care facilities did not meet best practice guidance outlined in the Care Inspectorate document, 'Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders)'. For example, children in the three to five room only had access to one toilet in their playroom, and children aged over two were sharing changing facilities with children under the age of two. The service told us they would develop a plan following the inspection to make adaptations to meet the current guidance. This would minimise the risk of infection and ensure that children's personal care needs were met at the right time.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The management team engaged well with the inspection process. It was clear to us that they were keen to provide a good service for children and families. Almost all families felt included in service development and their views were regularly sought through online questionnaires. We could see that some suggested areas for improvement had led to changes. Such as, requests for more information about children's daily experiences had been used to inform the service improvement plan. We advised the service to consider ways to respond to all families' feedback, completing a feedback cycle. This would ensure that all families feel valued and able to influence service development.

An improvement plan was in place that outlined key improvement priorities such as planning for play and learning, and information sharing with families. These had been identified through self-evaluation processes based on the Education Scotland evaluative guidance framework, 'How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare.' We could see the early stages of these priorities reflected in practice. We discussed the benefit of developing clear processes to monitor the implementation and measure the impact of improvements. This would help management and the staff team to be clear on their progress, actions required, areas of responsibility and manageable timescales.

Monitoring and auditing systems were in place that had identified areas for improvement. It was not always clear how some areas had been addressed and reviewed. The service should ensure that robust quality assurance systems evidence clear actions and evaluations. This will ensure that improvements are embedded and support positive outcomes for children and families.

All staff felt professional and personally supported. Staff had regular opportunities to meet individually with management to discuss their successes, achievements and any challenges. This ensured that staff felt valued and there was a supportive ethos in the service. Staff would benefit from more involvement in self-evaluation processes and opportunities to develop leadership roles. This would help staff to develop their leadership skills, professional autonomy and promote collaborative practice across the service.

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff were motivated and keen to provide a good service for children and families. They communicated their whereabouts well, and were kind and respectful towards each other. It was clear that staff had developed strong, supportive relationships with each other. Most families told us they felt a strong connection with that staff that cared for their child. One parent told us, "All the staff are extremely friendly and care for the children like they are their own." This created a warm and friendly ethos in the service.

Whilst staff worked hard to support all children throughout our visit. At times, staff deployment was not sufficient to meet the needs of all children at the right time. Particularly during key periods of the day such as collection, personal care, mealtimes, and moving between indoors and outdoors. During these times, staff were occasionally task focussed, often completing more than one task at a time. This resulted in missed opportunities for quality engagement from staff, and some children not being able to access personal care promptly when required. There were also periods of time where children were not appropriately supervised.

Management had identified there been a large number of unwitnessed accidents and we could not see a plan to reduce this. We discussed the importance of effective staff deployment to ensure all children are supervised closely particularly when eating and engaging in risky play. The service should ensure that staff are appropriately deployed to meet the individual needs of all children at all times (see area for improvement 1). This would ensure children's safety and well-being without limiting their experiences.

Children would benefit from a more consistent approach to staff deployment. Children requiring additional support were not always cared for by the same staff member when possible. We discussed the importance of ensuring continuity of care when possible to support children to develop strong attachments. Staff caring for children in the after school care provision varied day-to-day, with no clear roles and responsibilities in relation to key working and planning. As a result, we found some inconsistencies in children's personal plans and play experiences. A few children and families had not developed strong positive relationships with all staff who cared for them. One parent told us, "I still don't know some of the staff's names who look after my older child in the afternoon school room. My child doesn't know their names either and goes four days since mid August. Although they have a photo gallery of staff on each door, they don't look like their photos so it's difficult to work out who is who." The management team had identified that improvements were required to improve consistency in the after school care provision prior to our inspection. They told us they had recently been attempting to keep staffing the same week-to-week. We discussed the importance of maintaining continuity of care and developing clear roles and areas of responsibility for staff. We also suggested providing daily opportunities for parents to spend informal time in playrooms. This would help all families to develop positive relationships with staff and promote positive outcomes for all children and families.

Areas for improvement

1. 1. The service provider and management should ensure that are sufficient numbers of staff who are deployed appropriately to meet the individual needs of all children across the day.

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

'My needs are met by the right number of people" (HSCS 3.15) and 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19).

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?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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