

Alva Play Pals Out Of School Care Day Care of Children

Brook Street
Alva Primary School
Brook Street
Alva
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Telephone: 07903 009 962

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 October 2024

Service provided by:
Alva Play Pals Out Of School Care
Management Committee

Service provider number:
SP2003000682

Service no:
CS2003003345

About the service

Alva Play Pals Out of School Care is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 40 children aged four years six months to 15 years when operating within Alva Primary School, close to public transport and local amenities.

The service is also registered to provide care at a satellite location at Menstrie Parish Church Hall. Here, the service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 24 children of primary school age.

Children have access to a play area, gym hall, sensory room, outdoor spaces and toilets. A nearby kitchen area is available for the storage and preparation of snacks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 October 2024 between 14:40 and 18:00 and 29 October 2024 between 15:00 and 18:10. Feedback was given at the end of the inspection to the manager. The inspection was carried out by one 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:

- spent time with the children using the service
- spoke with or received feedback from 19 parents/carers
- spoke with staff members and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefitted from positive relationships between practitioners and families.
- Staff knew children very well and responded to their individual needs with warmth and nurture.
- The staff and management team engaged with the inspection positively and were keen to take forward any suggestions for improvement.
- Children had fun and engaged in meaningful play.
- Children benefitted from experienced passionate leadership which was improving outcomes.
- The safe recruitment of staff should be further developed to ensure a consistent approach for new staff.
- Staff deployment ensured that children's individual needs were met and that they experienced continuity of care.

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?	4 - 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 experienced warm, nurturing interactions from staff that knew them very well. They were happy and enjoyed their time in the service. One child told us, "It is a great place to be". A parent shared, "My daughter is very happy here, she loves all the activities and the staff". This supported children to feel secure and loved.

Staff had established and maintained positive, trusting relationships with children and families. New staff prioritised getting to know families and spent time at drop off and pick up times to speak to them about their child's day. A parent shared, "Each day I have positive and engaging interactions with all staff looking after my child". As a result, children and families felt welcomed into the service.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning that was developed in partnership with families. Their care plans were updated regularly and were meaningful. Children were involved in sharing their own thoughts and opinions within these plans. Staff then used this information to ensure that supports for children were tailored to their individual interests and needs. One parent told us, "Staff are always in communication about updates to care plans and changes in circumstances. I feel fully involved and confident that he is receiving the best care". This meant children experienced individualised care and support.

Children's mealtimes were a relaxed, unhurried and mostly social experience. Staff were aware of all children in the room and ensured they were safe while eating. Children were able to choose when they wanted to come to have their snack. On the day of inspection, children had chosen what they would like to eat to celebrate Halloween. This respected children's choice and supported them to be involved in their own experiences. For most of the time, staff sat with children and spoke to them about their day. We suggested that staff further develop this to ensure it is consistent throughout both sessions.

Children's medical needs were met as appropriate policies and procedures were in place to support the safe administration of medication. Regular audits of children's information that required medication were in place. We suggested the service review some forms to ensure that actions to be taken are clear. This would further support children's individual health needs.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children enjoyed their time in the setting as they had fun and explored the environment with their peers and staff. Children benefited from a variety of play-based learning opportunities. Staff took time to speak with children about their interest and what they wanted to learn. For example, some children told us that they loved exploring arts and crafts. This was available at both sites for children to explore. As a result, children remained engaged in meaningful play that respected their views.

Children were supported to lead their own learning and guide their experiences in the service. Staff responded positively to children's interest and requests during both sessions. Children told us that they were able to choose which resources they would like from the cupboard. For example, some children chose to make a den with a large parachute and some chairs from the tables. Children laughed and enjoyed these experiences. They were regularly asked what they would like to do at Play Pals and their views and opinions were respected. This supported children to feel listened to and valued.

Children benefitted from access to a large outdoor area at one site and regularly accessed a local park at the other. They told us that they chose when to go out and were given the opportunity to go outside regularly. One parent told us, "My child is very active and is supported to play outside and go on trips to the local park and other places of interest". Another parent commented, "The Menstrie location does not have a garden, so outdoor play needs to be planned". This supported children to be active and benefit from regular fresh air.

Staff spoke confidently about children's individual interests and were able to share this information with us. A floor book had been developed over time to celebrate children's achievements and highlight their own experiences to share with their peers and families. This supported children to reflect on their time in the service.

Children's play and learning was supported by effective planning. Planning for children was based on staff discussions with them to establish their current interests and thoughts on a variety of subjects. Mind maps were used to gather their thoughts and ideas on what they wanted to do, and staff would plan accordingly. The staff team were beginning to evaluate children's experiences and plan for further opportunities. We suggested the team continue to review this to ensure it promotes children's positive experiences in the service.

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 service was offered from two different sites, one at Alva Primary School and the other at Menstrie Parish Church Hall. The spaces were well-furnished, comfortable and mostly homely. Both sites provided children with ample space to move and explore and benefit from a range of resources. Communal areas were welcoming and organised with spaces specifically set out for children. Rooms benefitted from natural light, were well ventilated and positive spaces for children. This supported children to be confident and comfortable during their time in the setting.

A wide range of resources and experiences were available to children throughout the session. Resources for most children provided appropriate developmental challenge and encouraged independence. For example, children spent time dancing in the hall as they played games, or exploring painting rocks. This supported children to remain engaged in play and enjoy their time at the service.

Loose parts were effectively used to support children's developing curiosity and problem solving. For example, children explored a wide range of natural materials in the arts and crafts area. Some children told us that was their favourite experience. This was supported by experienced staff which promoted children's creativity and problem solving. As a result, children's creativity was enhanced from quality experiences and resources.

A few areas of the playrooms were not as homely and welcoming as others. For example, on the first day of inspection there were limited spaces for children to rest or relax. On the second day of inspection, the service ensured that there were spaces for children to rest. We signposted the manager to "Spaces to Grow and Thrive" from the Care Inspectorate to support the development of areas for children to rest and relax. This would ensure that the environment provides spaces which support children to rest, promoting their emotional well-being.

Children's safety was promoted as regularly reviewed risk assessments were in place and effectively highlighted risks to children and staff. This supported a safe learning environment and enhanced children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Staff implemented effective infection prevention and control routines to keep children healthy and safe. Hand washing was promoted throughout the visit. For example, children regularly washed their hands before snack. This promoted children's health as the risk of the spread of infection had been minimised.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

Passionate, caring, experienced leadership promoted positive outcomes for children. The team were committed to delivering high quality experiences for children and families. There was a shared vision amongst the staff team which valued children's rights and recognised each individual child. As a result, children and families experienced a quality service which respected and valued them.

Children's experiences continually improved through effective improvement planning. Staff knew the service well and were confident to discuss the services strengths and areas to further develop. For example, staff shared the recent improvements they had made to observations and planning. A focused improvement plan was in place with clear actions to be taken. We suggested the service continue to review this plan to ensure that it is manageable.

Children benefitted from a service that continued to improve based on the feedback and views of children and families. The management team regularly gathered families' and children's views on what was on offer in the service or what they would like to do. Families told us that they felt their views were valued and opinions were respected. The manager had plans to further develop this approach to formally gather feedback from families regularly. We encouraged the manager to continue with this as planned. This would further support families and children to be meaningfully involved in the development of the service.

Effective policies, procedures and most quality assurance processes were in place to support the development and improvement of the service. The manager regularly reviewed policies to ensure they reflected current best practice guidance. We asked the manager to further review how references are gathered for new staff members. Some staff did not have recruitment information in their staff folders as some of this information was gathered through telephone conversations. To ensure children continue to benefit from a safely recruited staff team, the provider should ensure that this information is recorded accurately (**see area for improvement 1**).

The management team were approachable, passionate and motivated. One parent said, "The manager goes over and beyond for me and I couldn't thank them enough". Staff said they felt very well supported by the leadership team. There were opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles and experienced staff mentored new team members. This was supporting a shared leadership approach.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children are cared for and kept safe by safely recruited staff, the service should ensure all staff have two references in place and these are recorded appropriately.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

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 quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The staff team provided a welcoming, inclusive environment for all children. They displayed warmth and kindness in their interactions. One parent told us, "All staff are welcoming, caring, attentive and want the best for the children. Communication is great". This showed positive relationships which put children and families first and supported positive outcomes.

Staff had developed positive working relationships with each other, which created an inclusive and solution focussed team. There was a range of skills and experience within the team. The staff used their strengths to develop specific areas. All staff commented that the strong team was one of the key strengths of the service. This meant that staff felt valued to grow professionally and provided children with a happy and supportive environment.

Children were supported by a staff team who worked very well together to support all of the children in the out of school care setting. They communicated effectively to ensure information and appropriate strategies were in place for children. Children's individual care plans were shared with staff and when updated, staff communicated this effectively to ensure continuity of care. Staff supported each other throughout the day when giving individual support to some children. This ensured that quality interactions with children were consistent across the day.

Children's needs were met consistently because the right number of staff were available at all times. Staff were proactive in recognising any gaps and supervised children while also spending quality time with them. For example, when more children wanted to go to dance in the hall, staff supported this.

Staff and management worked flexibly to supervise children in their play and offered a range of experiences safely. Transitions were well planned throughout the day to ensure children experienced quality care and support. For example, as children walked from the school to the club at the start of the session. This showed children consistently benefitted from a calm, nurturing experience.

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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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