

St. Margaret's RC Pre School Class Day Care of Children

Blackfriars Street
Montrose
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 October 2024

Service provided by:
Angus Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000043

Service no:
CS2003015755

About the service

St. Margaret's RC Pre School Class is a registered daycare of children service provided by Angus Council and delivered within St. Margaret's RC Primary School, Montrose. The Pre School Class has exclusive use of a play space, cloakroom area, children's toilet facilities, snack and meal space, an enclosed garden and playground area.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of eight children at one time, age from three years to an age to attend primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out by one inspector, which took place on Wednesday 23 October 2024 between 09:15 and 16:00. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluations we:

- Spoke with children using the service
- received feedback from 19 families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and confident in their play.
- Children experienced daily outdoor play in all weathers.
- Children were kept safe by a staff team who were trained, knowledgeable and confident in safeguarding them and their families.
- Children felt valued and respected as their interests and wishes were listened to and developed further.
- Children had a sense of belonging within the service and their community.

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?	4 - 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, caring and nurturing interactions with staff. One parent shared, staff are "very welcoming" and another parent told us, "staff are always helpful." These interactions contributed to building positive relationships between staff, children and their families.

Children's emotional wellbeing was well supported by staff who understood the importance of children understanding their emotions. For example, children expressed their emotions daily, using their self-register to identify how they were feeling. Staff helped children to develop this further through activities, such as creating emotion pictures using their own expressions. As a result, children were beginning to develop an understanding of resilience, how to manage their own and others' emotions.

Children's needs were met through effective personal planning. Important information was gathered which supported staff to meet children's individual needs. Personal plans were reviewed regularly with parents and children. One parent told us "Staff have been great when I have had to make changes to my child's medication, reviewing it with me." We discussed with management ways to streamline children's information to support with auditing processes. This would ensure all important information is kept and reviewed together.

Mealtimes were a sociable and relaxed experience for children within the service. Children had opportunities to develop their independence. For example, by self-serving their meals, tidying and clearing their dishes away. Staff sat with children and engaged in conversations such as, discussing what they would like for their snack that week. This resulted in children who felt listened to and their ideas and choices were respected.

Children had areas to go to if they wanted to sleep, rest or relax. Individual sleep mats were provided for children to ensure they were comfortable while they slept. One parent shared, "I like that there is a cosy arch in the room that has cushions and blankets for my child to go for some quiet time if she needs it." This gave children the choice to rest or sleep when and if they needed to.

Children were kept safe by staff who were confident in a range of procedures. This included safeguarding children and their families, safe storage and administration of medication and accident and incident reporting. Regular staff training and professional discussions took place. Procedures supported the team when reporting concerns. For example, Child Protection Officer's worked together from other local authority services and schools. As a result, staff were confident in current best practice which helped to keep children safe.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun as they played with a variety of resources, both indoors and outdoors. A careful balance of planned and spontaneous activities were available for children to explore their interests and challenge their thinking. For example, following on from the Gruffalo story, children took part in cooking some butternut squash and role playing parts of the story.

Loose parts and natural objects were woven throughout the play spaces. As a result, children were able to develop their imagination, curiosity and follow through with their ideas.

Children experienced opportunities to further develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills. The use of symbols and visuals supported children to complete tasks. For example, how to wash their hands properly or find items in the outdoor space. One parent told us, "We love the borrow a book service that is provided". This strengthened links with home. Children's interest in books and stories were developed further through story spoons, allowing children to tell stories in their own way and help them to be part of storytelling.

Children benefitted from good links with their local community. For example, trips to the library and local walks. Regular visits to the local care home took place, where children and residents socialised and took part in activities together. This provided opportunities for children to build intergenerational relationships where they could create meaningful interactions between different age groups.

Children's learning and development was promoted by staff who knew them well. Floor books and digital platforms were used to track children's learning, achievements and next steps. One staff member shared, "I have recently undertaken floor book training, and this has helped me to become more confident using floor books in an effective way including children." Children were involved in documenting their learning. For example, putting pictures into the book or their comments. One child shared, "look, we did lots with water", while proudly showing what they had been learning. This helped children to revisit their experiences and share what they had learnt and achieved with others.

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 were cared for in play spaces that were welcoming, clean and homely. Children had dedicated spaces to store their personal belongings. For example, cloakroom pegs and benches. This helped children to feel like they had a sense of belonging.

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted as effective infection prevention control measures were in place. Staff and children were seen washing their hands at key times of the day, for example after outdoor play and before having their meals. This helped to reduce the spread of infection.

Children experienced daily outdoor play. The layout of the building did not allow for free flow access to the outside space. Staff shared that they ensured children had a choice of accessing the outside space. We saw children who requested to go outside supported to access this area as they wished. As a result, children's overall wellbeing benefitted from regular outdoor play and learning experiences.

The outside space had been developed since the last inspection. This included removing large overgrowth and bushes, building a sheltered space, creating a fairy garden, mud kitchen and some loose parts. Children were engaged in play for long periods of time at the mud kitchen area making pumpkin and leaf soup. These additional spaces helped children to explore different play opportunities.

The indoor environment provided children with opportunities to explore and use loose parts, natural and real-life objects as they wished.

For example, children were using large circle curtain hooks as earrings and fluffy brushes as make up brushes. Furniture was at an appropriate height for children, lamps and twinkle lights were used throughout the spaces. This created a calming environment for the children to play and explore.

Children's safety was promoted through the use of risk assessments. Children were beginning to be supported to manage and understand risk. For example, their views had been gathered on how to keep the nursery safe when reviewing risk assessments. One child had commented "non-slip mats on the large blocks". We discussed ways to develop this further and signposted the service to the Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act (SIMOA) campaign from the Care Inspectorate. The team had shared they had begun to look at ways to introduce this in a meaningful way to the children. This would help children to build life skills and have an awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe.

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 improvement are led well

The service was in the process of looking at ways to review and develop new values and a vision that is meaningful to their children and families who attend. Gathering views from parents, children and staff would create a shared understanding of what the service means to them.

Children's outcomes were beginning to be positively enhanced through the use of good quality assurance systems. The quality assurance system was meaningful, and all staff were involved in the process. As a result, staff had an awareness of tasks and they were completed as required. Staff used a Leuven Scale observation sheet to review the play spaces and environment as a whole. This helped staff and management to assess and reflect on what worked well and identify areas for development. This ensured improvements were meaningful and positively impacted children's experiences.

Children were beginning to benefit from a service who had developed a meaningful improvement plan and culture of self-evaluation that led to continuous improvement. Improvement priorities were identified through local authority, environment and children's observations. Further areas were identified for improvement through parent feedback and monthly audits. For example, supporting children's wellbeing was identified as an additional improvement, while children settled into the service. One parent told us, "Staff have been helpful with separation anxiety at drop off." Activities and stories provided, helped children to begin to understand and manage their emotions. As a result, children's outcomes and experiences were improved.

Families were meaningfully involved in their children's play and learning experiences. Parents agreed that they were always welcomed into the service. One parent shared, "I have the opportunity to discuss my child in the mornings, pickup times, stay and play sessions and reviews." This supported families to be included in their children's learning journey and feel part of the service.

Children were cared for by staff who had undergone a robust induction process. The Early learning and childcare: national induction resource was used to support staff who were new to the service. An additional induction file had been created to share with supply staff. This detailed important information about the service, children and their families, such as allergies and evacuation procedures. This helped all staff know children and their families well and keep them safe.

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

Children and families were warmly greeted and welcomed into the service regularly. For example, some parents came in to help with the development of the garden space. This helped build positive transitions and communication. Children were consistently supported throughout the day by the right number of staff to meet their needs. This included effective planning of staff breaks to ensure that children were supported by familiar staff. As a result, children experienced high quality care, play and learning.

Children benefitted from a staff team that communicated well together. They were flexible throughout the day and ensured children's needs were met. Staff asked each other if they needed help, or let others know if they were leaving the area. The use of walkie talkies supported good communication between the outside and inside area. For example, if a child wanted to go outside or if more resources were requested outside. This created a nurturing environment for children where they felt valued and respected.

The service was led by a passionate team who wanted to get it right for children and families in the service. Parents told us how they valued the consistent staff within the service. One parent shared, "It is nice to see that there is a headteacher who is present in the building everyday." One staff member told us, "Our headteacher pops into the nursery a lot and knows the children and their families very well." As a result, consistency was provided for children and their families, which contributed to the service's home from home ethos.

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 ensure children receive a high quality service, the service should ensure robust self evaluation and effective quality assurance systems are developed and implemented to improve outcomes for children.

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 31 May 2023.

Action taken since then

The service has developed effective quality assurance systems, including self-evaluation process. These systems are meaningful and were beginning to improve outcomes and experiences for children within the service.

This area of 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?	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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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