

Portobello Toddlers Hut Playgroup Day Care of Children

28 Beach Lane
Edinburgh
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 November 2024

Service provided by:
Portobello Toddlers Hut Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003003024

Service no:
CS2003013207

About the service

Portobello Toddlers Hut Playgroup is situated in the Portobello area of Edinburgh. It is one of the oldest community run, self funded childcare facilities in the UK and has become a well known part of the community as a result. It is situated close to local amenities such as shops and a leisure centre, as well as being located directly on the beach promenade. The playgroup is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children aged from two and a half years to Primary School age, of which no more than 15 children shall be under three years old. The playgroup can operate between the times of 8:15am to 3:15pm, Monday to Friday. At the time of our inspection 24 children were registered. The service operates Monday to Thursday 8.30am - 3pm offering morning, afternoon and full day sessions.

The playgroup is provided from a portacabin that the playgroup has sole use of, and is comprised of two playrooms, a kitchen area, office and purpose-built toilets. There is an outdoor space to the side of the property. The playgroup is operated by a management committee made up of parent volunteers and a manager has day-to-day management responsibilities for the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 19 November 2024 from 09:30 until 15:00 and Wednesday 20 November 2024 from 09:10 until 13:30. 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:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with management, two staff and the chair person
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents
- reviewed feedback from 15 parents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing and kind interactions from staff.
- Children were engaged in their play and interested in the experiences available to them.
- Children were happy, settled and confident in the setting.
- Children benefitted from a manager, staff and provider being committed to the development of the service and were receptive to suggestions made.

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?	5 - Very 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 evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children and families were warmly welcomed into the service by staff who knew them well, and used their names during conversations. This gave children and their families a sense of value and connection. Children received sensitive interactions where their feelings were acknowledged and validated. Staff asked permission before carrying out personal care. For example, asking before wiping a child's face. This allowed children to feel respected and make their own choices.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal plans that were developed in partnership with parents. A parent commented, 'I can discuss my child's development with the staff. They are happy to help and very often they come up with advice'. A child centred approach to settling children into the service was done at a pace that was comfortable for each child. For example, during a child settling in staff made suggestions to the parent to position themselves where their child could see them but to allow them to explore the playroom. This enabled the child to engage in the activities and with other with the security of their parent being at a distance that felt comfortable.

The nurturing ethos and respectful approaches meant that children and families were supported by staff who genuinely cared for them. Staff supported a child with their communication by using signs and visual supports that were shared with parents to use at home. As a result the staff worked in partnership with the parent to ensure the child was effectively supported.

Children experienced positive mealtimes that were calm and unhurried with staff being present throughout. Routines were familiar to children, including washing hands, selecting their seats and tidying up after mealtimes. Children benefitted from having lunch in small groups as this enable rich conversations with each other and staff. Children had the opportunity to prepare snack, cutting up fruit and measuring oats for porridge. Staff supported a child's curiosity about the difference from cows milk and oat milk. As a result, children shared new learning through everyday experiences.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Planning approaches were child led, following their interests and supported by seasonal changes. Children's voices were captured within consultative plans and floor books through quotes, comments and photos. For example a child shared that they had seen a heron bird at the park, this was extended by staff supporting a group of children to research birds in the local area. This was recorded in plans and floor books about children's existing knowledge. We discussed with the staff how to enhance learning further by capturing children's new learning.

Children had access to a variety of resources that enabled them to lead their own learning and to support their interests. For example, the seasonal table had real resources, including pumpkins, twigs and leaves alongside local wildlife animals such as foxes and hedgehogs. Children could select other animal resources from accessible storage. A child commented 'dinosaurs don't hibernate, but they are my favourite'.

Children benefitted from having direct access to outdoors throughout their day. This enabled children to make choices about when and for how long they played outdoors. Children enjoyed sharing books with staff and friends outdoors and playing in the water tray. Children were able to care for potted plants around the garden and staff shared the plans to introduce more nature play as part of garden development. As a result children were able to access a range of play experiences when they chose to spend extended periods of time outdoors.

Literacy and numeracy had been developed across the indoors and outdoors, through carefully selected resources including books, mark making opportunities and games. Children participated in group time that enabled staff to share a story based on planning and seasonal topics. Staff skilfully introduced new words and concepts to children. For example, introducing that animals hibernate for Winter. This allowed children to practice new words, find out about hibernation, and through the use of props learn through their play.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a setting that was clean and homely. Gentle music was played in the background that created a calm and welcoming space. Children's belongings were respected with coats hung on pegs, and a seated area for children to remove and put on their coats easily. This provided children and their families with a sense of belonging and value.

Informative displays shared information about the service, including staff photographs and information about services in the local community. This enabled children and their families to be connected to the setting and wider community.

Children experienced indoor and outdoor spaces that were well maintained. Staff had considered how areas were used by children and developed spaces that allowed play to flow. For example, indoors play areas were set up so that children could move through quieter experiences such as books, arts and crafts into to the back room that was available for music, block play, and role play. This provided opportunity for children ease themselves into their play, and to express themselves without restrictions on noise.

Children benefitted from a spacious outdoor area, with space to ride wheeled toys, play with balls and run around. Children were able to enjoy books in a wooden shed with soft furnishings providing comfort and shelter. Children cared for some potted plants and the team shared plans on the development of natural areas within the garden. A parent commented, 'The staff are great at changing the outdoor space to keep things exciting for the children'. As a result, children's play was sustained as their interests were supported.

The secure door entry system at the main entrance ensured children's safety, this was monitored further by staff during busier periods including pick up and drop of times. Effective infection prevention control measures were in place, including regular hand washing and cleaning of resources and equipment. This minimised the spread of infection. As a result of the systems in place children were kept safe throughout their daily interactions and play.

How good is our leadership?**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager and staff were committed to providing a quality service. Staff told us they felt supported by the manager and their ideas and contributions were encouraged. The manager was aware of the skills and experience each member of staff brought to the service. For example, being a skilled story teller, having an interest in music and movement and having creative ideas for engaging games. As a result, children were able to seek out specific staffs areas of skills and knowledge as part of their interests and play.

A quality assurance calendar was in place providing structure to operational and practice tasks. These were balanced across the year to ensure that they were planned for and actioned. For example, reviews of personal plans were planned for ensuring that information about children was correct to enable staff to provide the right care and support. Quality assurance could be enhanced further using guidance documents to inform self-evaluation approaches. This could further opportunities for deeper staff reflection.

The parent's committee was in the process of establishing roles and responsibilities in response to changes in committee membership. The chairperson spoke enthusiastically about the improvement plan for the service, including the development of the outdoor space and parental engagement. As a result, children benefitted from a committee and staff team working together to create further opportunities and improvements.

Parents views were sought regularly throughout the year, with outcomes and actions being shared at termly meetings, and followed up by email communication. For example, arrangements for drop of and pick up was discussed and shared with parents, this enabled parents and staff to work together to support children through daily transitions.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff were respectful towards one another and worked well together. This created a positive environment for children in which they felt safe and secure. Staff were happy and spoke positively about the children and the service.

The deployment of staff across the service was well managed to support children's needs. Staff worked closely with each other to ensure children had access to the full provision across the whole day. Staff communicated effectively with each other when tasks took them away from their responsibilities, this enabled colleagues to deploy themselves to ensure children were supervised and cared for.

Mandatory training was up-to-date and professional development and learning was valued. Staff spoke positively about their own learning and were reflective on the impact it had on their practice. For example, attending training on how to support children with bladder awareness. This enabled staff to consider children's experiences and how their practice could further support children's wellbeing. As a result, children experienced staff who were open to new ideas and approaches that supported learning and wellbeing for children.

Annual appraisals had recently been introduced in addition to the existing supervision sessions. This provided an opportunity for staff to reflect with the manager and to plan their professional development for the year ahead. Staff spoke positively about their appraisals and the support they received from the manager. As this approach becomes fully imbedded in practice it will further strengthen the team approach to the service.

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

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