

Newburgh Mathers School Nursery Class Day Care of Children

Newburgh Mathers School Nursery
School Road
Newburgh
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Telephone: 01358 281 120

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 November 2024

Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000029

Service no:
CS2003015704

About the service

Newburgh Mathers School Nursery Class is a day care of children service provided by Aberdeenshire Council. They are registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 16 children aged 2 years to those not yet attending primary school. Of those 16 children no more than 10 children are aged 2 years to under 3 years. There were up to 13 children present during the inspection.

The service is delivered from a room within Newburgh Mathers Primary School in the coastal village of Newburgh. Children have access to a playroom and cloakroom area. There is direct access from the playroom into the enclosed outdoor play area and garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 and 28 November 2024 between 08:30 and 17:00. 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 and complaint 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 and one of their parents/carers
- received 13 completed questionnaires from parents and staff
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and well settled in the service. They benefitted from positive nurturing interactions with staff.
- Children were able to lead their own play, supporting them to follow their interests.
- Children enjoyed direct access to the outdoor areas and where able to choose when to do this throughout their day, promoting their choice and wellbeing.
- Children benefitted from a staff team which was reflecting on their practice and identifying where improvements could be made.
- The pace of change should be increased to promote positive experiences for children and families involved in the evaluation of the service.

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's wellbeing and confidence benefitted from warm and caring interactions with staff. Staff gave lots of praise, encouragement and reassurance as was necessary for each child. Parents told us they were happy with the care provided and felt they had a connection with staff looking after their child. They said there was "Good, warm compassionate care. Individual approach to each child. Great play environment with good local experiences (park, café visits etc)" and that "Staff are friendly and approachable. They ask on adults' welfare and the go on in their work etc with genuine interest".

Children's privacy and dignity was promoted during personal care routines. This included supporting children's confidence through chatting at nappy changing and ensuring children were given time to be independent when changing.

Lunch was a relaxed and sociable time for children. They were supported in tasks such as pouring their own drink and serving their side dishes, promoting independence and choice. Staff sat with children, most of the time, and encouraged them to participate in discussions. Children were able to lead these discussions and there were a variety of topics covered. This supported children to develop communication skills and form positive relationships with peers and staff. However, at times such as the beginning and end of the mealtime, staff focus was on tasks rather than the children. This meant there were one or two occasions when children were not consistently responded to or supported. The manager agreed to review lunch times to support a consistent approach.

Although no children currently required to sleep while at nursery, staff recognised the importance of this for some children. Sleep mats and bedding were available if necessary and where children would be least disturbed had been considered. Currently the soft furnishing and cosy reading nooks were used for children who may need some quieter time.

Staff used information gathered in personal plans to support them in identifying children's needs. Details were given of the strategies of support when children had an identified need, for example, to support children's language and communication. This supported a consistent approach for children, promoting their development. Where no such need had been identified there was less information in the plan to assist staff in promoting children's progress. The management team agreed to develop the plans to reflect staff knowledge of the support children were being given. This will ensure that staff have the information they need to consistently meet the individual needs of all children.

Children's health was supported as procedures were followed for the safe administration of medication. This included the storage of medication and the records of children's health needs and parents' permissions.

Children's wellbeing was supported by staff understanding of the procedures to follow should they have a concern over a child's safety. This included their role in identifying, recording and reporting these concerns. Staff confidence in this was being promoted through discussion of case studies.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Children were enjoying themselves and having fun in their play. They were able to lead their own play through accessing resources and choosing to play outside or indoors. The process for planning for children's experiences and learning was in the early stages. Some challenges around staffing had led to delays in fully embedding this into practice. Staff were responding to the observed interests of children but were not yet evaluating the outcomes of their planned activities. The management recognised that further support was needed in the planning and assessment of learning and had plans in place for this.

Children's skills in literacy and language were promoted through their interactions with staff. This included spontaneous and planned story telling. Staff confidence in interactions to support learning had improved since the last inspection. For example, staff were taking opportunities to encourage children to recount the stories and predict what may happen. Opportunities for mark making and writing were available throughout the session and staff supported children in recognising their names and other environmental print. There were fewer opportunities for children to practice their numeracy skills. For example, staff encouraged children to count but there were limited resources available to encourage measurement and comparison.

Children's sense of belonging was supported through strong links with the community and most parents saw this as a strength of the service. They told us, "I love that there are regular opportunities for visiting places in the community" and that their child enjoyed "Visits to local parks and cafes".

Staff shared information on children's learning and experiences with parents through updates at collection and within paper learning journals. Parents could access the journals at handover times or at events such as parents' nights or stay and play visits. However, only one of the journals we sampled had feedback from parents showing they had accessed the information. Plans were in place to introduce a digital app for sharing children's learning which should make access easier. Parents told us they were looking forward to this.

The observations within these journals were regular and specific to individual children. However, identification of children's learning was not consistently recorded and shared. For some of the journals we sampled next steps had been identified to support children's progression. There was little information on how the child would be supported to achieve these next steps. Including more detail on the strategies to be used to promote this would support a consistent approach.

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

The playroom was comfortable and welcoming for children and families. Soft furnishings such as a child sized sofa, cushions and rugs were used to promote a homely feel. The room was well ventilated and had plenty of natural light which supported children's health and wellbeing.

Children had direct access to the outdoor area from the playroom and could choose to play outdoors at any time for most of the day. The outdoor area had been improved since the last inspection. This included a better layout of resources, for example, the mud kitchen had been move closer to water to facilitate play.

The poor drainage, which had caused a large puddle near the entrance to the playroom, had been repaired promoting children's safety. There were still some improvements planned to make the most of the area to promote positive experiences for children. Staff had started to gather children's views to impact these improvements.

Children were able to freely access most of the resources which they needed. This enabled them to follow their interests. Resources were well organised to promote children's interest, for example, shelves were used to attractively display books and games, encouraging children to access these.

There had been some ongoing issues with leaks in the cloakroom and these had now been fixed. However, the décor was yet to be repaired. Plans were in place to do this during the school holidays and completion of this should promote feelings of respect and value for children and their families. In some areas of the room there was some clutter of resources and equipment. For example, in the cloakroom and around one of the sinks. The manager agreed to reorganise these areas. Removing clutter improves the ease of cleaning and provides a less overwhelming environment for children.

Children's safety was supported through the assessment of risk. This process had been recorded, noting the hazard and mitigating actions to be taken to minimise the risk. Staff were proactive in removing spills of sand and water to prevent slips. Children were beginning to participate in discussions around their safety and in assessing risks. This should be continued to support children in developing an awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Infection prevention and control (IPC) measures were in place to support children's health. This included regular hand washing at appropriate times and the cleaning of surfaces. Guidance for exclusion periods following illness had been shared with parents and staff, supporting their awareness of when to stay away from nursery.

Children and family's privacy was promoted through the safe storage of paper and digital records.

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 shared the vision, values and aims of the school, supporting feelings of inclusion. These were in the process of being reviewed with parents. Completion of this process will support everyone to recognise what is important for the setting to meet the needs of children and families.

Parents told us they felt involved in the development of the service. Some commented on the variety of methods used to gather their feedback saying that there was an "open dialogue with the staff". There were a variety of methods of gathering feedback from parents including face to face exchanges and digital questionnaires and surveys. Staff were beginning to capture children's views on their experiences and planned changes through discussions. There were plans to further develop ways to gather younger children's opinions and suggestions. Proceeding with this will improve children's ability to influence change and improvement in their service.

The manager and staff were involved in self-evaluation of the service against best practice documents. This

supported an atmosphere where staff felt able to make suggestions and initiate change. Self-evaluation, along with feedback from parents and other professionals, led to identification of where change was needed. Action plans had been put in place to support development in areas.

Improvements had been made, such as changes to the outdoor area and staff interactions to extend children's learning. However, some of the planned changes had not yet been fully implemented within planned timescales. The manager should look at ways of increasing the pace of change. This will ensure that the children and families involved in the evaluation process experience the benefit of improvement. The manager and staff should ensure that changes are fully evaluated against the children's outcomes and experiences. This will support them in assessing the impact of changes made and identifying where further improvement is needed.

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

The manager and provider recognised the importance of ensuring the service was appropriately staffed to support children's wellbeing. The staff team had a range of skills and experiences which benefitted children by supporting positive experiences across the day. The importance of positive attachments with children was recognised. When relief staff were needed, efforts were made to use staff that were familiar with the children and setting routines.

Time was taken to support children's transitions in and out of the service. This included making time to talk to parents and greeting children individually as they arrived. Most parents were happy with communication and all said they felt welcomed into the service. While some commented that there was "Always time to talk with staff at pick up and drop off", one or two indicated they felt rushed. Events such as stay and play sessions and parents evenings were arranged to support communication and a new digital app was being implemented. These actions should ensure that all parents have access to information on their child's experiences each day.

When staff took breaks, the timing of these was planned to minimise any impact on children's experiences. Staff communicated well with each other, providing information which supported positive experiences for children. They treated each other with courtesy and respect, promoting a relaxed and happy environment. Staff were generally proactive in identifying where they needed to be to support children. This included moving outdoors with groups of children or joining in children's games. However, at lunchtime experienced staff were completing tasks while new and relief staff were supporting children. We discussed this with the manager who agreed to review how roles were allocated at this time.

A system of induction and mentoring meant that staff were supported to gain confidence in their role. A buddy system was used for new staff and induction information was available for new and relief staff to support them to meet children's needs. Regular team meetings gave staff opportunities to share their experiences and skills. Regular individual meetings between staff and manager were not yet established. Having these meetings routinely will support staff development and wellbeing.

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

In order to consistently support children's learning and development staff should further develop their use of skilled interactions to extend children's learning.

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

'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

This area for improvement was made on 22 June 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff development and learning had taken place and most staff were now demonstrating interactions which supported children to extend their interests and learning.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

In order to support children's safety and promote positive experiences the outdoor area should continue to be improved. This should include but not be limited to:

- continuing with planned developments to promote consistently positive outdoor play and opportunities for children
- maintaining ground surface to support children's safety and minimise risk.

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

'My environment is safe and secure' (HSCS 5.17).

This area for improvement was made on 22 June 2023.

Action taken since then

Drainage and surfacing in outdoor area had been improved. This led to a safer environment with less chance of slipping outside and reduction in wet floor from shoes coming in causing slips. There was no standing water removing that risk of infection or contamination.

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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