

Gordon Park Early Learning and Childcare Day Care of Children

Cricket Pavillion
Gordon Park
Ellon
AB41 9GN

Telephone: 01358 722 234

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 November 2024

Service provided by:
Gordon Park ELC

Service provider number:
SP2003000498

Service no:
CS2003002632

About the service

Gordon Park Early Learning and Childcare is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 14 children at any one time, aged from two years to those not yet attending primary school. Of the total number of children, no more than 12 shall be under two and a half years of age.

The service will operate from Cricket Pavilion, Gordon Park, Ellon, AB41 9GN. If the premises at Cricket Pavilion, Gordon Park are unavailable, the service will operate from Ellon Academy, Room 4, Community Campus, Kellie Pearl Way, Ellon, AB41 8LF.

We visited the service whilst operating from Ellon Community Campus.

Ellon Community Campus is situated on the outskirts of Ellon, Aberdeenshire. Children are cared for in one large playroom with access to an outdoor play area.

The Cricket Pavilion, Gordon Park is located in the centre of Ellon and is well situated for local shops, schools, and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 and 27 November 2024 between 09:00 and 15:30. 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:

- interacted with children using the service
- spoke with five of their parents/carers
- spoke with staff and management
- received six completed questionnaires in total
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were cared for with nurturing and caring approaches.
- Children were offered nutritious and healthy snacks and lunches. However, mealtimes could be improved with staff sitting with and supporting children at all times.
- Children were happy and independent learners who were supported by the skilled interactions of staff.
- Children played in an inviting and attractive environment which was well maintained with good quality equipment and resources.
- The service promoted a culture of inclusion and working together with families, promoted through the appointment of a family learning practitioner.
- Self evaluation and quality assurance practices were effective to ensure the smooth transition to Ellon Community Campus.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very 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 different parts of this key question as good and very good, with an overall grade of good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were cared for with nurturing and caring approaches. Staff were warm and welcoming and responded to children's cues for help or support with smiles and positive interactions. Where children sought comfort or closeness, this was given through regular hand holding, being down at the children's levels, making eye contact, and sitting on knees. Parents told us they were confident their children were well cared for. Their comments included, "Staff are all very approachable, extremely helpful, and brilliant giving person-centred care to each child".

Children's health and wellbeing was well supported by information collated in their personal plan. Parents were central to this process and told us a strength of being a smaller setting meant staff knew their children well. A few children benefitted from an additional support plan with key strategies to support their progress and development. These were developed in consultation with other agencies, such as the speech and language therapy unit. This meant children were progressing well and were provided with consistent strategies, such as using Makaton (a communication system using symbols and signs).

Children were offered nutritious and healthy snacks and lunches. A few children enjoyed helping to prepare snack and were supported to cut and slice fruit. Lunches were calm, unhurried, and sociable experiences where children were able to chat with friends. Children were supervised by staff who provided praise and encouragement for trying new foods. However, staff did not always sit with the children to help keep them safe, prompt meaningful discussions, and promote good manners.

Children were able to rest and relax in cosy, calm areas. Quiet activities, such as reading stories, helped children to rejuvenate and feel ready to play.

Children were kept safe and well by knowledgeable staff in the safe administration of medication. Medication kept on the premises was stored safely in line with guidance and medical care plans were regularly reviewed with parents/carers to ensure the information was up-to-date. However, forms did not include clear signs and symptoms to ensure children receive their medication accurately. The manager advised forms would be updated.

1.3 Play and learning

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.

Children were happy and independent learners. They were offered a range of age-appropriate play experiences and were able to choose where they wanted to play and why. For example, children had fun building a train track, rolling and pressing playdough, and creating a den with cardboard boxes. This contributed to a busy ethos with children who were engaged in their learning. Parents commented, "There is always a wide range of different activities which help stimulate children's play. Lots of different stations are setup each day to make it fun and interesting".

Planning approaches were working well to support children's learning and development. Observations were used to identify next steps to support children's learning and help plan interesting play experiences. Observations were shared with parents, encouraging strong home links and continuation of learning. Staff celebrated children's achievements, raising children's confidence and self esteem.

Staff demonstrated skilled interactions when supporting children in their play. They encouraged turn-taking and ensured children were included and listened to. Staff were responsive to children's interests and life experiences. For example, when children spoke about their experience of going to the doctor, staff facilitated their learning by providing doctor's play equipment and stimulated their interest using effective questioning. This led to engaged children who experienced appropriate challenge and depth in their learning for their age and stage of development.

Children took part in a balance of spontaneous and organised activities which supported their learning and development in language, literacy, and numeracy. For example, some children enjoyed drawing pictures of their family to make a calendar. As they drew, they chatted with staff describing their family members and pets, helping to develop early communication and writing skills. Songs and rhymes were embedded in the daily routines and there were a variety of books for children to read. Staff introduced early mathematical language and numbers and shapes when playing games.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their own and wider communities. Close links had been developed with the local care home for the elderly and regular visits helped children build close relationships and friendships with the residents. These visits were currently suspended due to the use of the alternative accommodation. The manager advised they were beginning to explore new ways for community involvement closer to the premises at Ellon Academy.

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.

Children were cared for in a playroom with direct access to an outdoor play area. The playroom was bright, airy, and well ventilated. Staff commented that the spacious playroom added to children's engagement and promoted a calm but busy atmosphere.

The setting was well furnished, comfortable, and well maintained. Any issues were reported immediately and repaired promptly. This contributed to children playing in a safe environment.

Children played in an inviting and attractive environment. When moving premises, consideration had been given to the equipment needed without compromising children's learning. The playroom was well set out with plenty of space for children to play on the floor, rest in comfortable spaces, or play games at tables. The role play corner was well resourced with a range of real-life resources for children to play and learn using familiar items. A good range of sensory materials, including paint, water, and playdough, supported children's learning through imaginative and creative play.

Outdoors, there were a variety of loose parts to support problem solving and imaginative play. Children had previously taken part in gardening and growing, developing a good understanding of the world around them. A large and attractive mud kitchen had also been created in the garden at Gordon Park.

Staff worked well together to promote a safe environment for children. Risk assessments had been completed to help identify any hazards and accidents and incidents had been audited to help identify any trends and patterns. Parents 'strongly agreed' that their child was safe at the setting. The Care Inspectorate campaign to keep children safe at nursery had been shared with children and was embedded in practice.

Children's health was promoted by staff's understanding of infection prevention and control. The environment was clean and children were well supported to wash their hands.

Children's privacy was protected by the safe storage of their information, including electronic and paper files.

How good is our leadership?

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.

The service was managed by an experienced and skilled manager. They were supported in their role by a very supportive committee who were clear of their roles and responsibilities. This helped create conditions where all people were able to initiate well informed change and share responsibility for the process.

Staff were valued for their contributions and leadership qualities. This led to an enthusiastic and committed staff team who took responsibility and ownership for improving and developing the service.

The vision, values, and aims for the setting positively informed nursery practice. All stakeholders, including parents, children, and staff, were involved in the consultation process to ensure they were fully reflective of their aspirations.

The service promoted a culture of inclusion and working together with families. This was promoted through the appointment of a family learning practitioner. Children and families benefited from initiatives, such as home visits prior to starting nursery, home learning bags, coffee mornings, and parent information sessions. This led to improved family engagement and better experiences for children.

There were opportunities for children and families to influence change within the setting. Parents and members of the community were invited to share their views, make suggestions, and help manage the setting by joining the committee. Play-and-stay sessions and accompanying the children on outings supported parent involvement and promoted an inclusive ethos. Parents had been asked for feedback on the service provision and responses were very positive. Parents commented, "Opinions are always welcome, stay-and-play sessions are offered, and regular sessions are arranged which parents are invited to" and "We are always encouraged to be involved which, again, makes it personable".

Children's voices were included through the use of floor books and staff followed their interests when playing.

Self evaluation and quality assurance practices were focussed on the smooth transition to Ellon Community Campus. This helped ensure children and their families were fully involved, well supported, and able to cope with the changes.

Previous quality assurance and audits had been effective to help identify where improvements were needed and any development needs. As a result, staff had undertaken nurture training and had conversations

around their understanding of gender-neutral practice, impacting on a very inclusive and welcoming ethos. Key areas identified for further development included supporting children's understanding of their rights.

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.

Recruitment procedures had been reviewed to help ensure the safety of children. New members of staff were supported with an effective induction, helping to develop their confidence and skills needed for their role.

Children and their families were supported by an experienced staff team. Some staff had worked at the setting for a number of years and had built positive relationships with families. Parents told us that staff were very friendly, approachable, and helpful. Parents commented, "I really like the intimacy of the setting i.e the staff's relationship with the children. The children love the staff and the staff are passionate about their work and this is passed onto the engagement the children have with staff".

Children and families new to the setting were supported with home visits and settling in sessions. This contributed to building strong attachments and happy, confident children.

The approach to staffing meant there were enough staff to keep children safe and well. However, staff breaks were not well planned and led to inconsistency of care at busier times of the day, such as mealtimes or arrival and departure. We discussed this with the manager who agreed to take action to ensure children's experiences across the day were positive.

There was a positive ethos of attendance and any staff absence was well covered. Relief staff were consistent which led to staff and children knowing each other well.

Children were supported by a team who worked well together. Most staff had worked in the setting for several years and had developed good working relationships. Staff communicated well throughout the day. They recognised gaps in care and took appropriate action to help.

Staff were committed to developing their skills and knowledge. They had undertaken a range of training, including developing their skills in supporting children's communication and early language. This was evident in their skilled approach in using Makaton.

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	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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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