

Woodland Play Ltd Day Care of Children

Greenbank Woodland Play Nursery
Greenbank Gardens
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 November 2024

Service provided by:
Woodland Play Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2022000208

Service no:
CS2022000314

About the service

Woodland Play Ltd is a day care of children service and is set exclusively in an outdoor learning environment located within the National Trust site at Greenbank Gardens, East Renfrewshire.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 26 children aged 3 years and over. At the time of inspection 18 children were registered with the service.

Children have access to a large fully enclosed paddock with outdoor toilets, handwashing facilities and a designated space to prepare and eat food. The coach house provides shelter and facilities for children to have their meals during the winter months.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection, which took place on 19 and 20 November 2024 between 10:00 and 16:30. 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:

- spoke with children using the service and eight of their families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed and sampled documents
- spoke with visiting professionals

Key messages

- Children were happy, safe and secure
- Staff had a kind, caring and nurturing approach
- Children were engaged in their play and learning
- Positive relationships had been formed with families
- The management team led the service well
- Staff worked well together to ensure children's needs were met
- The management team and staff were committed to the quality 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?	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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good as there were a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurture care and support

Children were very well cared for in a calm, kind and nurturing environment. Relationships were important to staff within the service and they worked together with families, to ensure that children's experiences were positive. Staff knew children well and respected them as individuals and included them in decision making. As a result, children's confidence and self-esteem was promoted.

Staff shared information effectively with each other and families, which helped ensure children received consistent care and support. Families told us they felt well informed about the service and their child's care and wellbeing. As well as a comprehensive family handbook, the service shared information regularly through digital methods and by talking to families at key times of the day. This helped ensure continuity of care.

Staff interacted with children respectfully and gently. They responded to children as individuals, and reassured them when they needed comfort, listened to them and consulted with them. Children were encouraged to be independent and take responsibility. For example they could put their coats on by themselves, and make decisions about games and activities they wanted to participate in. This safe, nurturing environment meant that children could confidently express their views and ask for help when they needed it.

All children had a personal plan which contained key information about their health, wellbeing, and safety needs. These were shared with families, and they contained information about children's interests and preferences. This enabled staff to plan for children's individual needs. We made some suggestions about how the layout of personal plans could be developed.

Mealtimes were sociable experiences. As the weather had become much colder, mealtimes had recently moved indoors and children were adapting well to the change of routine. Staff supported children well as they sat with them, engaged them in conversation and role modelled good eating habits. Menu planning was based on children's dietary needs and preferences, which meant that meals and snacks were nutritious and tasty. Children looked forward to their meals and enjoyed the mealtime experience. Staff often served children their food. We asked the service to promote children's independence more, by involving them in meal and snack preparation and encourage them to self-serve.

The pace of the day was relaxed, which provided children with opportunities to be active and rest as needed. Children had time to be curious and investigate the learning environment and access quiet areas if they wanted to relax or spend time by themselves. This meant that children's emotional wellbeing was well supported.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children were having fun with their friends and engaged in their play. They had a range of play opportunities throughout the day to investigate and explore the learning environment. Children told us that they were happy at the service and that their favourite activities were playing in the mud kitchen and climbing trees. This meant that children were involved in play that was meaningful to them.

Staff clearly understood the importance of play and that children were active learners. Children were independent and led their play and learning. Staff supported children and ensured they had ample resources to sustain their interests and allowed children to extend their ideas. Staff observed children and stood back and guided them appropriately, for example when climbing trees. This enabled children to learn about how to keep themselves and others safe.

Staff followed children's interests. Children found a large block of ice and they were excited as this was a new experience and they wanted to explore it. They cracked the ice open with a stick and broke parts off as it started to melt. Staff introduced new words and extended their curiosity through open ended questions. This helped support children's language development as they experimented with ice.

Children were physically active and as they spent most of their time outdoors which contributed to their health and wellbeing. Staff engaged children in storytelling which developed their imagination. They were singing songs and playing action games, and changing the rules of games to adapt and create their own versions. As a result, children were having fun.

Staff supported children's curiosity by using technology to find answers to questions, for example they explored different kinds of mushroom. They used the information to create their own book about mushrooms and children could confidently identify and name them. This supported children were learning in different ways about the natural environment.

Some children needed their play and learning to be extended. Most staff used open ended questions which enabled children to think about solutions for themselves and problem solve. Staff would benefit from training on higher order thinking skills to ensure effective questioning skills extend and challenge children's learning.

Staff were developing their confidence with using the online learning app for planning and recording children's learning. They used observations to extend children's learning to include broader learning experiences such as arts and crafts. Staff were reviewing how to combine their responsive planning approach with a short term plan to provide a balance of child and adult led experiences. This will help provide children with more opportunities to extend their play and learning.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good as there were a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in an outdoor environment. Whilst there was an indoor space available if the weather was particularly severe, children were outside for most of the time. The routine had changed to take account of the weather and children went indoors for meals and snacks. This meant that children could spend time indoors and regulate their body temperature if needed.

The service was set in a National Trust property and was monitored by the gardener and tree surgeons. They spoke with children about the trees and how to look after the shrubs, bushes and the hay. Staff supported children to learn about their natural environment by growing their own produce and harvesting it, for example, through jam making. This supported children to make progress in their learning.

Children used the available space well. They were able to play in groups or by themselves and staff were skilled at observing what children were doing and where they were playing. This meant that they were able to support children appropriately and ensure that they were playing safely.

Large apparatus such as cable reels and climbing frames meant that children could participate in risky play, which supported their physical development and movement. Natural and open-ended resources sparked their interests and enabled them to use their imaginative and creative skills. For example, children planned and built a slide using wooden pallets and learned about the properties of ice. Good use was made of recycled materials which helped children learn about sustainability and caring for the environment.

Children were encouraged to think about risk taking, for example when climbing trees. They knew how to stay safe around a fire and were learning how to light a fire. Children knew that the fire should always be put out when finished. The service used a risk/benefit approach to managing risk. This meant that children were learning to keep themselves safe.

Handwashing facilities and outdoor toilets were accessible and children were encouraged to wash their hands regularly. We asked the service to remind children to wash their hands. We also discussed good practice for handling food including the use of gloves and a thermometer to test the temperature of food and drinks. This would help keep children safe.

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.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are well led.

The service was led well. The management team was relatively new and had made progress in developing the service and improving communication between staff and families.

A clear vision outlined aspirations to ensure children were empowered with skills for life and learning through play based pedagogy. The service's values were due for review and the manager had plans to include families in the process. This would help ensure families are meaningfully involved in developing the service.

Feedback from families and staff was valued and used to shape how the service would improve over time. The management team had identified different ways of involving families in the service. For example, providing opportunities to be involved in short term project groups that reflected their interests and skills. This will ensure families influence the quality of the service.

The management team and staff acknowledged there had been a number of significant changes over the last year and that they were working well together to improve outcomes for children. Staff told us that they felt well supported by each other and the management team and they welcomed the opportunity to be involved in improvement planning and self-evaluation processes. Reflective practice helped staff identify priorities to improve the learning environment and plans were in place to seek the views of children. This will ensure children are consulted.

Staff were confident about making suggestions for improvement and providing feedback to each other to help support best practice. They met regularly to discuss children's progress and the service as a whole. Meetings were held online and recordings were shared with staff who were unable to attend which meant they could all contribute and have their say.

Staff were supported to attend training courses to support their professional learning needs and goals. They were trained in first aid and child protection which helped keep children safe. They participated in forest school outdoor learning and this was evident in practice. An appraisal programme provided staff with the opportunity to reflect and discuss their practice and learning needs with the manager. This helped improve outcomes for children.

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.

4.3 Staff Deployment

Staff were kind, caring and nurturing. They knew children very well and spoke with them in a calm, gentle and respectful manner. Children were well supported throughout the day to ensure their needs were met and the routine was unhurried and relaxed. This meant that children were happy, safe and secure.

Positive and trusting relationships had been formed between staff and families. Families told us they were very happy with the service and the quality of their children's care, play and learning. Children benefitted from a key worker system which enabled staff to exchange information with families and ensure children's individual needs were met.

Staff ratios meant that staff could follow children's interests and support their learning as they moved around the large outdoor space. Staff were deployed in a way which allowed them to observe children without interrupting their play. They were committed to ensuring children had high quality experiences and encouraged children to make choices about their play and learning. This meant that children's experiences at the service were positive.

The team was well established and staff worked well together. Effective communication ensured children's needs were well supported. They used work phones to check with team members indoors about meal and collection times. Staff complimented each other and spoke openly and honestly with each other in a respectful manner. They knew each other's strengths, skills and knowledge and valued the team's enthusiasm to learn more about outdoor play. This meant that children benefited from a committed and skilled team.

There was a willingness to continuously develop the team's knowledge and skills to help improve outcomes for children. A peripatetic teacher had started to support the service to audit the learning environment. This would help staff review and consider how they resource play areas and identify gaps in children's learning experiences.

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	5 - Very 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?	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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