

Little Learners Nursery Day Care of Children

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Edinburgh
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 January 2025

Service provided by:
Little Learners Scotland Limited

Service provider number:
SP2012011763

Service no:
CS2012306096

About the service

Little Learners Nursery is registered to provide an early learning and childcare service to a maximum of 59 children aged between birth and 12 years, of whom a maximum of 12 children are under the age of two years and a maximum of eight children attend primary school.

The nursery is located in the Liberton area of the city of Edinburgh close to local amenities and is easily accessed by public transport. The service consists of three areas, Moonbeams for children birth - two, Sunbeams for children two - three and Rainbows for children aged three - five years. There is an enclosed outdoor area which is used by all the children.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 21 January 2025 between 9:30 and 18:00 and an announced inspection on 23 January 2025 between 9:00 and 18:00. 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 information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke and interacted with children using the service
- took account of electronic feedback from 14 parents
- spoke with parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff had built positive relationships with children and families.
- The nursery was a warm and welcoming space, with ample room for children, both indoors and outdoors.
- Children benefitted from a high number of staff, who were qualified and experienced practitioners.
- Improvements were needed to the recording of observations to demonstrate where individual children were in their learning and development.
- Quality assurance process needed to be more robust to demonstrate the impact that they were having on outcomes for children.

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

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|--|---------------|
| How good is our care, play and learning? | 4 - Good |
| How good is our setting? | 5 - Very 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?

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 benefitted from warm, caring and respectful interactions with staff. Where children required support with personal care, interactions were sensitive and nurtured their security, confidence and positive relationships. Staff spoke and sang with children when carrying out nappy changing, making this a positive experience for children.

Meals were provided by an outside agency, Healthy Tots, and snacks were provided by the service. Children's independence was supported through self service. Staff sat with children when they were eating to ensure that they were safe and support could be offered when necessary. We discussed with the service, ways in which they could make lunchtimes a more sociable experience for children, for example through more conversation with children.

Where children required medication, this was delivered in a safe and sensitive manner. All staff were trained in First Aid and the nursery had achieved 'Millie's Mark' accreditation. All staff were trained in Child Protection which ensured that they were aware of how to safeguard children. This contributed to children's overall well being.

Parents completed personal plans prior to children starting at the nursery. Staff discussed these with parents when their child had settling in visits. These contributed to staff knowing and understanding the children's home lives and how to meet their needs at nursery. Staff made three monthly progress and development phone calls to parents to discuss their child's development in more depth. Parents were positive about these and told us, 'Regular progress calls, staff are open to supporting any initiatives being implemented at home. Staff were very supportive during toilet training process' and 'Staff are good at providing updates and arranging catch ups to discuss our child's development'. This process contributed to effective information sharing to promote consistency of care for children.

The FAMLY app was used to record children's time at the nursery, which included daily updates about the child's sleeping, eating, as well as observations about activities that they were involved with. This provided information in real time and allowed parents to respond and share information with staff.

Transition reports were completed for children moving rooms, and they had settle in days to ensure that they were familiar with the staff and children. Some parents felt that they were fully informed about their child transitioning to a new room, whilst some felt that they were not. We discussed this with the service who agreed to address this.

We saw that where a child required additional support, the service needed to improve their recording of information to ensure that they had all relevant up to date information to support the child. By the second day of the inspection, the service had this information in place. Moving forward, the service should ensure that current information is in place, this is essential to provide clarity for staff and consistency for children who required additional support.

Quality indicator 1.3 : Play and learning

Children were meaningfully involved in their play and learning through spontaneous and planned experiences that promoted children's choice and independence. All children had opportunities to take part in a range of tactile activities, which enabled them to explore their senses. These experiences were scaffolded by staff using descriptive language about the sensations children were experiencing. Staff made use of natural resources to provide children with new experiences, such as paintbrushes made from branches and leaves. Play experiences developed children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Parents told us that their child had opportunities for lots of play experiences, indoors and outside, choice and independence.

The nursery had a large garden, which was divided into three areas. The garden had a range of age appropriate resources which promoted children's choice and independence. The service had two chickens, a child told us "We have chickens called Penny and Pickle, they make eggs and we eat them". This supported children to learn about animals and how to take care of them.

The pre-school and Sunbeam rooms had direct access to the garden, however children did not have free-flow access to the garden. We discussed with the service different ways in which they could introduce free-flow access to the garden, to offer more choice to children. The service agreed to explore this.

Forest Kindergarten was facilitated by two qualified practitioners, who were very passionate about providing an opportunity for children to have play opportunities in a natural setting, for example through den-building. In addition, children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections with the local community. This included visits to the local library, the park, shops and the residential home for elderly people. They had visited local libraries, local shops and local play parks. Parents were very positive about the experiences their children had in the local community and how much they enjoyed them.

Children in the pre-school room had been learning about their rights and how to assert them, while respecting other people's rights. This resulted in a caring environment where children respected each other.

Throughout the nursery, staff knew the children in their care well and offered play experiences based on their current interests and stage of development. A parent told us, 'Children are involved in planning and plans follow their interests'. However, the quality of observations needed to improve to demonstrate where individual children were in their learning and development. In addition planning approaches in the pre-school room needed to improve to support children's creativity and choice. Staff within the service were keen to discuss how to make improvements, demonstrating their capacity for improvement. We suggested the service contact the City of Edinburgh council for further support and training opportunities (**see area for improvement one**).

Areas for improvement

1. To improve outcomes for children, staff should be supported to develop and apply their knowledge of observation and planning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that, 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and development' (HSCS 2.27).

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where significant strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 2.2 : Children experience high quality facilities

The nursery was very comfortable, furnished to a high standard and welcoming with plenty of natural light and ventilation. It gave a strong message to children that they mattered and had ample space for their needs.

The setting's indoor and outdoor areas were structured to take account of children's stages of development and learning. Spaces reflected children's current interests with appropriate resources to support learning.

Well-functioning arrangements for monitoring maintenance and repair of the setting and equipment were in place. A maintenance person had responsibility for this and there was a clear process to report any issues, which we saw were actioned in a timely manner. This contributed to a safe environment, free of hazards for children.

Staff worked well together to identify and remove risks to children both indoor and outdoors across the day. They ensured that children were accounted for at all times and that the environment was safe and secure. Children were aware of SIMOA (the Care Inspectorate's campaign to keep children safe and accounted for) and spoke about their teachers keeping them safe and how they kept themselves safe.

Robust infection prevention and control and food safety practices provided high levels of safety for children. All staff understood the arrangements for cleaning within the service and had received appropriate training in food hygiene.

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 vision, aims and objectives were clear and displayed throughout the nursery. This contributed to all staff knowing what was important for the setting to meet the needs of children and families. Annually these were revisited by the manager and staff and sent to parents to gain their feedback.

Children's and families' views were actively sought to inform the development of the setting. Feedback was requested from families after specific events, such as transitions and stay and play. This was confirmed by parents who told us, 'I am regularly asked for my feedback and input, especially during stay and play sessions and also during room transitions' and 'We occasionally will complete questionnaires about the nursery, and when our child moved to a new room we received a thorough questionnaire to complete to say how we felt the transition was handled'. Information could be shared by parents about their child through the Family app, information evenings and through daily discussions with staff. Some parents felt that communication could be improved, particularly around transitions. The service have agreed to address this with parents.

Staff said that they were proud of the relationships that they had built with parents and families, while the manager and provider spoke about their open door policy. This demonstrated their acknowledgement of the importance of the involvement of families in their child's life and that of the nursery.

Heads of rooms and staff discussed with us, how they used self evaluation to reflect and used these reflections to bring about positive change to outcomes for children and families. We discussed using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle of improvement to support staff to know the impact of changes made.

We discussed with the manager that the Quality Assurance needs to be more robust to ensure that it is having a positive impact on outcomes for children. More specific detail about the areas being quality assured, such as medication and observations would allow the manager to provide guidance and support for staff and and strengthen the documentation of the service's improvement journey (**see area for improvement one**).

Areas for improvement

1. To help ensure positive outcomes for children, a robust quality assurance system should be developed.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that, 'I use an organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.27).

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where significant strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 4.3 : Staff deployment

The importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed during the day was recognised by the manager and provider. Effective use was made of the skills, knowledge and experience of staff. Modern apprentices worked alongside qualified and experienced staff, to ensure that they were effectively mentored and supported in their roles. Modern apprentices told us that they were well supported in the setting.

Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensure positive transitions and communication with families. Staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on the children whilst ensuring that staff were rested and refreshed. The commitment to staff wellbeing positively impacted upon staff's emotional availability for children.

Arrangements for absence were managed to support minimum disruption to children's routines. Appropriate policies were in place to maximise the attendance of staff. As a result, the service had never used agency staff and children were always cared for by someone who was known to them. This was confirmed by parents who told us, 'The rooms are always staffed according to their ratios and I often see staff from other rooms covering holiday absences.' and 'There are always multiple staff members in the room at drop off and pick up.' This helped to promote trust and provided a sense of security for families as they knew the staff caring for their child.

Staff communicated effectively and through a variety of methods to support children. A daily morning huddle and a communication book was in each room These helped to ensure that staff were well informed with up to date information about the children in their care. Throughout the day, staff communicated well

with each other to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children. This supported consistent information sharing and contributed to positive outcomes for children.

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

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|--|---------------|
| 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? | 5 - Very Good |
| 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities | 5 - Very 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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