

The Croft Nurseries Ltd - Chapelton Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 March 2025

Service provided by:
The Croft Nurseries Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2008009707

Service no:
CS2014333151

About the service

The Croft Nurseries Ltd - Chapelton is situated in the village of Chapelton in Aberdeenshire. The nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 90 children aged between birth and primary school age at any one time. The nursery comprises of four rooms - a baby room, toddler room (both downstairs) and an ante pre-school room and pre-school room (both upstairs). The upper level can be accessed via stairs or a lift. An enclosed outdoor area provides opportunities for outdoor play. The service is close to parks and other amenities. Street parking is available close to the nursery.

There had recently been a change of provider. The service was now provided by 'Bright Stars' who have a number of services across Scotland.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 March 2025 from 09:55 - 17:45 and 6 March 2025 from 09:30 - 17:30. 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 registration information, previous inspection findings, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the service was registered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Observed practice and daily life
- Spoke with children, parents, management and staff
- Reviewed documents
- Received written feedback from 15 families.

Key messages

- Children were nurtured by caring and responsive staff.
- Improvements to the lunchtime routine and deployment of staff meant that children were generally better supported and enjoyed a more relaxed and sociable experience.
- To support staff in fully meeting children's needs, personal plans needed to be developed further.
- Children's learning could be further supported through language, literacy and numeracy opportunities being developed throughout the setting.
- Children enjoyed a safe and secure fully enclosed outdoor space. More opportunities for children upstairs to be outdoors on regular basis should be developed.
- A clear improvement focus had resulted in changes to the nursery which impacted positively on children's outcomes.
- Children were supported by a motivated and skilled staff team who worked closely with each other to provide positive experiences and keep children safe.

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?	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/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were cared for by nurturing and caring staff. Interactions were positive and supportive, with cuddles, praise and encouragement being provided consistently. Families told us that, "all of the staff are very lovely and welcoming" and that they were "friendly and helpful." This helped children to feel safe and secure. As a result, children were happy and settled. Where children were feeling sad or overwhelmed, they were supported to understand their emotions and those of others.

Snack and lunchtime for children was generally positive with children enjoying a relaxed and enjoyable experience. There was sufficient staff to ensure that children were well supported and supervised with staff sitting with them. In one room, on one occasion, staff did not sit with children for the full-time children were eating. Although staff were supervising the children they may not have been able to respond so quickly to incidents of choking.

Staff had worked hard developing the dining experience for children. There were increased opportunities for children to self-serve and be more independent at all ages, including the very youngest children. Interactions between staff and children over lunch time were engaging. To continue to develop this further staff could eat alongside children to provide role modelling and an enhanced social experience.

Children were supported well by staff when resting and sleeping. A dedicated sleep room was in place for younger children. It was calming and inviting due to the addition of fairy lights and soothing music. In the toddler room sleep mats were now covered with fitted sheets which helped children to feel more comfortable. Staff supported children in both rooms using soothing voices, back rubs and children's individual comforter preferences being provided. An inviting cosy area was available in the ante pre-school room for children to rest and relax. A similar space was not available in the pre-school room and this could be developed.

Nappy changing was undertaken using a caring approach with positive engagement between staff and children throughout. Staff followed best practice guidance when changing nappies to help prevent and control infection. We asked the management team to review the facilities for older children to be supported with nappy changing as current arrangements were not in line with best practice. The manager actioned this promptly and ensured that more effective and safer arrangements were put in place.

Staff had a good understanding of the individual needs of the children they were caring for and how these needed to be met. Parents and carers felt that staff worked with them in relation to ensuring their children's needs were met. One parent, for example told us that they had "advised staff on many occasions when my child's development and routine changes at home and have found the nursery to be helpful and accommodating to ensure this is replicated in nursery." Much of this information was recorded in children's personal plans however feedback was provided about how personal plans could be improved. The service would benefit from having personal plans containing all the information they hold on each child in one place. Using the wellbeing indicators would support an effective, holistic overview of each child. This would help to ensure that all children get the support they need to reach their full potential.

The management team had recently been introducing a key working system which was in the very early stages. Staff were positive about this and keen to make this successful in further strengthening relationships with children and their families and supporting positive outcomes for the children. Following on from that they were also planning to develop personal plans further, having themselves identified it as an area that could be improved.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were happy and engaged in play and learning throughout the inspection. We saw some really positive examples of children being supported to have fun, be curious and develop their skills. For example, a cress seed planting activity in the ante pre-school room provided a rich learning experience for the children supported by skilled staff. In the baby room children were being well supported in their water play and play doh activities. They were really interested and staff used this to help develop fine motor skills and language. Parents and carers told us about other positive play and learning experiences including planting and growing, watching caterpillars turn into butterflies and releasing them, baking, messy play and forest school. One parent however told us that, "there hasn't been any forest play so far with the pre-school children, and I believe my child would benefit from this." The management team should explore this further.

Some of the oldest children needed to experience more challenge in their play to support them to be stimulated, engaged and to achieve through skilled staff interactions.

Language, literacy and numeracy could be developed throughout the setting. We saw some story telling in the younger children's rooms but did not observe this for older children. Books and mark making opportunities could be enhanced throughout the nursery. Environmental print such as number lines, alphabets and children's names could be developed further. Real resources such as clocks, calendars, books, diaries, old phones, keyboards and scales would add learning opportunities in the home corner for example.

The team had reviewed how they planned for children's learning and considered how they could improve this further. They had received some recent training and were exploring how they would put this into practice. The management team wanted to ensure that the staff team had a very clear understanding of what they need to do and how to achieve it before they introduced the new planning process. Staff were motivated to make these changes. Using the curriculum for excellence will help staff develop their planning and support them to consider next steps for children's individual learning and development.

An enclosed garden was used by the children, providing opportunities for fresh air and energetic play. During the inspection, children upstairs had more limited time outdoors due to having no direct access. More opportunities for children upstairs to be outdoors on regular basis should be developed.

There were some resources in the garden which were used well by children in their play, for example some children enjoyed using loose parts and climbing apparatus to climb, balance and jump. Staff engaged in doing some singing and exercises which was enjoyed by some of the children. The garden, however, would benefit from a wider range of resources to make it a more exciting and stimulating space for children. The mud kitchen, for example, had very limited mud available and there was no mark making resources to support literacy and numeracy. This would all help to create meaningful and engaging learning opportunities. The service had been reviewing and building on their range and depth of resources, taking account of children's current interests and were continuing with this.

Some trips outwith the service were taking place, including play parks, walks, forest area, which helped to support children's links to their community and provided positive learning opportunities. A visit to a local

garden centre was being planned. These opportunities should continue to be developed to enhance children's learning through strong connections to their own and wider community.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The nursery was well furnished with furniture and resources that were of a high quality. Children had plenty space to play and move around. There was plenty natural light, large windows to look out of and appropriate ventilation. The environment would benefit from further developing homely touches such as displays of children's work on the walls, photos in frames which would give a strong message to children that they matter. Other resources such as sofas for story time and general one to one and small group experiences, rugs, cushions and plants would further support children to feel relaxed and nurtured.

The nursery had been developing their range of resources and had presented them in a more accessible and appealing way to interest the children and allow them to make choices. Craft areas were well stocked with a range of resources to support children to be creative and encourage literacy and numeracy. A range of loose parts such as bottle tops, reels, log slices and pinecones allowed children to be more creative in their play.

The environment was clean, and we observed staff cleaning throughout the day and at the end of the day. We spoke to the management team about infection prevention and control practices that needed to be improved to keep children well. These included ensuring paper towels for hand drying are appropriately stored and ensuring nappy changing arrangements for older children met current best practice guidance. Since the last inspection improvements had been made to arrangements for accessing the toilets for younger children. Children in toddler room no longer walked through the nappy changing room to access the toilets, entering instead from another entrance. We observed this in practice, and it was going well. In addition to supporting effective infection prevention and control practice it also supported the children's privacy and dignity.

Children enjoyed a safe and secure fully enclosed outdoor space. Changes had been made to the front door which enhanced the security of the building. Natural opportunities throughout the day encouraged discussions with the children about keeping themselves safe. This was however not consistent across all the rooms and could be better supported.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The management team told us that they planned to review and refresh the vision, values, aims and objectives for the service, under the new provider. positively informs practice. They plan to involve everyone in this including staff, children and families to ensure that it reflects what is important for the team to do to ensure that the service meets the needs of children and families.

The team were reflective practitioners who had a clear improvement focus. They had identified areas they needed to work on and had been progressing with improvements. These included the snack and lunch experience for children, and we were able to see these were supporting positive outcomes for the children. The team had been well supported by the area manager since Bright Stars became the provider of the nursery. By providing opportunities for the nursery to link up with other Bright Stars nurseries and providing joint training opportunities this was supporting the service on their improvement journey.

Team meetings enabled good quality discussion to take place about the quality of the service, improvements required and using best practice guidance to support positive outcomes. We could see that identified actions had been progressed. Staff had, for example, highlighted a need to review planning for children's play and learning. Staff had received training on planning and were in the process of considering how they could best implement their learning to support positive outcomes.

The service was using best practice guidance such as 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' to support improvement for example, within their mealtime audit. This also helped to inform the improvement plan for the service. Using red, amber, green colour coding and regular written updates helped them to see progression and we could also see this during our inspection.

Feedback from children and their parents and carers was very much welcomed by the service. Informal discussions took place, and staff used their observations of children's interests to consider what resources to purchase. Families could also leave reviews online and postcards where written feedback was encouraged were available at the main nursery entrance. We discussed other ways of strengthening feedback from children and their families which the management team were interested in exploring further.

Supportive observations of staff practice were being undertaken. Staff strengths were recognised and areas that could be developed further were highlighted. These were very comprehensive, and it may be beneficial for the service to undertake smaller, more focused observations and do them more often, to maximise their positive impact.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good where there were significant strengths which supported positive outcomes for children.

4.3 Staff deployment

Changes had been made to staff breaks to ensure that the service was always appropriately staffed, including at busier times such as mealtimes. There was plenty staff available to effectively support children at meal and snack times during our observations. Staff in all rooms were able to promptly attend to children's care needs, for example changing wet clothes, wiping noses, changing nappies and providing cuddles and comfort to children who were upset. Families agreed they were satisfied with the staffing levels. One parent told us that, "my child has some additional needs, and these are always met with no issues." Having appropriate staffing levels enabled staff to provide quality feedback to parents at the end of the day. Parents and carers told us that staff were, "happy to share information about the day and listen to what we tell them" and "provide an overview of the day."

Staff were observant and made sure all children were supervised and kept safe. We asked the provider to consider the skills mix in one of the playrooms to ensure that there was consistent positive engagement with the children, and they were supported to have sufficient challenge in their learning.

There was a very good mix of skills within the staff team. We found, for example, that the modern apprentices were knowledgeable and interacted very well with the children. The staff were reflective practitioners, motivated and keen to develop further. Staff spoke about working well together and a sense of being well supported by colleagues and the management team. The whole team presented as being happy and proud of their nursery which created a positive and welcoming environment.

Staff were clear in their roles and responsibilities throughout the sessions which helped support positive experiences. Within this however staff were also able to be flexible and support one another when this was needed. For example, when a child was unsettled and needed a lot of nurture and care from an identified staff member other members of the team helped to undertake other tasks. The management team were all very visible in the playrooms. Staff were confident in asking managers for help and managers were very proactive in offering help and checking in with the rooms on a regular basis.

Since the change of provider was completed the area manager had worked hard to establish really positive working relationships very quickly. A very respectful approach was being used. The area manager was empowering the management team through positive and meaningful engagement, guidance and training opportunities.

The nursery had built up a new small relief team of staff. This had helped to support continuity of care when permanent staff were absent. There had also been a low turnover of staff within the setting. This supported staff to develop as a team, establish meaningful relationships with the children and their families, develop a detailed knowledge of children and support positive outcomes.

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

To keep children safe and support their health and wellbeing, the provider should ensure ratios are met at all times and consider how to ensure that staff lunches do not impact on the safety and care of children.

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

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15); and

'I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

This area for improvement was made on 5 October 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff ratios and deployment had been improved. Key times of the day such as lunchtime were staffed appropriately to ensure that children's needs were being met.

This area for improvement was found to have 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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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