

Cornerstones Nursery Day Care of Children

Loon Brae House
Ashgrove Road
Rattray
Blairgowrie
PH10 7BS

Telephone: 01250 876 165

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 July 2024

Service provided by:
Hartley and Gordon Nurseries Limited

Service provider number:
SP2015012587

Service no:
CS2015341434

About the service

Cornerstones Nursery is a day care of children registered to provide care for a maximum of 51 children at any one time. The outdoor space has been considered when agreeing the maximum number of children aged over three years and not yet attending primary school. Children must have access to the outdoor space at all times.

The service is provided from a large house in the town of Blairgowrie. Very young children (0-2 years) are cared for in a playroom with nappy changing facilities. Younger children (2-3 years) are cared for between two playrooms and a separate sleep room and toileting facilities. Older children (3-5 years) have two interconnecting playrooms, a quiet room and toilet on the ground floor. Children have use of a large secure nursery garden. On the top floor of the house there is an office space and staff room.

Cornerstones Nursery is privately owned and works in partnership with Perth and Kinross Council to provide ante and pre-school funded places.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced visit which took place on 24 and 25 July 2024. 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 two of their family members.

We reviewed 29 responses to our questionnaire sent out to families

- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- Children were happy, confident, loved and motivated to learn.
- Children were offered a wealth of opportunities to enjoy active play whilst also developing their problem solving, investigation and enquiry skills.
- Children benefitted from high quality mealtimes experiences which promoted opportunities to develop their independence and skills for life.
- Leaders were passionate and committed to providing high quality care, support, play and learning. They were well organised, visible, and supportive of staff.
- Staff had successfully created an ethos where children were valued and their right to play was fully supported through exciting and interesting experiences
- Staff worked very well together they were compassionate, friendly, and motivated. It was evident they had children's interests and wellbeing at the heart of their work.

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?	5 - Very 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?

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.

1.1. Nurturing care and support

Children received warm and nurturing support from staff who were kind, fun and had high aspirations for children. They knew children very well and were responsive to their individual needs, interests, and requests. Positive attachments between staff and children supported their emotional wellbeing and building resilience was at the heart of children's development. This resulted in happy, loved, secure, and confident children. Children were keen to share their experiences with us, they told us 'The teachers really help us when we are sad, they make us smile and happy again,' 'They are really funny, and we have so much fun with them.'

Staff had thoughtfully considered how best to support children. Personal planning and effective information sharing with families and other professionals contributed to the consistent strategies used to enable all children to have stability in their care. For example, staff were knowledgeable when children requiring additional support needed some alone time or when to interact to provide them with comfort and reassurance. Staff used Makaton signing and repetition of words with younger children, appropriate to their age and stage of development. These approaches meant children were fully supported to be included in nursery experiences, and to reach their full potential. We highlighted that adding strategies of support to the first page of children's planning folders would ensure they were easily accessible if needed.

Younger children's personal care and sleep routines were very well supported through warm and nurturing interactions. This contributed to building their confidence, emotional wellbeing and security. Intimate care routines provided children with a fun and joyful experience which included lots of singing. Sleep routines were thoughtfully considered and reflected children's individual needs. They were given comforters from home and staff gently soothed them to sleep using calming music and gently patted their backs. Staff supervised sleeping children which contributed to keeping children safe.

Children benefitted from high quality mealtimes that were unhurried and a sociable learning experience. Children and families were consulted on food choices and preferences. Food choices were homecooked, nutritious and well balanced. Older children helped prepare their snack options and opportunities for choice, independence and responsibility meant they were learning independence and skills for life. Very young children were encouraged to feed themselves and sensitively supported if needed. Some staff, sat, and ate with children which strengthened attachments, and promoted their social and language skills. There was scope to provide children aged two to three years with more opportunities for self-help skills. Allergies were managed well which contributed to keeping children safe.

Children's health and wellbeing needs were met as the appropriate forms and permissions were in place for the safe administration of medication. Staff were knowledgeable on how to share initial concerns on children's welfare and were confident in child protection procedures. We signposted best practice guidance 'Guide to Chronologies' to further support the service with keeping records in a way that fully considered children's needs if needed.

1.3 Play and learning

Children benefitted from a child-centred approach to play and learning. Staff had successfully created an ethos where children were valued and their right to play was fully supported. Floor books were of high quality and demonstrated that children were listened to and their contributions to planning experiences were valued by staff.

Children were empowered to think for themselves and be successful. Staff were skilled and knowledgeable, and the use of effective questioning developed children's confidence and built resilience. This approach was naturally woven into conversations with children and challenged them, developed their thinking, and deepened their learning. This was demonstrated by children who told us about the activities they enjoyed and enthusiastically showed us round their nursery garden. They told us, 'This is our vegetables, we help them grow' and 'This is where the hen lives, we have to look after her, we feed her.'

Staff provided children with creative, spontaneous and planned experiences that promoted their curiosity, enquiry skills, imagination and reflected their interests. This meant children were engaged in their play in a meaningful way which supported them to develop and flourish. For example, a group of older children cooperatively decided the trees in the garden needed to be washed. They excitedly gathered the materials they needed including paintbrushes and filled vessels with soapy water. They told us, 'We are looking after the trees, look that's better.' All children had fun as they confidently explored the wealth of loose parts, real life experiences and natural materials which inspired children's curiosity and creativity.

Children were very well supported to develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy, their play and learning enriched by their natural environment. For example, stones, twigs, and cones were collected to sort and match. Flowers and other materials inspired wonder by changing the colour of water. There was a very good range of materials for mark making and reference books on nature which encouraged early language and literacy skills and inspired children's curiosities.

Families were provided with observations of learning on a digital platform, they were focused on children as individuals and recognised their successes and achievements. Next steps in learning were identified and monitored well. However, some children had a lot of next steps, and some were too vast to be developmentally achievable. For example, 'to recognise colours and language development'. We highlighted to staff; they could include strategies on how they would support children to achieve. This would contribute to children being appropriately challenged in their learning and progress with measurable and achievable next steps.

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

Children's health and wellbeing was supported as during our two visits, older children spent their nursery day outdoors and younger children most of their day. Staff had meaningfully and effectively designed the nursery garden, it was interesting and exciting and provided high-quality play and learning experiences which were responsive to current interests.

Children were offered a wealth of opportunities to enjoy active play whilst also developing their problem solving, investigation and enquiry skills. Risky play experiences encouraged children's confidence as they enjoyed new challenges while developing an understanding of keeping themselves and others safe. Staff understood children needed to be challenged and the importance of developing gross motor skills. They had adapted the garden to include, larger loose parts, different surface areas for climbing and rope swings. Despite older children being the only age group to have free flow access to the garden, staff had worked hard to ensure younger children benefitted from the outdoor space regularly throughout their day.

The nursery playrooms were laid out in a manner which helped develop children's independence. Resources were clean and easily accessible to enable children to self-select resources of their choice which empowered children to lead their own play and learning. Younger children were provided with a wide range of sensory, messy, and creative play experiences, appropriate for their stage of development. Due to all children spending most of their day outdoors we highlighted to staff, the nursery playrooms looked sparse. Children would benefit for their indoor environments being developed to create warmer and more inviting spaces. The management team had identified this through their self-evaluation processes and future improvement work had been planned.

Staff had developed effective systems to keep children safe. Daily checks of the environment were carried out by staff prior to children's arrival which supported them to identify and action any issues if required. Radios were used by staff to communicate if they needed assistance from other staff members. We found staff were very aware of the risks around children potentially leaving the setting, and they had measures in place to prevent this. For example, families would remain at the nursery gate when dropping off or collecting their children. We acknowledged that children played in the garden all day and the nursery gate lead onto a busy road, however, we suggested ways in which families could be welcomed back into the setting, while keeping children safe. Additionally, we signposted best practice guidance, 'Me, My Family and My Childcare Setting' to assist the management team with this.

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 led well

Leaders were passionate and committed to providing high quality care, support, play and learning. They were well organised, visible, and supportive of staff. They had established strong working relationships enabling a positive ethos of mutual trust and respect between the staff and management team. This approach was promoting a very happy, secure, and supportive environment for children and their families.

Children, families, and staff had created a vision, values, and aims for the setting which promoted a shared understanding of what to expect from the nursery. It was evident the service was meeting these aims which included 'to provide high quality play and learning which is playful, inspiring, and inviting, and to ensure children have positive experiences of achievement at their own level'.

The management team had taken significant steps to embed a strong sense of commitment to continuous service development. Planning for improvement reflected current priorities in the setting. Staff had a very good understanding of their role in improving outcomes and used best practice guidance and the Care Inspectorates 'Quality framework for daycare, childminding and school-aged childcare' to evaluate the service they provided. Staff, families, and children had regular opportunities to meaningfully contribute, which helped develop the service in a positive way and ensured everyone felt fully included and their views and suggestions respected. Families told us, 'We are asked for feedback regularly' and 'There are frequent opportunities to give feedback on aspects such as the menu. Staff have been responsive and open when any issues or requests have been brought up and made changes as requested or suggested'.

Robust and effective quality assurance processes allowed for meaningful opportunities for the manager and staff team to engage in professional discussion. Together they reviewed and reflected on the service and progressed with their improvement priorities. For example, the manager routinely monitored staff practice, the environment, and mealtimes. This resulted in areas for improvement being identified, actions undertaken, and positive changes being made.

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

Effective staff deployment meant that children's individual needs were being met by the right number of staff, consistently throughout the day. The staff to child ratio enabled staff to be responsive to children's requests and needs. This enhanced children's experiences and ensured children were provided with right support at the right time.

Staff were compassionate, friendly, and motivated. It was clear they had children's interests and wellbeing at the heart of their work. They had a good mix of skills, knowledge, and experience to meet children's needs. Staff told us of training they had attended and were knowledgeable on best practice guidance and how they used this to provide very good outcomes for children. They were enthusiastic about continuing to learn and train to gain further knowledge, skills, and expertise in early years to support them further within their roles. As a result, children were happy, loved and thriving at the setting.

Staff told us they felt valued, respected, and listened to by each other and the management team. This contributed to a staff team that identified strongly with the service. Their wellbeing was sensitively considered and supported by the management team which contributed to the positive ethos within the service.

The service had recently experienced some staff changes. An effective mentoring system was in place to support new staff. They valued the induction process and told us; it had encouraged them to be reflective practitioner's which supported them to gain confidence in their roles. Newer staff were complimentary of the staff team and managers whom they found welcoming and approachable which ensured they felt part of the existing team.

Families that we spoke with and who answered our questionnaire, held the staff in high regard. Their comments included, 'Staff are really friendly, take their time to really get to know our child', 'The staff are brilliant, it's very welcoming', 'The staff are amazing, loads of outdoor activities and loads of fun learning activities. My child is excited to go to nursery' and 'They are friendly, they show great care towards the children, and they get to know them and all about their family too'.

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

Staff should review the lunchtime provision to ensure it meets the needs of all children and provides choice and independence. This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'If I need help with eating and drinking, this is carried out in a dignified way and my personal preferences are respected.' (HSCS 1.34).

This area for improvement was made on 27 August 2019.

Action taken since then

Lunchtime was a sociable, unhurried and positive learning experience for all children. Older children were offered opportunities for choice and independence and younger children were sensitively supported with with self help skills.

This 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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very 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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.