

Methilhill Nature Nursery Day Care of Children

130 Sea Road
Methilhill
Leven
KY8 2GW

Telephone: 01592 719422

Type of inspection: Unannounced
Inspection completed on: 6 June 2018

Service provided by:

Methilhill Community Children's
Initiative a company limited by
guarantee

Service provider number:

SP2013012220

Care service number:

CS2013322737

About the service

Methilhill Nature Nursery is part of the Methilhill Community Children's Initiative. It is a community group dedicated to providing local children with clubs, activities and an outdoor nursery. The Initiative is run by a Board of volunteers. The nursery employs its own staff team led by a nursery manager.

The nursery is situated in a large enclosed garden in Methilhill and operates throughout the year, allowing children to explore the garden and see the seasons change.

The nursery is open for three sessions each week on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 20 children from age two years to those who are not yet attending primary school.

The service was registered with the Care Inspectorate in August 2014.

The provider's overall aims were to provide a nature nursery where children aged 2-5 years could play and learn, build confidence and resilience and learn to be curious.

On the day of the inspection there were eight children attending along with three practitioners, a trainee, a volunteer and a board member.

We compiled the report following an unannounced inspection, which took place on 7 May 2018 between 10.40 and 15.15 and 6 June 2018 when feedback was given to the manager who was named on the certificate and to a Board member.

The inspection was carried out by two Care Inspectorate inspectors.

We check services are meeting the principles of Getting It Right For Every Child (also known as GIRFEC), Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes and wellbeing for children by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them and their parents to work with the services that can help them. There are eight wellbeing indicators at the heart of Getting It Right For Every Child: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

What people told us

We issued eight questionnaires to parents and carers of children who used the service. We received four completed questionnaires prior to the writing of this report. They demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the service. Comments on the Care Inspectorate questionnaires included:

"My child loves this experience and has chosen to continue one day a week."

"The leaders of the nature nursery have helped my child settle in very well. She has progressed a lot in talking, skills with other children, co ordination skills and other activities."

"Excellent nursery providing a wide range of quality learning experiences for my child. Staff appear dedicated to their jobs and show a genuine care for my child. My son settled well and loves his time at this nursery."

"My boys really enjoy their time at Methelhill Nature Nursery. It gives me a lot of satisfaction to know that they are spending so much quality time outside in the fresh air. I think that they offer a fantastic service to various age groups. I only wish we had one closer to home."

We were able to speak to six parents and carers and they told us they were happy with the care their children received. Comments from parents, carers and children are included below.

Eight children were in attendance. The children were happy and settled in the nursery. They told us what they liked to do and interacted with us during our inspection. Comments included:

"What's in there? Let's see what we can find in here."

"It looks like a worm or a snake."

"We make squishy, squashy things on the fire - marshmallows."

"The real chicken laid an egg. Run!"

Parents' comments on the day of the inspection included:

"I'm very happy. They love it. We get great feedback. I wrap them up when it's cold and they've got the indoor area for lunch, crafts and stories if it's wet and cold."

"It's lovely. They wrap them up if it's cold. They do a class dojo if there's anything we need to know. It's a private closed group for photos and information."

Comments on Parent/Child feedback forms included what they liked best about the nursery.

"The range of learning experiences provided based around nature is the best part."

"The children's ability to enjoy outdoor activities catered to their learning in all weathers."

"The general air of fun children have."

"We think nursery is fantastic . The children get to learn and have fun at the same time."

"The staff are all lovely and friendly. Couldn't speak any higher of them."

"Children get the opportunity to play outside in a safe environment, learning about nature and getting dirty."

Self assessment

The service had not been asked to complete a self assessment in advance of the inspection. The service did not have an improvement plan so we were unable to use this to help inform our inspection.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	3 - Adequate
Quality of environment	4 - Good
Quality of staffing	3 - Adequate
Quality of management and leadership	2 - Weak

Quality of care and support

Findings from the inspection

From the evidence gathered at this inspection we considered that the service was working to an adequate standard of care and support.

We found a welcoming atmosphere in the service for children and their families. Families benefitted from the flexible pattern of attendance available to them. Siblings of various ages from two years up to those not yet attending primary school all enjoyed playing together, supporting one another in their play.

We saw children being provided with comfort and reassurance from caring staff within a nurturing setting. This helped children to form attachments and feel safe and secure. Staff had caring relationships and were kind towards children. Children were happy, confident and settled in the nursery.

Children had opportunities for active play outdoors throughout the whole session playing games such as hide and seek and football, as well as climbing trees and playing on the see saw. They initiated play in the playhouse and used grass to make ice cream for their own ice cream shop.

Children had access to their own water bottles throughout the session to keep hydrated, which was particularly important on the first day of the inspection when the weather was very hot.

Staff sat with children and chatted with them at lunch time. Staff could have eaten lunch with the children, modelling how to enjoy meals together and providing a more social experience.

We saw that staff were only expected to read or be familiar with the policies during the first six months of their employment. As a result, they could be working for that period of time without knowing of the expectations of the service or what policies to follow. Not all staff were clear about who to go to if they had a child protection concern if it was not being taken forward by the service. Neither did they know who to go to if the child protection officer was on holiday or could not be contacted during the working day.

We saw that Personal Learning Journeys (PLJs) had been introduced since the last inspection but they could be simplified to reflect children's part time attendance. Some PLJs were totally empty and none sampled showed children's progression or development. All needed to contain the core information including GP details and to be updated six monthly in line with current legislation. See requirement 1

We saw that each child was handed out a biscuit for snack but staff said to us during the inspection that snack was dependent on whether or not groups previously using the service had left any biscuits. As a result, parents would not know if their children would be given snack each day. Children should be able to have a snack which is either provided by the parents or the service. See improvement 1

Requirements

Number of requirements: 1

1. The provider must ensure effective procedures are in place to ensure children's personal plans are implemented consistently across the service to meet the needs of each individual child. In order to do this they must: a) Implement support plans for children which should be reviewed and updated at 6 monthly intervals or more often as required. b) Monitor the completion of the plans at regular intervals to ensure continued consistency. c) Plans must contain statutory information.

This is in order to comply with: The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, No 210: Principles 3: shall provide a care service in a manner that promotes quality, safety, independence and promotes choice, 4(1)(a) - Requirements to make proper provision for the health and welfare of service users. 5 (1) & 2(a)(b)(i),(ii),(iii),(c) & (d) Requirements to prepare personal plans. Regulation 15(a)&(b) - to make proper provision of sufficient and suitably qualified and competent staff.

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. The best practice document 'Setting the Table' could be used to support the team to enhance this aspect of children's care. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that I can choose suitably presented and healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables and participate in menu planning. (HSCS 1.33)

Grade: 3 - adequate

Quality of environment

Findings from the inspection

From the evidence gathered at this inspection we considered that the service was working to a good standard in this area.

We saw that the nursery was providing the children with a happy, healthy and calm outdoor environment for them to learn and develop and to express themselves and discover nature.

Children played in a well resourced garden with a mud area, sand pit and slide. Staff were helping the children develop their skills, knowledge, resilience and confidence whilst also enabling curiosity and personal development. We saw children had freedom in the garden to play, learn and create using their imagination. The outdoor environment provided opportunities for the children to see chickens wander and lay eggs in an outdoor enclosure, grow and harvest flowers, vegetables and fruits and learn about the cycle of growth. Children spent time outdoors throughout the year and could become aware of the seasons and get fresh air. We saw children exploring and experimenting and there was a selection of loose parts to help stimulate their curiosity and give free reign to their creativity to encourage conversation and collaboration with their friends. We spoke with staff about schemas and suggested that further research and knowledge of these would support them in providing consistently good quality play experiences for children.

A new indoor space, called Charlie's Shed, had been created following a fire which burned down the yurt. This new multifunctional space contained a kitchen as well as space for indoor children's activities. Staff said they seldom used it but it was there for use in the most inclement of weathers.

A portable hand washing sink with warm water had enhanced the environment for the children since the last inspection, enabling the children to wash in warm water after using the toilet. However, we saw that staff did not encourage children to wash before sitting down for lunch.

As a result, children were at potential risk of harm as they ate their food with their fingers.

A successful volunteer day had just taken place, to help develop the garden and improve the mound area to try to prevent the continuous need to replace the grass. This involved parents and carers and the service told us that they valued their participation.

Staff had carried out a visual risk assessment before the children arrived but had failed to spot issues such as a wooden palate with large nails sticking up which posed a risk to children's safety. They took action to deal with this when they were pointed out to them. The risk assessment needed to be more effective as staff are responsible for the safety of children in the setting.

Accidents were not clearly logged. Some were written in pencil and some did not include the child's name. Some did not include sufficient detail about the accident. See requirement 1

Requirements

Number of requirements: 1

1. The provider must ensure that all accidents are clearly recorded to ensure the report is accurate. Staff should also ensure they include the child's full name when completing accident reports and that the accident is recorded in a permanent marker with full details of the injury and how the accident occurred.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 SSI 2011/210 Regulation 4(1)(a) Welfare of users.

Timescale for implementation: with immediate effect on receipt of this report.

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 – good

Quality of staffing

Findings from the inspection

From the evidence gathered at this inspection we considered that the service was working to an adequate standard in this area.

We saw that staff were friendly and welcomed parents and children on arrival. We had positive feedback from parents.

Staff were warm and caring towards the children. We saw that interactions with children were positive and respectful which meant that children experienced being cared for within a supportive environment.

Staff cared for children to the best of their ability.

We saw a high adult:child staff ratio which meant that staff were available to attend to the day to day needs of the children throughout the session.

Not all staff were trained in child protection. No-one had yet been trained in outdoor play, Forest Kindergarten or on the document My World Outdoors in spite of the ethos of this nursery being a nature nursery, so management should consider providing training in outdoor play for children. Training for staff should also be available on schemas, first aid and on Building the Ambition in order to support staff in their work to help them fully understand the principles, in order to effectively improve the outcomes for the children.

We found that one staff member who was required to register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) was not registered. We saw that there was no effective system in place for the service to monitor staff SSSC registration renewal dates. The service must ensure an effective system is put in place and that this system continues to be monitored thereafter. See requirement 1

Requirements

Number of requirements: 1

1. To ensure that children are safe and protected, the provider, on receipt of this report, must ensure that all members of staff, who are required to register with the Scottish Social Services Council, are appropriately registered.

This ensures children's care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state, "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSC 3.14) and "I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited" (HSC 4.24).

It also complies with Regulation 7 and Regulation 9 of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 3 - adequate

Quality of management and leadership

Findings from the inspection

From the evidence gathered at this inspection we considered that the service was working to a weak standard in this area.

The service was unable to provide us with its aims as these had been incorporated into the aims of the Methilhill Community Children's Initiative which included those for high school children. We asked for the aims to be reviewed to reflect the experiences that the nursery offered to the children attending.

There had been a high staff turnover in the last year and a new manager had been appointed to the service since the last inspection. Efforts were needed to build a strong staff team, knowledgeable about the policies and ethos of the service. Three out of four requirements were still outstanding from the last inspection and much work was still needed on the recommendations from the previous two reports.

The service had not developed a positive culture of reflection and learning. We saw that the service was not being monitored effectively. Quality assurance was very limited within the service. There were no formal systems in place to identify strengths or areas for improvement. The development of a calendar for quality assurance linked to an improvement plan and to the new Health and Social Care Standards would help to monitor the effectiveness of the service. The lack of quality assurance had contributed to the issues identified throughout the report. See Improvement 1

To help the service sustain continued development and improvement, it is important that they have a planned and focussed monitoring programme with clear responsibilities and timescales.

The responsibility for this should be agreed by the manager and the management board. We saw that there were some opportunities for parents and children to offer feedback to the service. We would like to see the service develop these and to use any feedback and suggestions given to support their evaluation of the service.

The service had not produced a development plan to demonstrate how they were going to further develop the service over the coming year. The service should ensure that this development plan includes areas for improvement which will directly impact on children's experience of the service. Staff should be involved in the development of the plan. A development plan would allow a more focused approach to improvement and provide staff with opportunities to lead on identified key aspects. Direct monitoring of staff practice and a clear audit trail of identified improvements and how these have been addressed should be recorded to lead into an improvement plan. See Improvement 2

Staff told us that they were not aware of any planning being done with the children or any evaluation of their activities. We discussed the need for the staff team to work consistently and effectively to ensure good outcomes for the children through flexible planning and by evaluating the activities to see what went well and what could have been done better. See Improvement 3

We had not been notified of changes to the Directors for this service. See requirement 1

We saw that the service had not notified us that the manager had been absent for more than 28 days. Staff were unclear who was the manager of the service at the time of the inspection. The service was not fully aware of its responsibilities as employers and providers of a registered care service, including its obligations regarding notifications to the Care Inspectorate. See requirement 2

The areas for improvement identified throughout this report reflect the significant need for improved management and leadership within the service, in order to promote high quality care and positive outcomes for children.

We discussed the administration of medication and how it would be recorded. The medication policy must reflect practice. During the inspection the staff were unable to provide any documentation to support the administration of medication in line with best practice guidance. We were provided with some paperwork later along with the policy, but staff working in the service were unaware of it and did not know the policy.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 2

1. The management committee of Directors must be fully aware of its responsibilities as employers and providers of a registered care service, including its obligations regarding notifications to the Care Inspectorate.

This is in order to comply with Section 53(6) of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010

Timescale: Within seven days of receipt of this report.

2. The provider must notify the Care Inspectorate of the manager being absent for more than 28 days. The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2002. Regulations 19-24. Notice of absence

22.-(1) Where a manager proposes to be absent from the duties of manager of the care service for a continuous period of 28 days or more, the provider shall give notice to the Commission of the proposed absence.

(2) Except in the case of an emergency, the notice referred to in paragraph (1) above shall be given no later than 14 days before the proposed absence or within such shorter period as may be agreed with the Commission and the notice shall specify-

(a) the length or expected length of the proposed absence

(b) the reason for that absence

(c) the arrangements which have been made for the running of the care service during that absence

(d) the name, address and qualifications of the person who will manage the care service during that absence.

(3) Where the absence arises as a result of an emergency, the provider shall give notice of the absence within one week of its occurrence specifying the matters in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d) of paragraph (2).

Timescale: Within seven days of receipt of this report.

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 3

1. The management team should develop systems which have clear outcomes focussed on outcomes for children. "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes." (HSCS4.19).

2. To ensure children receive high quality care and support, the service should ensure it creates an improvement plan clearly focussing on the service's provision taking account of relevant feedback from children, parents and staff as well as the evidence gained through using recognised guidance such as How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare. This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards that state, "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes." (HSCS 4.19).

3. To ensure children's interests are identified, supported and developed, the service should reflect on the planning systems in place to ensure it meets the needs of children and staff while following best practice guidance.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards that state, "I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice." (HSCS 4.11).

Grade: 2 - weak

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Previous requirements

Requirement 1

The provider must ensure that the personal plans of children using the service are maintained by the staff responsible. These plans must contain all relevant information about the child including how their health, welfare and safety needs will be met. Staff must engage with parents to identify strategies and to set targets. These plans must be reviewed every six months.

This is in order to comply with The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, (SSI 2011/210) Regulation 5 Personal Plans.

Timescale: Within a month of receiving this report.

This requirement was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous requirement

Plans were in place but they did not include the statutory information or necessary information on how each child's health, welfare and safety needs would be met. Staff were not meeting regularly with parents to identify strategies and set targets. These plans were not being reviewed six monthly.

Not met

Requirement 2

The provider must review the service policy and practice to ensure that the administration of medication is safe.

This requirement was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous requirement

The policy had been reviewed but staff did not know where the medication was to be stored or where to get the forms for recording the medication. They were unclear whether or not medication could be administered on the premises.

Not met

Requirement 3

To support the health of the children using the service, the manager must review the service infection prevention and control procedures with staff and monitor the effectiveness of these procedures.

This is in order to comply with regulation 4 (1) (d) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI / 210).

Timescale: Within a month of receiving this report.

This requirement was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous requirement

The procedures had been reviewed but were not adequate to maintain the safety of the children in the service. Children did not wash their hands before eating lunch in the garden.

Not met

Requirement 4

The provider must ensure that all staff complete training in the protection of vulnerable children to safeguard children's health and wellbeing. The provider must ensure that all staff are aware of the identity of the child protection officer for the service and the procedures to follow if they had a concern about one of the children in their care.

This order is to comply with: The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 SSI 2011/210 Regulation 4(1)(a) Welfare of users.

Timescale for implementation: within one week of receipt of this report.

This requirement was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous requirement

Not all staff had undertaken child protection training. Not all staff knew what to do if the service did not take forward their concerns, nor how to access the child protection officer if she was on holiday or unavailable during the day when the service was open. New staff only needed to read the policy during their first six months in post.

Not met

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

Previous recommendations

Recommendation 1

The service should review and develop the participation and involvement of the children in the service. They should consider how to engage children of all ages in expressing choices and opinions about their experiences and care.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 6: Support and Development and Standard 1: Being Welcomed and Valued.

This recommendation was made on 2 August 2016.

Action taken on previous recommendation

We did not see evidence of children's opinions being used to influence the service. We saw them making some choices as they played.

Recommendation 2

To support the children to reach their potential it is recommended that the service establishes personal files that record children's learning and development. These should include the contribution of parents.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 6: Support and Development.

This recommendation was made on 2 August 2016.

Action taken on previous recommendation

The files on individual children still needed to be further developed to record learning and development and parents involvement.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the service continue to assess and develop the quality of experience for the children attending the service. In particular, they should consider the needs of the under three year old children who attend. They should reflect on the support needs for these children and consider how these can best be met. In doing this they need to take into consideration:

- appropriate staff to child ratios
- staff knowledge and skills
- the timing of nursery sessions
- assessment of the garden area and its suitability for very young children in a mixed aged group.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 6: Support and Development.

This recommendation was made on 2 August 2016.

Action taken on previous recommendation

This area of the service had improved. They had limited the areas of the garden where the children could play freely but staff could take the children there for planting experiences.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the service continues to develop the use of risk assessments as a working tool to assess and check for risks to children using the service on a daily basis. They should involve the children in discussions about risky play.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 2: A Safe Environment.

This recommendation was made on 2 August 2016.

Action taken on previous recommendation

Staff said that they had carried out a visual check before the start of the session. This was not effective in identifying potential areas of risk to children. Very sharp nails were sticking up from a wooden palate where the children were playing and had not been noticed by staff.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that the manager develops the monitoring systems used to evaluate the quality of the service and the impact the service has on the outcomes for children attending. This should involve consideration of staff skills and knowledge which allow them to make good observations of children's learning and identifying next steps.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 14: Well-Managed Service, Standard 13: Improving the Service, Standard 12: Confidence in Staff and Standard 6: Support and Development.

This recommendation was made on 2 August 2016.

Action taken on previous recommendation

There was no evidence of any effective monitoring or evaluation of the service or activities leading to improvements. There was no evaluation of staff practice or personal learning journeys. The PLJs which we sampled did not identify next steps. There was no improvement plan.

Recommendation 6

To support the improvement and quality assurance of the service it is recommended that the manager with key stakeholders develop a plan of improvement for the service.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 13: Improving the Service.

This recommendation was made on 2 August 2016.

Action taken on previous recommendation

There was no improvement plan in place. No action plan was provided following the last inspection. No quality assurance system was in place.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that the service develops their positive and restorative strategies in behaviour management to support the children in a sensitive and caring manner so that they learn to regulate their own behaviour. They should involve parents in this process.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 7: A Caring Environment.

This recommendation was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous recommendation

Staff discussed positive methods of distraction. We did not see a positive behaviour strategy.

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that the service continues to develop the use of risk assessments as a working tool to assess and check for risks to children using the service on a daily basis. They should involve the children in discussions about risky play.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 2: A Safe Environment.

This recommendation was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous recommendation

No evidence of this was seen. Visual risk assessments were not very effective.

Recommendation 9

It is recommended that the management board develop and clarify the roles and responsibilities for the staff team.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 14: Well-Managed Service.

This recommendation was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous recommendation

The board had written these roles out and printed them in the staff handbook.

Recommendation 10

It is recommended that the manager develops the monitoring systems used to evaluate the quality of the service and the impact the service has on the outcomes for children attending. This should involve consideration of staff skills and knowledge which will allow them to make good observations of children's learning and identifying next steps.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 14: Well-Managed Service, Standard 13: Improving the Service, Standard 12: Confidence in Staff and Standard 6: Support and Development.

This recommendation was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous recommendation

We saw no evidence of monitoring systems in place and staff said they had not seen any planning or monitoring system.

Recommendation 11

To support the parents and children to take an active and meaningful role in learning and childcare, it is recommended that the service improves the opportunities for participation and information sharing.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 13: Improving the Service and Standard 7: A Caring Environment.

This recommendation was made on 21 June 2017.

Action taken on previous recommendation

A development day had been organised with parents to help improve the garden. Further opportunities for participation should be encouraged.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
24 May 2017	Unannounced	Care and support	3 - Adequate
		Environment	3 - Adequate
		Staffing	3 - Adequate
		Management and leadership	2 - Weak
14 Jun 2016	Unannounced	Care and support	3 - Adequate
		Environment	3 - Adequate
		Staffing	3 - Adequate
		Management and leadership	3 - Adequate
23 Jun 2015	Unannounced	Care and support	3 - Adequate
		Environment	4 - Good
		Staffing	3 - Adequate
		Management and leadership	3 - Adequate

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