

Little Acorns Day Nursery Day Care of Children

Royal Cornhill Hospital
Cornhill Road
Aberdeen
AB25 2ZT

Telephone: 01224 557457

Type of inspection:

Unannounced

Completed on:

31 July 2019

Service provided by:

NHS Grampian

Service provider number:

SP2003000363

Service no:

CS2003001643

About the service

Little Acorns Day Nursery is provided by NHS Grampian for the benefit of NHS staff. The service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011 to provide a day care of children service for a maximum of 108 children at any one time from birth to those not yet attending primary school.

The service operates from modern, two storey, purpose-built accommodation within the grounds of the Royal Cornhill Hospital, Aberdeen. Registration Conditions specify:

A maximum of 17 children aged 0 to under 18 months may be cared for in Room 1 on the ground floor.

A maximum of 18 children aged 1 to 36 months may be cared for in Room 2 on the ground floor.

A maximum of 33 children aged 2 to 3 years 6 months may be cared for in Room 3 on the first floor.

A maximum of 40 children aged 3 to those not yet attending primary school may be cared for on the first floor.

The care service will operate between the times of 07:00 and 18:00, Monday to Friday.

The service will comply with the following staffing Age of children / Ratios – Adults to Children: 0 to under 2 years 1:3. 2 to under 3 years 1:5. 3 years and over 1:8. A minimum of two adults to be on duty at any one time. (Only adults in contact with the children for the majority of the session should count towards the ratios.)

The main aim of Little Acorns Day Nursery is to:

'Provide a happy caring and safe environment for our children which provides for the freedom to choose opportunities to develop at their own pace and meet their needs in a respectful way.'

The aims were currently under review.

We carried out an unannounced inspection of Little Acorns Day Nursery on the 30 and 31 July 2019. During the inspection we observed and talked to the children as they played. We spoke to parents, the management team and staff, observed staff practice and checked documentation relevant to the inspection.

The Care Inspectorate 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 parent(s) to work with 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. These are often referred to as SHANARRI indicators.

What people told us

We observed that babies and toddlers were happy and settled in the nursery, in the care of their key workers. Older children were confident, engaged and motivated in their learning and were making good progress. They were confident in asking who we were and what we were doing in the nursery. They talked about their interests and friends as they played.

We spoke to seven parents during the inspection, all of whom who were very happy with the service. They reflected on aspects of the service that were helpful to the inspection:

"The level of information shared through the weekly newsletters, wall displays, and daily communication is a real strength. Over the past year or so children have had much more choice and unstructured play which is good. My child has been learning amazing things for example about the body and can talk about the spine and veins."

"Management and staff are great; creating a lovely atmosphere. Communication is good both ways and the recent parents evening provided a lot of information. Transition visits to the toddler room are well planned."

"Really pleased with the care; our child loves coming and can't wait to get here every day. Great feedback from staff, especially the emailed news, I love looking at the photos; they do so much. Definitely has supported my child's development. The staff and manager are great, you can talk to them about anything and they are always helpful and supportive."

"The staff are fab, it's not easy leaving your little one, but I had regular updates from my child's keyworker, and she personalised my child's experiences and worked on their social skills. I am a little anxious about my child going upstairs but feel reassured that they will all be lovely."

"I genuinely feel the staff love what they do."

"More free play is now taking place; my child loves climbing trees and being outdoors. Staff are approachable and supportive with things like toilet training. They have shared information about my child's transition to pre-school."

"The nursery has a nice environment and caring staff. Staff are lovely, really nice and very approachable. My child eats well at nursery, not so well at home. The nursery has made a difference and my child has come on brilliantly."

31 out of a sample of 50 parents returned completed questionnaires to us before the inspection. All were very positive, indicating that parents were very satisfied with the service. Written comments reflected:

"I cannot recommend this nursery enough and have done so. Every single member of the team has been amazing; from the baby room, toddler room and all the kitchen, cleaning and reception staff have all gone above and beyond when caring for my child. I feel the staff at Little Acorns respect and care so well for every child they look after and appear to genuinely enjoy their role and treat each child in a unique individual. Lastly, I love the nursery environment it's a lovely building and I'm so happy to see my child get outside so much to play. Fantastic team I felt my son was in safe hands. We'll really miss it."

"Little Acorns is a fantastic nursery. The staff are constantly developing the nursery to make it the best it can be. Both my children have been very happy there and I cannot fault it in anyway."

"Little Acorns nursery is a great place where my child enjoys different activities every day. The communication from the staff are incredible with the activities and what is going on in the nursery. The facilities indoors and outdoors are amazing, with the garden refurbished. It is a great place to have fun and learn every day. I am very happy with the care provided and support offered."

"My child is very happy in the nursery and considers the members of staff as friends. Very often when I ask him

who has he played with he will mention some of the other children's names but will also say the name of members of staff."

"An amazing nursery. I've now been using it for 9 years and not had a bad word to say. Brilliant team, my 3 children are very happy and settled there. An excellent nursery. Staff are knowledgeable, caring and confident in their skills. I feel completely at ease leaving my daughter at Little Acorns and she clearly loves her time at nursery. There is a real sense of family and community about this nursery, staff still ask about and well remember my older child who is now at school."

"I cannot praise Little Acorns baby room highly enough, the girls are all passionate and clearly enjoy their jobs. They made a stellar job in helping my child settle in when he first came here and encouraged me to call at any-time if I wanted to check how he was. This made the process much more reassuring for me when I had to go back to work."

"Cannot praise the service this nursery provides highly enough. Have felt reassured and extremely happy to have my child in Little Acorns for the past 4 and a half years. I feel sad that our time here is coming to an end as my son goes off to school in August. First class nursery!"

"My daughter is a happy and confident little girl. She attends Little Acorns on a full-time basis. I feel that the support and happy environment at nursery has definitely helped her into the little girl she is today. As her mum, it is so nice to watch her confidence grow. She has such good bonds with the staff in tweenies and as a parent I feel really supported as well."

"We've always found staff warm and genuinely interested in our children. There are a huge range of activities available to the children and these do seem to be developed with input from the children. The introduction of weekly outdoor days has been a really positive addition. My child certainly enjoys this and I have to admire the staff for perseverance in all weathers!"

"My child is excited to go to nursery in the morning, always has a fun active day, and does not want to leave at home time."

"Every member of staff has contributed to my child's learning and development. They provide fun and relevant learning opportunities and are very caring. The service is managed very well and I feel I am always included in nursery developments. My child is excited every day to attend nursery and has a great bond with the staff."

"Little Acorns is an excellent nursery with a dedicated caring and creative staff. The outdoor days and outdoor environment offer exceptional benefits for children, providing exercise, stimulation, education and encouraging resilience and creative play. I could not be happier with the service in the 6 years my children have attended Little Acorns."

"I am very pleased with the care my child receives at the nursery, and find all the staff very approachable. The majority of the staff working there are still the same which I like because it means you get to know them. My child looks forward to going every day. She has a very good relationship with her key worker and talks about her all the time."

"My child has the most wonderful key worker and sees her as one of his best friends. They love nursery and I'm always confident that I am leaving him with staff who love and care for him. Little Acorns go the extra mile with communication. I have lots of fabulous videos on the interactive portal and photos/updates daily in his book that we will treasure forever."

"Brilliant nursery. Both staff and building are fantastic, allowing our children to grow and develop, as well as having lots of fun. My husband and I feel very lucky that our children attend this nursery. Staff have worked with us to develop individual plans for example with eating and developing friendships and social interactions."

"I enjoy the regular newsletters from the nursery and get a comprehensive handover each day about my child. The staff are great and engage in a wide range of activities which has been a great experience for my child. I feel I am involved in what's going on at nursery."

"My child gets the opportunity to do something different everyday including outdoor activities, rain or shine. The staff are all extremely friendly and involved in his development."

Self assessment

The service had not been asked to complete a self-assessment in advance of the inspection. We looked at their own improvement plan and quality assurance processes. These demonstrated their priorities for development and how they were monitoring the quality of the provision within the service.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	6 - Excellent
Quality of environment	not assessed
Quality of staffing	6 - Excellent
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

What the service does well

The quality of care and support was excellent. The management team and staff knew children very well and worked in partnership with parents to develop personal plans that ensured that children had consistent and appropriate care that supported their development effectively.

Children were nurtured through responsive and respectful care. As a result, we saw that even new children had quickly developed secure relationships with consistent key workers and were happy and settled. Relationships were supported by staff moving with children in well planned transitions to the next group. Older children's evaluations showed the success of transition programmes developed with Mile-End school to help children prepare for moving on to their new schools.

Children's health was promoted through healthy snacks and a well-planned three-course lunch with attention to low sugar and salt; for example, vegetable ice-lollies. From the main and vegetarian option all children found options they enjoyed and ate well. Babies and younger children enjoyed a relaxed lunch in the consistent environment of their own rooms. Older children ate in the dining room; we discussed ways that children might take more responsibility in the lunch routine.

Children were active outdoors daily, in the extremely well-designed garden. Younger children freely explored the natural environment, investigated daisies, were curious about slugs and insects and engaged with sensory experiences such as water play and wind chimes. They were learning about weight and balance as they

struggled to carry buckets of water independently to water their sunflowers and herbs. They were creatively painting with sticks.

Older children also had plenty of opportunities to take forward their own learning in a variety of ways. They experimented with floating a car to the top of a container, explored how blood flows through veins using red water and a tubular construction set. They made models with wood and real tools with appropriate supervision and were encouraged to think about their own safety. Children received swift comfort and appropriate support when hurt. Children were protected appropriately in the sun, particularly babies whose play was mainly in the shade and all were encouraged to drink plenty of water.

Indoors and out, the learning opportunities motivated and engaged the children. All children took an interest in number, mark-making, looking at books, listening to stories and singing rhymes, at times enhanced with the addition of puppets. They were able to make the choice to join in with group activities of their own accord. Children's voices were represented strongly in displays. Specific additional input enhanced children's learning and wellbeing for example; physical education, yoga, rhythm time and optional Spanish.

Engagement with the wider community enhanced children's learning opportunities. Older children explored the woodland on the wider hospital grounds on a weekly basis. Children enjoyed regular visits from and walks with their Therapet; a large Alsatian dog called Bruno. They had been learning about his needs and how to care for him and as a result of this initiative a few children had overcome their initial fear of large dogs. Children regularly visited nearby sheltered housing and were building relationships with the older people through a range of joint activities. Children were very aware of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves through their collections for a local food-bank. A partnership between the nursery and local parks had been developed which planned to involve children in garden planting and maintenance.

The quality of staffing was excellent. Children were protected through a robust recruitment process to ensure staff suitability. This also involved children's views from an introductory stay and play session. Children were also kept safe because staff were well-trained and highly attuned to children's needs and family life and took action to ensure children and families had the support they needed.

The management and staff team all worked well together; creating a positive atmosphere for the children. Those staff we spoke to and those responding to our questionnaires genuinely loved being part of the Little Acorns team. They were confident and assured and demonstrated embedded good practice in every aspect of their work. Staff collaborated with each other and parents in focus groups to take forward improvement plans and their own ideas. Staff were valued and empowered through a robust framework of training, support and supervision. Self-evaluation against their job description ensured that staff thought deeply about their role. As a result, the significant pace of change and improvement in the nursery had positively impacted on the learning environment, children's experiences and their outcomes.

What the service could do better

The manager, with the involvement of staff and parents was currently developing a new improvement plan to build on the successful impact of the previous plan. The nursery was well placed to continue to develop.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

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

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

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

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

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
20 Mar 2017	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good
11 Feb 2015	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good
14 Mar 2013	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	4 - Good
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
7 Jul 2010	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	Not assessed
1 May 2009	Unannounced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good

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