

Altens Nursery Day Care of Children

102 Hillview Road
East Tullos
Aberdeen
AB12 3GZ

Telephone: 01224 883 911

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 February 2021

Service provided by:
Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003000319

Service no:
CS2003001743

About the service

We carried out an announced inspection of Altens Nursery between 9 February 2021 and 22 February 2021. We used virtual video calls, telephone calls and emails to engage with staff and parents and assessed relevant documents that we requested from the manager. Feedback was given on 22 February 2021 to the Manager of the service and the Early Childhood Area Director for Bright Horizons.

This service has been registered since 2002. The service is provided by Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd. It provides a day care of children service for a maximum of 35 children at any one time who are not yet attending primary school. A maximum of 14 children are aged 0 to under 2 years. A maximum of 21 children are aged 2 to those not yet attending primary school.

A full list of condition can be found at <http://www.careinspectorate.com>

The service operates from a purpose built nursery building within the grounds of Tullos Shell Complex. Playrooms for children are bright and of a good size for children to move freely. The garden and outdoor play areas provide a flexible space for children to explore within a safe and natural environment.

The aims of the service included:

- To provide a high quality nursery experience, where children at the heart of everything that happens.
- To create a safe, appealing and inspiring nursery environment, inside and outside where children thrive and have fun.
- To build on the parent's values and beliefs whilst upholding secure and trusting relationships with children and their families, always valuing parents as the child's first and most important educators. To celebrate diversity, appreciating and respecting the things that make each child unique.
- To continuously strive to improve the nursery to be the best that it can possibly be.
- To promote Bright Horizons growing programme in our setting.

This was a focussed inspection to evaluate how well children were being supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. We evaluated the service based on key areas that are vital to the support and wellbeing of children experiencing care during the pandemic.

What people told us

We spoke with children during their play using online technology. Children told us about their activities in the snow. We observed that staff interacted with children in a positive way that supported them in their play and learning.

We received feedback from parents via email and spoke with some via telephone. Parents told us that they were very happy with the service provided during this time of COVID-19. Parents commented on a high level of communication describing it as very helpful, informative, clear, and has helped parents and children be prepared for changes that have had to take place. We spoke to parents about individual care and support that was provided to them by the staff at nursery and how this had been invaluable. Some parents made suggestions and we looked at these as part of the inspection and have included our findings within the report.

Parents comments included:

- "We have found the communication very helpful, timely (especially given the constraints the team has to work with sometimes), and clear. No visits have been permitted inside during my time there, but the team did allow a short, escorted and distanced tour of the outside when we joined. In terms of drop off and pick up, the nursery has been diligent in terms of instructing parents on what they should do to minimise the risk of transmission. The daily diary and engagements at pick up and drop off help me understand what's working (or not) for my daughter."

- "My daughter started right after the nursery reopened. Due to COVID there was no opportunity for a settling in period. I was concerned how she would settle with starting full time straightaway, but thanks to the efforts of the team and her key worker, she took to it brilliantly. I also felt very reassured with regular telephone updates during the first couple of days."

- "The level of support we've received from the manager has been exemplary. When there has been recent uncertainty around nurseries staying open and who would be eligible to access them, the manager did a fantastic job at managing that uncertainty for me as a parent. She is incredibly professional and has such a good understanding of our situation. On an ongoing basis, the diary that passes between nursery and home is a very effective communication tool and works well for us. As well as having the key information I want regarding meals, nappies and naps, I feel like I am given a great sense of how my daughter's day has been. There are quite often photographs as well. The most recent Learning Journey review with her key worker was done as a video call which made the conversation feel more 'normal' than just a telephone call. In summary, I am thrilled with our decision to send my daughter to Altens Nursery and can't praise the team highly enough, particularly my daughter's key worker and the manager. I continue to be amazed at how quickly and confidently my daughter is developing, particularly during these strange times!"

- "Weekly updates are issued to all parents and I can see that the nursery staff are keeping in touch with children based at home during this time, it's great to see (so I can show my daughter) what the kids at home are doing. Newsletters with activities are issued, we try some of the activities at the weekend also. In 2020 first lockdown the Altens Nursery was closed therefore there was minimal contact. This lockdown there has been increased communication, packs issued to parents at home, weekly newsletters and emails with communication is on a regular basis. The staff have introduced a book with daily information on your child. Weekly newsletters with pictures of the activities is a great way to see what they have been up to, especially when parents miss seeing creations while collecting their children. The new manager has been a great asset to the nursery and handles communication well and timely. She is very friendly and informative. She assisted with information regarding key workers and helped when completing forms by explaining the government rules in a better format. I think all the staff at Altens are doing a great job, they are always friendly, happy and informative. They are coping well with the ongoing changes and I think their great accommodating attitude comes across well. It's honestly a relief to I know my child is happy and being very well taking care of during these uncertain COVID-19 times."

- "The nursery has given fantastic feedback day to day regarding my son's activities through a daily entry in the jotter. This has made it easy to have conversations with him and encourage him to explain more about his daily activities. Nursery have adapted really well to the arrangements for dropping off and picking up. Noticing that peak times parents are waiting longer in all weather and accommodating this through allowing children to be collected from another door at these peak times. Staff have been great, creating topics for little ones to engage with and almost all staff are enthusiastic and engaging with our son. The nursery has adapted well, they asked for parental feedback and accommodated this. Such as staff name board at the entrance, having events that parents can discuss at home and be involved in. The staff have made the transition extremely smooth for our family. Our son has settled in extremely well."

- "Communication during the second lockdown has been very good, a massive improvement from 2020 lockdown. It has been helpful to discuss return plans etc. Lockdown activities for those at home have been very useful, not only to see what other's are doing but gives parents ideas. We are very grateful for these being sent out. Handling return, bubbles, etcetera has all been great but I am not sure if the blue book is COVID friendly. Ideally something digitally would be more effective and safer."

- "Lots of support with at home learning and regular updates on the ongoing situation. They have always been clear about how drop off and pick up will work and reinforced it/reminded parents when they forgot. They recognised the possible wait outside in the deteriorating weather so opened up another door to collect children, which then allowed parents to see in to the room and what their child was doing (this was brilliant as not going in means you miss a lot!) There has been lots of support, they have completed daily journals for each child and kept us informed of activities at the nursery. They've also been great at supporting home learning when children haven't been attending nursery."

- "The communication on COVID has been very timely and detailed. Working on quick notice from the government we have always been advised promptly and any questions we have are always answered quickly. The staff have been very child orientated. Staff have went over and above to ensure the nursery was a consistent and stable environment for my son. I am very grateful for the support we have received. I think the nursery was in a great place previously, but since the new management took over the level of communication, professionalism, standard of care and support has only improved further."

- "During any periods of uncertainty the nursery management team have been brilliant in communicating what they know as soon as possible. We, as parents, are kept informed of any procedural changes (for example wearing of facemasks at drop off) clearly and effectively. The nursery have quickly adapted as situations have changed. Communication of face masks for drop off/pick up was clear and masks are available in the lobby if needed. They wash my sons hands as soon as he arrives and before he's in contact with other children. We started during the pandemic and there was no indoor visiting, however I felt so comfortable due to prior phone consultations with his key worker and the manager giving me a clear understanding of what would happen. Photos and email/phone updates throughout the day to let me know how he was getting on. I can not fault the staff at all. I think they've adapted so well and still greet my son every day with a smile. I'm so pleased with the care my son gets. He is always so excited to get to nursery and never wants to leave; a real credit to the staff. I'm also so pleased with the food options available and happy they are approved in terms of children's nutrition."

- "We have had regular weekly newsletters with plenty of images to see what the children are up to whilst we can't come into nursery, which are brilliant. The manager has also introduced a communication book as handovers are now shorter. This is absolutely excellent. I appreciate it takes up staff time, however it allows me to see what they have been doing and learning in the day and also any messages the staff have for me about things that need to be brought into nursery for example, and I can use it to communicate back to the staff. I personally find it better than pre-COVID! We've also had prompt communication and clear updates when the government guidance has changed, even over the Christmas holiday period. Finally, we have maintained an increased frequency of parent partnership meetings through this period."

- "The nursery send out weekly activities for children at home and include those families who are still at nursery so we can do those activities at weekends if we wish and they share photos of the children at home in the weekly newsletter too so it still feels like a community. I think the staff have been outstanding since COVID-19 has started. I don't honestly think there is more they can do. They have taken great care of the children, maintained a secure relationship with them, found creative ways to work with the restrictions on the activities that are possible. They have talked to the children about COVID in an age appropriate way so they understand the importance of handwashing and the various rules without being frightened. They have

found more opportunities to play outside and make more use of the wider grounds including the 'wild garden'."

- "We have had initially phone calls and now Teams video calls for their regular development updates, which work really well. The nursery also provided all the clarity I requested about the criteria for children to attend nursery during the current lockdown. I think the nursery have done and are doing an incredible job of caring for our children through this challenging time. They have handled every change that has come to them, quickly, efficiently and with the children in mind. I was very surprised at how quickly the children settled back in after lockdown and that is testament to how well the nursery have managed it. I cannot thank all the staff enough for their continued support of us as parents and of the children."

- "The staff have always been helpful right from the beginning. The variety of activities my preschooler does at the nursery is amazing and enjoys nursery. They update us through the book sent back each day and at pick up if anything had to be highlighted. All the staff at the nursery are excellent and I know my child is being looked after well."

- "The communication and service from the nursery in the last year has been excellent. The manager has brought a great level of initiative in the communication from the nursery to the parents. The weekly newsletters, updating us on what the children have been doing, have been great. The pictures especially are lovely to see. We had multiple phone calls personally from the manager chatting through when and if our child should be going. We also really liked the video calls that our daughter could have with a member of staff she particularly likes, to read a story together. That was a really nice touch and our daughter loved it. We think that what the manager especially has brought with her to Altens has been fantastic, and the whole team are great. The only extra thing we can think of that would be valuable, is perhaps a monthly call or catch up with someone to hear about how our daughter is doing and any other support that we could be giving at home. This kind of chat that would normally happen naturally at pick-up, is obviously harder in the present circumstances, so that kind of call would be well received."

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 and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	5 - Very Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?

5 - Very Good

Quality indicator 5.1: Children's Health and Wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- Children are nurtured and supported throughout their changed experience in their early learning and childcare setting
- Effective communication with families enables responsive care to support children through changing circumstances.

Children and families were well supported in areas of health and wellbeing. Staff had a nurturing and adaptable approach to provide this support through changing circumstances. Staff used imaginative and fun ways to introduce changing routines and experiences to the children, involving them whenever possible. Children were involved in discussions about new experiences and routines and helped to risk assess in a way that was meaningful to them. This helped children feel a sense of ownership over changes that had to be made.

Staff had an understanding of child protection. Additional training sessions had supported the staff to gain a shared insight into the potential impacts that children and families may have experienced as a result of COVID-19. They were clear about the approaches they would follow to safeguard children.

Staff evaluated practice from the first lockdown into the second. Staff remained in close contact with families during the second lockdown period supporting them well, building on trusted relationships. Staff identified areas of individual support they could give to families and children and worked with them during the course of COVID-19. Parents commented on how helpful, valuable, and caring staff have been. This has helped support children's safety and wellbeing.

Ongoing communication with families recognised the difficulties of physical distancing. Key workers used technology to keep in regular contact with families who were not in attendance. Staff used this time to read stories with children, play games and share information with parents. Weekly emails involved information and picture sharing for all children both at home and those attending nursery. This was a positive way to maintain relationships and allow children to remain with a sense of belonging to the nursery. Daily journals and a new parents information area helped keep daily communications with families.

Parents were asked to provide current information about children to make sure that children's needs were met to keep them safe, happy, and achieving. Sensitive settling in procedures were arranged with parents to support children on their return to the service. This reassured parents and further supported children to feel confident and welcome.

Staff recognised the importance of outdoor play for children and the additional benefits at this time. Children played outdoors in all weathers. We observed children having fun in the snow looking at building with it and experimenting with colours. Being outdoors helps prevent infection but also promotes healthy wellbeing of children.

Quality indicator 5.2: Infection Prevention and Control Practices support a Safe Environment for Children and Staff.

- Children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Staff took the necessary precautions through a range of approaches to reduce the spread of infection as set out in guidance. Prior to reopening, management and staff had created a COVID-19 risk assessment and had updated their Infection Prevention and Control policy. This was shared with staff and families and set clear guidance and expectations.

Enhanced cleaning procedures were in place. Toys, equipment, soft furnishings and difficult to clean items had been reduced so that a clean and safe environment could be easily maintained. Soft furnishings that were in place, were cleaned every day; staff had suitable cleaning procedures such as a 'mouth box' in the baby room for toys that could not be cleaned straight away after use. The nursery was well staffed which allowed for staff to carry out cleaning duties including touch points throughout the day. These steps were supportive to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Safe arrival and departure times were in place outdoors. Staff had worked to develop this for longer term use throughout COVID-19. Signage for parents was clear and parents were aware of the guidance to follow. A welcoming arrival area had been created in the vestibule area with strict physical distancing in place. Notice boards, staff pictures, interest boxes and displays of children's work were in place safe. This supported ongoing communication with families and gave children a sense of achievement in being able to share their stories with parents.

The nursery was well ventilated. Staff were all aware of social distances measures and worked together to maintain a safe distance from each other helping to keep children safe.

Children had been supported to understand the need for good hygiene and hand washing was always supervised by a member of staff. Staff had used fun ways of introducing this such as making soapy bubbles, glitter experiments and story books. Staff worked with those children who required a little extra support encouraging a sense of achievement.

Staff were clear on the signs and symptoms relating to COVID-19 and that neither children or staff should attend the service if they displayed any of these. Staff had advised us of the correct procedures to follow keeping in line with the guidance issued.

Quality indicator 5.3: Staffing Arrangements are Responsive to the Changing Needs of Children during COVID-19.

- Staffing arrangements meet the needs of children and families**
- Staff are well supported and confident.**

Staff were aware of guidance to be followed to maintain a safe environment and reduce the risk of spread of infection. Staff told us that they felt confident about the procedures and that policies and risk assessments were easily accessible and could be referred to any time. The management team kept them well informed about any updates and changes.

The service was appropriately staffed to meet the additional demands of COVID-19. Staff worked in groups which provided consistency for children helping them feel secure. Staff time was planned across the day to ensure that additional tasks could be carried out, without compromising on the care and experiences for children.

Staff were clear about their roles and discussions with them indicated that, they were well motivated, and keen to share ideas and help each other. It was recognised that there had been some recent changes to the staff team and roles. They spoke about their roles with enthusiasm and shared how happy they were to be working as a team. Staff were keen to speak about the varied support they have provided for individual children and families and were proud of what they had achieved.

Staff were being well supported by the management team and valued the support that was being given at both a professional and personal level. Staff felt able to share ideas and voice personal worries and felt supported by each other and the management team.

The staff team worked together well to evaluate new procedures and make changes when needed, to ensure effective infection control practices and support for children. Staff had all been involved in self evaluating their service and identifying areas for improvement. Staff were empowered to act on and make these changes when needed. They kept positive outcomes of children at the heart of any improvements.

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

The provider and manager must ensure that induction processes ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge needed to care for the children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, as a child, "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." (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 28 January 2020.

Action taken since then

This area was not assessed at this time

Previous area for improvement 2

In order to support the development of the service and to support improved outcomes for children, the provider and manager must ensure quality assurance methods are effective and are fully embedded into practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, as a child, "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes." (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 28 January 2020.

Action taken since then

This area was not assessed at this time.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	5 - Very Good
5.1 Children's health and well being are supported and safeguarded during COVID-19	5 - Very Good
5.2 Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff	5 - Very Good
5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19	5 - Very Good

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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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