

Little Monkeys @ Craiglockhart Day Care of Children

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Edinburgh
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 May 2021

Service provided by:
Little Monkeys Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003002999

Service no:
CS2005101786

About the service

Little Monkeys @ Craiglockhart is one of three daycare services for children provided by Little Monkeys Ltd. Registered with the Care Inspectorate in 2005 it can care for a maximum of 108 children at any one time aged from birth to those in Primary 5 with a maximum of 33 children at any one time under 2 years.

The premises is two large townhouses converted into one nursery accommodation. Playrooms accommodate children in age groups across four floors with one baby cohort, two toddler cohorts, two preschool cohorts and an after school service. A secure outdoor area provides opportunities for outdoor play each day for all children. Situated in the Craiglockhart area of Edinburgh, it is close to local amenities and serviced by local bus routes. Children benefit from exploring the local area, including woodland and canal paths.

The group of nurseries state their aims as:

'To provide a safe and stimulating environment for children to grow and learn.'

'To provide a unique 'home from home' environment, developing the principles of learning through play.'

'To work in partnership with our nursery parents and communities, providing an open door policy at all times.'

We carried out an unannounced inspection visit on Monday 10 May 2021 9:15-13:30. Further observations of the after school service took place virtually through a video call. We had telephone discussions with management and staff over five days, where we viewed documents and discussed nursery approaches. Feedback was provided through video call on Monday 17 May 2021.

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. This inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

What people told us

Children appeared happy and engaged in play throughout the playrooms. They were familiar with staff and seemed comfortable receiving comfort and assistance. We spoke with a few older children including the after school children who told us about their changed experiences during Covid-19.

We asked the service to distribute our contact details to parents during the inspection. Twelve parents offered feedback about their experiences with the service, through email or telephone conversations. Parents confirmed they felt supported throughout the pandemic through clear information at the right time. All parents felt confident their children were cared for to a high standard and were supported to settle back into nursery life following lockdowns initiated by Covid-19. Comments included:

"They made extra effort to make the children feel welcomed and settled when they returned. I am so grateful to them for all their hard work. I even think that the drop-off is better now!

"The staff have been cheerful, helpful and efficient throughout. Drop off and pick up has been particularly good. They're communication daily with us has been excellent and they are always responsive to any questions."

"The time at handover is necessarily reduced and it is therefore more difficult to get regular feedback on our children than before. The nursery has worked hard to provide reports and has arranged short feedback calls. However, anything to regularise/improve the detail of the day to day / week to week feedback and communication would be welcome, to compensate for the lack of informal chats with staff that were possible pre-pandemic."

"In the period where the nursery was closed, I think they went above and beyond to provide entirely free of charge, regular activity packs and videos of the staff familiar to the children, reading stories. It was so appreciated. The cook supplied recipes familiar to the children for families to make at home."

"It was so strange for us not being able to do the "settles" but the team made sure that there was good phone communication, safe outdoor face to face introduction interview, and much appreciated photos emailed during the first week."

"When the first lockdown eased, our little one found it difficult to transition for the first few weeks but the staff were very supportive at dealing with all of our anxiety at returning at such an unknown time. My child was able to return in a phased manner and with the initial use of small bubbles, was able to settle more gently. The increased use of outdoor time was also very beneficial to my child."

"We have found the mitigations around drop off, distancing, masks etc very helpful and the staff have demonstrated a high level of patience, care and consideration with the children. Though we aren't able to chat to the staff in such an informal way now, we are able to discuss any individual issues by phone which is very helpful. We receive daily emails with menus and activities outlined which helps our sense of connection to the day to day routines."

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?	3 - Adequate
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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?

3 - Adequate

Quality indicator 5.1: Children's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during COVID-19. 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.

A key strength of the service was the connections and interactions between children and staff. Children's emotional needs were met as staff were warm, familiar, attentive and knowledgeable about each child in their care. Children were able to maintain these relationships throughout Covid-19 lockdowns through virtual activities and story-times. This meant that children felt familiar and secure when settling back into nursery life.

There was a commitment to keeping children's experiences as familiar as possible whilst also considering Covid-19 guidance. All children benefited from outdoor play each day, accessing fresh air and a natural environment. The service was involving children and staff in a planned refurbishment of the upper preschool room. This would enhance children's ownership and further offer resources in response to interests.

Each child had a personal plan which was kept up to date and relevant. Communication methods had evolved throughout the pandemic to ensure information about children was being shared between parents and staff. This meant that personal plans were tailored to their needs and wishes and used to plan their care. Consistency was provided for children as staff were aware of all children in their room. The manager agreed to update medication forms to provide further clarity for staff when needed. We also asked the manager to further consider the involvement of parents when reviewing their children's care within the after school service. This would ensure a consistent approach for all parents to reflect on their child's progress and plan for future needs.

We raised some development areas with the provider who gave assurances that these issues had already been identified and were in the process of being addressed through refurbishments in the preschool rooms. For example, the use of shower curtains instead of toilet cubicle doors; and a limited range of resources for learning opportunities. These developments would enhance outcomes for children around experiences, room routines and privacy in the preschool toilet area.

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.

A number of steps had been taken to protect children and staff from the spread of infection, particularly Covid-19. The environment was well ventilated and visibly clean. The use of masks, physical distancing and a one way system for parents, reduced the risk of Covid-19 transmission in communal areas. Signage was placed in key areas to remind staff and visitors of Covid-19 procedures. These steps were outlined in a Covid-19 risk assessment and additional information in service procedures. This offered clarity to staff and aimed for consistency across the setting.

Children were cared for in cohorts with consistent staff working in each cohort. This reduced the adult contacts children had each day. An area had been identified where children with possible Covid-19 symptoms could be cared for until collected by a parent. Staff were clear about their use of personal protective equipment (PPE) during this time and the importance of cleaning the space afterwards.

During the inspection we saw examples of inconsistent handwashing practice throughout each playroom. For example limited handwashing supervision for children after using the toilet; limited handwashing for children before snack; the use of hand gel by staff after children's nose wiping. Where soap and water are available, these should be used to further reduce the risk of infection transmission. The inconsistent supervision and supporting of children's handwashing meant that good hygiene practices were not always being explained and embedded into their daily routines. Inconsistency compromises any effective handwashing which does take place, increasing the risk of infection for both staff and children. Effective handwashing is standard best practice and has become more essential during the pandemic (see area for improvement 1).

Snack preparation in the baby room, increased the risk of food contamination. For example, food was prepared on paper towels beside children's paint pots.; antibacterial spray was sprayed onto the surface beside an open tub of spread. We discussed this with the manager who agreed to look into this practice further. This would contribute to children's health and safety.

5.3: Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19.

Staff were comfortable and confident with their roles and responsibilities due to the support received by management throughout the pandemic. Being kept informed, consulted with and trained in Covid-19 practices, meant that staff felt ready to return to work following lockdowns. This in turn enabled them to welcome children back into the setting in a relaxed manner. Having consistent staff who were familiar to parents and children was beneficial to families wellbeing at this time.

Children were cared for by attentive, skilled and committed staff. We saw specific pressure points in the baby room routine however, which were impacting on children's experiences. For example, the baby room cohort was split over two rooms. This meant that in one of the rooms one staff member was less able to meet the needs of babies whilst the other staff member changed nappies. We discussed the need to review staffing arrangements during pressure points such as nappy changing, meal times and when new babies were settling. Management were committed to addressing this quickly to ensure quality of experience for children.

The after school service had the depute manager and a support worker present during inspection, however the service confirmed it was usually staffed by the support worker only. We advised the manager to consider the potential impact of this on the quality of children's experiences regarding choice, a responsive approach and quality assurance. For example, children should be able to access the outdoors if they wish as opposed to waiting for all children to go outside when only one staff was present.

The manager had amended room observation records to include Covid-19 tasks. This meant that Covid-19 practices could be monitored to promote adherence to the national guidance. We would advise the continuing use of these observation records to support management to further identify and address the issues outlined in this report.

It was evident through the use of the key question 5 self-evaluation tool, that the management team were committed to ongoing improvements to provide positive outcomes for children. Further improvements could be made by risk assessing each cohort and the split space they use. This would further identify the mitigations needed to ensure a safe environment for children and staff when using more than one space per cohort.

Areas for improvement

1. To further reduce risk of infection transmission, the manager should consider how to make handwashing practice consistent throughout all playrooms each day and in accordance with the national Covid-19 guidance by:

- providing sufficient resources for washing and drying of hands
- considering the length and frequency of handwashing
- supervising and supporting children's handwashing
- quality assuring practice

This is to ensure care and support reflects the Health and Social Care Standard 4.11 which states "I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice".

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	3 - Adequate
5.1 Children's health and well being are supported and safeguarded during COVID-19	4 - Good
5.2 Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff	3 - Adequate
5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19	3 - Adequate

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