

Stramash Outdoor Nursery, Elgin Day Care of Children

Spynie Village Hall
Spynie
Elgin
IV30 8XJ

Telephone: 01631 566 080

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Unannounced

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About the service

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at www.careinspectorate.com.

Stramash Outdoor Nursery Elgin is a daycare of children service and is registered to provide care to a maximum of 32 children aged two years to those not yet attending primary school.

The provider is Stramash Social Enterprise.

The service's aims include:

'To provide a safe and stimulating environment where children can feel happy and safe, encourage the development of the whole child - emotional, social, physical and intellectual, develop confidence and self esteem, encourage children to explore, appreciate and respect their environment'.

This was a focused 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

During our visit we were able to see children freely expressing themselves when playing and together at gathering times. Some of their comments included:

'I'm going to school I'm 5.'

'I'm 5 I just had my birthday last month.'

'The best thing to do here is to climb that' (wooden construction).

'I like to slide' (in the mud).

'Look at how many bubbles I've made!' (child taking great pleasure in handwashing).

'I found a shell.'

'I really wanted a wheelbarrow.'

'What topping would you like on your pizza - onion?' (mud kitchen).

'I can only give you coke to drink that's all that's available.'

Seven parents/carers also contacted us by email to give their views on how the service had delivered care to them and their children during the pandemic. They were all very positive about the care and support their child received and the experiences and opportunities provided for them to grow, flourish and develop. Some of their comments included:

'My [child] has been attending Stramash for over a year now and he/she loves it. His/her development in general has come on loads. The staff at Stramash are so nurturing and he/she is always happy (and muddy !) when we go to collect him/her. The staff were fantastic in providing that continuity for him/her in a safe and nurturing environment and we felt reassured that they had correct protocols and procedures in place.'

'I am writing to commend [the manager] and the team at Stramash. The site location is good, with the access to the woods a particular boon. The staff always seem engaged with the children and take an active interest in them. We've always been quite satisfied with Stramash's approach during Covid, particularly given the outdoor setting. I think the biggest challenge was the return after such long breaks, [our child] found this quite upsetting and was very reluctant to go in. However the staff were very supportive and it was clear when we collected him/her that he/she enjoyed his/her time.'

'My [child] attends Stramash two days per week. I just wanted to say how much he/she loves his/her time at Stramash. It is such a unique environment, it took him/her a while to settle in but now he's/she's made some good friends and he/she is always so happy with his/her day when I go to pick him/her up. In relation to how well Stramash has supported us through the past year of Covid - I am very happy with the communication from Stramash about the various restrictions and how they effect the care available for XXX. There was one instance where XXX had been in possible contact with a case of Covid at Stramash and the nursery provided very clear support and helped liaison with the test and trace service. Otherwise we have just been so happy to have an outdoor environment for XXX to attend as I understand transmission is less of an issue outdoors.'

'We couldn't be happier with the care [our child] receives. We see how much [our child] has flourished with their care and approach to early years practice. They have taken the time to be involved in his/her ongoing multidisciplinary care. We feel as parents that he/she is in the best place for his/her development as the team have such a passion for their work. We have really had such a positive experience with the team and commend them highly.'

'My [child] attends Stramash, he/she absolutely loves it, his/her confidence and speech has come on leaps and bounds in the short time he/she has been there so far. He/she is always so excited to go and always smiling when I pick him/her up. He/she has made many friends since being there and loves getting involved in all activities, especially feeding the horses. I would highly recommended this nursery to friends - and have done so!'

'I wanted to email you about Stramash Nursery Elgin and our experience there so far which has been 100% positive. We saw the nursery during the pandemic and decided to start our [child] before Christmas. This became not possible due to lockdown. The nursery was great at keeping the communication open with us and being flexible. Despite not having been apart from us before, he/she quickly felt safe and secure and even though we were invited to stay, we left after 10 minutes and he/she was very happy to wave goodbye. We have been kept up to date with some videos of him/her via the online portal. The staff have been so welcoming and caring and our [child] has connected well with his/her key workers especially. He/she looks forward to his/her nursery days and greets me after each day with a huge smile after so much adventure. I feel really confident in his/her care and development at the nursery so far (and he/she is very happy!).'

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

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| How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic? | 4 - 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?

4 - Good

5.1 Children's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Staff were warm, caring and nurturing towards children and knew them very well. They engaged skilfully with them to comfort, reassure and support their play, encouraging them to share, resolve conflicts successfully and promote friendships. They were taking an individualised approach to children's wellbeing, closely observing and supporting them to adapt to changes and settle in, helping them to shape their play and express their feelings and emotions through a range of creative activities, imaginative play and story telling at gathering times. On our visit we were able to see children happy, relaxed and having fun, feeling safe, secure and confident in their new routines and changed experiences within the setting.

The manager and staff understood and spoke knowledgeably about the impact and challenges children and their families had encountered during lockdown. Through regular meaningful contact with parents and continuing to work collaboratively with other professionals and relevant agencies, they had helped to reduce the impact of any changes on children's experiences and outcomes. Transition plans were tailored to children's individual needs and flexible to respond to any additional support that may be needed. Children's emerging and changing needs were fully taken into account as part of their personal plan. Through their online Interactive Learning Diaries work was already underway to refine and develop how they reported and recorded on children's progress and involve parents in the process in a Covid-19 safe way.

As an outdoor nursery children were able to freely connect with nature, enjoy the fresh air and play with a wide range of natural resources and loose parts play. These experiences provided children with the opportunities to develop their independence, be adventurous and enhance their sense of wellbeing. For example, during our visit we were able to see children excited and having fun, climbing on 'horsey' that they had constructed from pallets, sailing to imaginary places in their wooden boat, experimenting in their mud kitchen and collecting wood for the fire. We discussed how the children's lunch time experience could be further improved. We agreed with the changes they intended to implement to make the experience more positive.

Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities to protect children from harm and had reviewed their approaches in line with the impact of the change to provision due to Covid-19. We discussed the importance of continuing to share key information with social work on an ongoing basis and also signposted the service to the Scottish Government's 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): supplementary national child protection guidance' published in March 2020.

5.2 Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff.

The service had risk assessed and reviewed their procedures and put additional measures in place to reduce the risk of transmission. For example, they had clear protocols in place for visitors when they arrived at the setting. Attention was being paid to handwashing and the careful selection and rotation of resources, as well as physical distancing between staff and other adults.

Indoor spaces and covered areas displayed clear signage and had been adapted to minimise the number of people using the same space. This supported physical distancing and reduced the risk of the spread of infection. Their enhanced cleaning and hygiene programme was not impacting on the engagement children received from staff or the breadth of activities available.

Staff had participated in a range of training activities relating to Covid-19 and demonstrated a sound knowledge of infection prevention and control procedures. They were familiar with new policies and procedures and understood their responsibilities of keeping themselves and children safe, however during our visit we observed that a consistent approach was not always being adopted across the service. This was with particular reference to the storage and wiping down of lunch boxes at meal times, the arrangements for storing children's spare clothes and bags indoors, the dispensing of paper towels and the cleaning programme for the portable sink and vinyl flooring in the nappy changing area. Although staff knew when personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn, the guidance on how it should be put on, taken off and disposed of was not always being adhered to. See Area for Improvement 1.

Procedures were in place for isolation if needed and information had been shared with families. The management team were supporting families individually where required, for example, if they were in close contact with a positive case of Covid-19. Clear procedures enabled the team to act swiftly if there was a suspected case of Covid-19. The service had been vigilant in notifying the Care Inspectorate of any suspected or confirmed outbreaks of Covid-19.

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

They were a well motivated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff team who were clear about their roles and responsibilities. Careful consideration had been given to ensure that they were deployed effectively. They were working well together as a team and flexible in their response to changing situations. A positive ethos of mutual trust and respect promoted a happy, secure and supportive environment for children and their families.

Staff told us that they felt connected and committed to their work. They were well supported by the management team and recognised the potential impact of Covid-19 within work and their personal circumstances. They felt valued, respected and safe at work. Plans to re-introduce individual support and supervision sessions and more formal observations of practice were underway. On site team meetings had been resumed. This was giving everyone further opportunities for professional dialogue, to raise or express any concerns and reflect and identify where improvements or changes needed to be made. See Area for Improvement 1.

Areas for improvement

1. To further minimise the risk of infection and cross contamination:

- All cleaning and hygiene practices should be reviewed and follow current good practice guidance and be carried out in accordance with 'COVID-19 – Information and Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings'. This is with particular reference to the storage and wiping down of lunch boxes at meal times, the arrangements for storing children's spare clothes and bags indoors, the dispensing of paper towels and the cleaning programme for the portable sink and vinyl flooring in the nappy changing area.
- Staff should refresh their PPE training and adhere to Scottish Government guidance in relation to the wearing of face coverings.

This is to demonstrate the Health and Social Care Standards, My support, my life, which state:

5.17 My environment is secure and safe.

5.22 I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.

4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 31 March 2020 the service provider must demonstrate to the Care Inspectorate that they have robust safer recruitment policies and procedures embedded into their practice that follow and are in line with current legislation on protecting vulnerable groups. The provider should refer to the updated guidance 'Safer Recruitment through Better Recruitment'.

This ensures management and leadership is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state:

4.24 I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited.

4.23 I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

4.19 I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.

4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

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 9(1)(2) Fitness of employees and Regulation 13(1) Protection of vulnerable groups listings.

This requirement was made on 10 February 2020.

Action taken on previous requirement

As detailed in their action plan submitted on 02 March 2020, the service had updated their safer recruitment policies and procedures in line with current legislation and guidance. They had developed a safer recruitment checklist to strengthen and make sure procedures were being correctly followed and implemented.

As part of this inspection we carried out a safer recruitment audit and were satisfied more robust processes and procedures were in place. We discussed how their recently introduced provider quality assurance audits could be used to support and further embed good practice.

Met - within timescales

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 undertake training to refresh their knowledge and understanding of child protection. Better record keeping along with clearer and more robust protocols should be put in place for management and staff to follow should they have any concerns.

This is to demonstrate the Health and Social Care Standards, My support, my life, which state:

3.20 I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

3.21 I am protected from harm because people are alert and respond to signs of significant deterioration in my health and wellbeing, that I may be unhappy or may be at risk of harm.

3.22 I am listened to and taken seriously if I have a concern about the protection and safety of myself or others, with appropriate assessments and referrals made.

This area for improvement was made on 10 February 2020.

Action taken since then

- Training undertaken.
- Staff clear what to do should they have any concerns.
- Chronologies in place.
- Procedure with relevant contact details displayed for everyone to follow along with the name of the service's child protection officer.

Also see comments under quality indicator 5.1 of this report.

Previous area for improvement 2

Management and staff should review their cleaning and hygiene practices, along with their facilities and arrangements for nappy changing in consultation with environmental health, to ensure they meet the current good practice guidance. Staff should also undertake further training in infection prevention and control.

This is to demonstrate the Health and Social Care Standards, My support, my life, which state:

5.4 If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed.

1.4 If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected.

5.22 I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.

4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

4.23 I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

This area for improvement was made on 10 February 2020.

Action taken since then

- Further training undertaken.
- Consultation with environmental health.
- Cleaning and hygiene practices reviewed along with their arrangements and facilities for nappy changing.
- New nappy changing unit and portable sink installed.
- Daily checklists and protocols displayed for staff to follow.

Also see comments under quality indicator 5.2 of this report.

Previous area for improvement 3

Any indoor play spaces should be appropriately furnished with suitable resources and equipment, heating and flooring to create cosy, nurturing spaces for children to play, sleep and rest safely and comfortably.

This is to demonstrate the Health and Social Care Standards, My support, my life, which state:

5.21 I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices.

5.22 I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.

4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

This area for improvement was made on 10 February 2020.

Action taken since then

- Indoor cabin space refurnished and refreshed with wipeable resources and soft furnishings.

Also see comments under quality indicator 5.2 of this report.

Previous area for improvement 4

A programme of staff support, supervision and development should be implemented that includes more formal observations of their practice, audits of their training needs, as well as a comprehensive induction programme and opportunities for them to self evaluate and critically reflect on their work. This is to build capacity within the team and support continuous improvement.

This is to demonstrate the Health and Social Care Standards, My support, my life, which state:

3.14 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.

4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

This area for improvement was made on 10 February 2020.

Action taken since then

- Implementing the Scottish Government National Induction Resource.
- Staff induction checklist in place.
- Staff participating in regular team meetings.
- Training plans in place.

Also see comments under quality indicator 5.3 of this report.

Previous area for improvement 5

The provider, management and staff should develop and implement robust and systematic quality assurance processes and procedures to monitor and evaluate all aspects of their service delivery. The Health and Social Care Standards My support, my life should be included and embedded as part of the framework along with other relevant evaluation documents, resources and good practice guidance.

This is to demonstrate the Health and Social Care Standards, My support, my life, which state:

4.23 I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

4.19 I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.

4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

This area for improvement was made on 10 February 2020.

Action taken since then

- Improvement plan in place.
- Self evaluation submitted to us assessed as providing sufficient evidence.
- Provider quality assurance audit recently introduced.
- Comprehensive action plan submitted from the last inspection.
- Significant progress made on the requirement and areas for improvement identified from the last inspection. This has been regraded separately.

Also see comments under quality indicators 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 of this report.

Detailed evaluations

| | |
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| How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic? | 4 - 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 | 4 - Good |
| 5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19 | 4 - 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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