

Early Learning Unit Hope Street Day Care of Children

Hope Street
Hamilton
ML3 6AF

Telephone: 01698 281 228

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
31 August 2022

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2019376559

About the service

Early Learning Unit Hope Street is a daycare of children service situated in Hamilton, South Lanarkshire. It is registered to provide care to a maximum of 116 children aged from birth to those not yet attending Primary School. This is an integrated setting which also offers specialist provision for children who have additional or complex care and support needs.

The service is provided from a purpose-built, single storey building with direct access to outdoor play space from each of the six playrooms. The service is close to Hamilton town centre, public transport links and other amenities in the local area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 29 August 2022. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with 15 people using the service and nine of their families
- spoke with 25 members of staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- received information from one external professional.

Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with children. They knew the care and support needs of all children in their care very well and ensured their individual needs were met throughout the day.
- Free flow access between the well-resourced indoor and outdoor environments provided children with a wide variety of play and learning experiences suited to their needs and stage of development.
- Staff were deployed well throughout the service to ensure there was the right number of staff with the right skills and experience to meet children's needs throughout the day.
- The manager and depute were very experienced, skilled and knowledgeable. They worked closely with the staff team who were enthusiastic, motivated and committed in ensuring positive outcomes for all children in their care.
- The service worked in close partnership with parents/carers and professional agencies to ensure all children's needs were met, with their views and suggestions respected and followed.

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, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

1.1 Nurturing care and support.

All staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with children. They knew the individual needs of all children very well. A wealth of information was in place following consultations with families, and professional agencies where required, prior to children starting in the service. This included parents, respected their views and provided reassurance as to how their child's needs would be met in the service. All required information was noted within children's personal plans, with their routines, preferences and individual targets clearly recorded. One parent told us: 'I always feel that the service works well as a whole to accommodate my child's needs and my wishes to help meet the needs of my child. My child is always happy to attend nursery and separates well from me to welcoming and nurturing staff.'

Various communication methods were used to meet the individual needs and preferences of children and families. This included Makaton, a language programme using signs and symbols, other visual and communication aids for children and an app, phone calls, emails, regular conversations and meetings with families. This ensured children and their parents were included, their views sought and respected and important information shared. Now that some Covid-19 restrictions had eased, there were more opportunities for parents to come into the setting and be part of their child's time at nursery. This included dropping children off and collecting them at their playroom instead of at the main door and planning 'stay and play' sessions where parents can visit and share play and learning experiences with their child.

Lunchtime was a pleasant, sociable and relaxed experience for children. Staff sat alongside children providing support where required, interacting and engaging in conversation. All children's dietary needs and preferences were known to staff. Lunch sittings and groupings were managed within each playroom to meet the needs of the children in attendance. This contributed to children's health, wellbeing and safety. To ensure children kept hydrated, we advised that drinking water should be more visible and easily accessible to children throughout the day.

Due to children's individual patterns of attendance, different options were available for children at snack times. Although this was planned to take account of current guidance and children's overall daily intake, this was confusing for some children. The provider and manager agreed to review the snack procedures again as recommended at the last inspection. This would ensure children could choose from a variety of similar healthy options alongside their friends. (See Area for Improvement 1).

All medication was stored in line with guidance. Clear protocols were in place and relevant training undertaken by staff, where required. Staff were very knowledgeable about individual children's medical conditions and requirements, administered medication safely and sensitively while taking the child's overall needs and preferences into account. Although parents were notified when medication was administered, we advised adding a column to the administration of medication forms to record when and how parents had been informed of medication which had been administered to their child that day. This would contribute to children's overall health, wellbeing and safety. The manager agreed to add this to the form.

1.3 Play and learning.

Children were settled, happy and engaged in play experiences, both indoors and outdoors. All children had direct access to the outdoor learning environment and could freely access this area independently or with support, as required throughout the day. Access to varied outdoor play experiences was a particular strength of the service.

Staff knew children's interests and preferences and ensured there were resources and activities accessible to children. This assisted some children who had just started in the service to settle happily and offered challenge and extended learning to others. Examples included a wide range of sensory experiences such as, bubbles and water play, the provision of steps and raised climbing areas both indoors and outdoors to assist children who liked to climb, more safely. Staff were pro-active in ensuring any required equipment, such as specialist chairs and standing frames were in place prior to children starting in the service. This enabled children to participate more fully in play and learning activities, while providing comfort and continuity from home.

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play through a balance of planned and freely chosen high quality experiences. Staff were very responsive to children's verbal and non-verbal cues for making choices in their play. We observed very good use of praise, encouragement, questioning, scaffolding and challenging children's thinking as appropriate for each individual child within all playrooms. As a result, children were developing and progressing well and observed to be happy, settled and confident.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure all children have a positive snack time experience and can make choices from similar, healthy snack options alongside their peers, the manager should review snack procedures and snack options.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that:

'I can choose suitably presented and healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables and participate in menu planning.' (HSCS 1.33)

'My human rights are protected and promoted and I experience no discrimination.' (HSCS 1.2)

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Staff were aware of the importance of safety at entrances, exits and throughout the building to ensure children's safety. They were aware of the Care Inspectorate's safety awareness campaign, 'Keeping Children Safe - Look, Think, Act' and had displayed posters and shared safety information with families. More information can be found on our website at www.careinspectorate.com

The nursery was a purpose-built building, spacious and bright with lots of natural light. All areas were well-ventilated and each playroom had direct access to a well-resourced enclosed outdoor play area. This meant children had sufficient resources and suitable spaces to play and rest within a safe and secure environment. Additional areas, rooms and spaces were used effectively to provide quiet times, sensory play and dining areas for individual or smaller groups of children. A wide variety of resources were easily accessible to children. There was a balance of organised and freely chosen play, including open ended and natural materials. These were accessible to children at both ground and higher levels which meant they could make choices and access these areas more independently.

All areas were clean, tidy and well-maintained. Very good infection prevention and control measures were in place throughout the building to ensure high levels of safety for children. Rooms were well furnished throughout with cosy corners, cushions and dens to create a comfortable and homely environment. Staff observed children's preferences and play to adapt and extend particular areas. One example, was extending the space and resources for the home corner. As a result children were having fun in imaginative and more challenging play experiences.

Some playrooms had shared outdoor spaces. While offering additional outdoor play experiences, this also assisted with transitions. This meant children became familiar with other children, other staff and different areas prior to moving onto the next playroom. We observed children exploring and moving confidently between these areas.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The well-experienced manager and depute worked well together. They had been pro-active in bringing the whole management and staff team together through increased, meaningful meetings and consultations. Examples included updating the vision, values and aims for the service, creating a visual, relatable 'rainbow' which was on display throughout the building.

Strong relationships and partnership working were well-established with parents and professional agencies. One external professional commented, 'Staff work really well with our service and from observation within meetings I feel the nursery work well with other agencies and parents to support meeting the needs of the children within the nursery. Staged intervention is clearly followed and the depute has a great knowledge about all of the children and their needs. Staff within the nursery are also able to answer questions in regards to this. Observations within the nursery environment have shown staff to be caring, considerate and working with children at a level appropriate to their needs and stage of development.'

Views of children and families were sought, respected and included. Evaluations of these positively informed practice within the service. Plans were in place to further engage with families through settling-in questionnaires, 'stay and play' sessions and parental workshops.

The increased opportunities for staff to feel confident in sharing their ideas, leading change and sharing responsibility for areas had a positive impact. Staff were enthusiastic as they shared examples of where they had led initiatives and implemented change to ensure positive outcomes for children and how they had been involved in devising the current improvement plan. Staff told us, 'I feel the team have grown and bonded since the last inspection. We have strong, working relationships and also bonded on a more personal level' and 'We can have our say. We feel more valued, respected and included within groups. This has led to the agreed improvement priorities.'

More robust monitoring systems were now in place as recommended at the last inspection. The use of good practice documents, monitoring and self-evaluation enabled the management and staff team to provide a very good service, where high quality care, support and learning through play had resulted in positive outcomes for children and their families.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

4.3 Staff deployment.

There were sufficient numbers of staff in place to meet the varied needs and number of children in attendance. Consideration was given to the different experience, skills mix and knowledge of the staff team within playrooms. This ensured children's needs were met, children were supported and felt safe and secure. Lunch times and staff breaks had been reviewed. Staff were now deployed more effectively to meet children's needs, while also ensuring staff had time to rest and refresh. This met a requirement made at the last inspection.

Staff spoke gently and respectfully with children, with their care and support being the main focus. There was a warm, welcoming atmosphere and staff worked well as a team. They were flexible, supported each other and communicated well to colleagues and children when having to attend to another task. This ensured minimal disruption to the children's day and built trusting relationships. One member of staff told us, 'We have a really supportive management and staff team currently. New staff have fitted right in and we are now taking on more responsibility and I feel we are involved more. We always have been involved, but it now feels much more inclusive. We were consulted about the new framework, our improvement plan, self-evaluation and our new vision, values and aims. We are definitely heading in a new positive direction.'

Staff had established trusting relationships with families. Good communication systems supported this. Parents told us, 'We, as parents and also our child have been made to feel so welcome. Everything has been so positive and welcoming. We can see such a difference in our child already, even in this short time. I can't begin to describe how this nursery has helped them and our family as a whole.' and 'They have done so much for us. I don't just see them as nursery staff. I love them.'

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 31 March 2022, the provider must ensure there are a sufficient number of staff present with children in all playrooms over lunchtimes to ensure all children have a positive experience. This is to maintain children's health, safety and wellbeing.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) ensure there are a minimum of two staff present within all playrooms at all times
- b) ensure there are enough staff present within playrooms to meet the number of children in attendance
- c) ensure there are enough staff present to meet the individual care and support needs of all children present over the lunchtime period.

This is to comply with Regulation 15 (a) (Staffing) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210)

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15)

'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me.' (HSCS 3.16)

This requirement was made on 27 January 2022.

Action taken on previous requirement

The staffing model had been reviewed and updated as a priority to ensure there were sufficient staff in place over lunchtimes and at all times. Consideration had been given to the number, experience and skills mix of staff to meet the individual care and support needs of children. This improvement has resulted in positive and safer lunchtime experiences for children.

Therefore, this requirement has been met.

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

To ensure all children have a positive snack time experience and can make choices from similar, healthy snack options alongside their peers, the manager should review snack procedures and snack options.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that:

'I can choose suitably presented and healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables and participate in menu planning.' (HSCS 1.33)

'My human rights are protected and promoted and I experience no discrimination.' (HSCS 1.2)

This area for improvement was made on 27 January 2022.

Action taken since then

The provider and manager agreed to review the snack time experience to ensure children can make choices from similar healthy snacks alongside their peers.

We have repeated this recommendation as an area for improvement within this report.

Previous area for improvement 2

The service should ensure there are more robust monitoring systems in place to contribute towards improved outcomes for children. This is to support children's care, support, health and wellbeing and the improvement focus within the service.

This includes: - playroom monitoring - children's experiences, both indoors and outdoors. - monitoring of key points in the day, for example, lunch times, snack time, start and end of the day. - monitoring of children's personal plans. - monitoring of accidents and incidents.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: '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 27 January 2022.

Action taken since then

More robust monitoring systems were now in place. This area had been prioritised and contributed to the improvements we observed and sampled at this inspection.

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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