

Auchenblae Pre-school Group

Day Care of Children

Village Hall
Monboddo Street
Mearns
Laurencekirk
AB30 1XQ

Telephone: 07817 505 657

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 September 2022

Service provided by:
Auchenblae Pre-school Group

Service provider number:
SP2003000371

Service no:
CS2003002488

About the service

Auchenblae Pre-school group is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 16 children at any one time aged from 2 years to those not yet attending primary school, with no more than 6 children aged 2 to under 3 at any one time.

The service is accommodated within the village hall in Auchenblae, Aberdeenshire. Children have access to the playroom and a secure outdoor play area which is located to the rear of the service. Within the local community there are forest areas, nature walks and green spaces that children can access.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 6 September 2022. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluations we:

- Spoke with the children using the service and had feedback from four parents;
- Spoke with staff and management;
- Observed practice and daily life;
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Positive attachments had been formed between staff and children. Staff knew the children in their care well, which supported them to meet children's needs.
- Children had access to a variety of resources which provided quality play and learning experiences.
- A child-led approach to care and learning ensured children were given choice and their needs and wishes respected.
- Effective personal planning allowed the service to plan learning and care to support children's needs, interests and parents' preferences.
- The setting provided a secure, calm and nurturing environment. Children had a variety of quality experiences indoors and out.
- The service supported families well. Children and their families' views were sought regularly to ensure care and learning was adapted to meet their needs.
- A new leadership team recognised the importance of developing a culture of inclusion for families and staff. This promoted a welcoming ethos and gave staff and families using the service confidence to share their views, which contributed to positive changes and improvements.
- The service should continue to develop quality assurance procedures to effectively manage audits and reviews. This would support with continuous improvements and monitoring of the service.
- We found the staff team to be motivated. They were keen to continue to contribute to developments within the service to support positive outcomes for children.

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?	4 - 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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

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.

Children were confident and appeared happy and secure within the service. They experienced warm and nurturing interactions from staff, and we saw children smile and heard laughter as they played.

Positive relationships had been formed between children and staff, and our discussions with staff highlighted that they knew the needs and interests of children in their care. This allowed experiences and support to be adapted to children's individual needs, contributing to them feeling safe, secure and valued. Comfort and reassurance were given when needed, which supported positive attachments. There was a relaxed pace to the day that took good account of individual needs and routines.

Children's wellbeing and progress was supported through effective personal planning. Personal planning documents were individualised for each child and took account of the 'Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)' wellbeing indicators, providing a holistic approach to care. These were completed and reviewed with parents supporting effective information sharing and promoting a continuity of care for children. Chronologies were in place which captured significant events in children's lives. These highlighted that the service was aware of potential safeguarding and wellbeing issues in children's lives, and that actions had been carried out to ensure children were provided with appropriate support.

Mealtimes were a positive social experience with staff and children sitting together to eat. Staff supported children well during mealtimes, with help provided, if needed, and encouragement given to develop self-help skills. Food options were nutritious, and a variety of choices supported children to try different foods. There were some opportunities for children to be responsible and independent during mealtimes. For example, children could pour their drinks and clear dishes when they were finished. We discussed how the service could further promote independence during mealtimes, for example, supporting children to serve their food and wash dishes.

Medication procedures were reviewed as part of inspection, and we found these supported safe storage and administration and were in line with best practice guidance.

We found the service supports children and families well. Parents shared that they felt well informed about their child's experiences and learning, with staff taking time during drop off and collection times to share information. Parents felt this was useful and valuable, supporting them feel included in their child's care. Parents told us they feel staff know each individual child, their needs and how to support their choices. They feel that the service actively consults with them to allow sharing of information, which provides a consistent approach and a continuity of care for their child.

1.3 Play and learning

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.

Children were engaged in play throughout their day, with a range of quality resources both indoors and out. Children were seen to be independent and given choice in where and what they played with, with a child-led approach to learning implemented. Opportunities to explore literacy and numeracy were naturally embedded within the setting. Loose part and open-ended resources were available to children in both the indoor and outdoor environments. These promoted children's curiosity and encouraged them to be creative, problem solve and use their imagination.

Staff used open-ended questions during their interactions, encouraging children to be creative, problem solve and to extend thinking.

Child centred approaches were evident in daily practice and staff interactions, and the service was beginning to develop 'in the moment' documenting of children's interests to support plan learning. Planning was inclusive of parents and children's ideas which contributed to a child-led approach responsive to the children's needs.

We observed mind maps had been used to gather children's ideas and capture interests. We discussed how the service could develop floor books to contribute to children's inclusion within the planning process. These would provide opportunities to stimulate discussions with children, involve them documenting their ideas and enable staff to assess what children already know and identify possible new learning and experiences. The leadership team shared that they had plans to use floor books and were currently sourcing training and professional development opportunities to support inform practice.

Journals documented observations of children's learning and identified next steps to support children's progression and allow staff to plan future learning. Professional development opportunities were ongoing within the team to enable staff to improve their observational skills to meet the individual needs and interests of children. Journals were available to parents, giving them insight into their child's experiences and learning. Parents were encouraged to share their views and could contribute to journals, supporting their involvement in planning.

Free flow to outdoors wasn't possible due to the layout of the building, however, outdoor learning was a planned and established part of the day. Staff saw the benefits of having the children outdoors to support their health and wellbeing.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

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.

The neutral décor and natural lighting of the playroom created a calm and relaxing learning environment for children. The layout of resources and furniture enabled children to move freely between experiences, supporting choice and allowing children to lead their play. The playroom was well resourced with open-ended learning experiences offering challenges and allowing children to be creative and develop problem-solving skills.

Safe, cosy spaces had been developed within both the indoor and outdoor environments. These provided children with areas to rest, reflect and access quieter learning experiences.

Opportunities for daily outdoor play supported children to stay active and healthy. A newly developed outdoor area was a welcome addition to the service and enabled children to explore, be creative and promoted curiosity. Staff told us this had a positive impact on outcomes for children and the quality of experiences offered. We observed children use the area with confidence and participate in high quality learning experiences during their time outdoors. Regular walks in the village and local trips provided experiences within the community and learning beyond the service.

Robust infection control measures provided a safe environment for children. Nappy changing and personal care was in line with best practice guidance and promoted dignity and privacy. We observed handwashing was carried out by both staff and children at appropriate times. Child height sinks and support from staff ensured children could hand wash effectively. The service also considered how handwashing was carried out when children were outdoors, with water butts and soap available.

Risk assessments had been developed to identify potential safety issues and put measures in place to support a safe environment for children. These were routinely reviewed or as changes occurred to ensure they were current, and information was relevant. Accidents and incidents were documented well, and information shared with parents to keep them informed. We suggested that the service carry out audits of any accidents or incidents that occur as part of quality assurance procedures. This would support identifying trends or regular occurrences that may require further action or investigation.

The hall committee was responsible for the upkeep of the building and carrying out any repair work. Staff told us work or repairs identified were actioned promptly. We asked that the service develop recording procedures for repairs and maintenance carried out. This would allow them to document actions taken to support a safe environment for children.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The service had a new leadership team in place who recognised the importance of creating an ethos and culture of shared leadership and inclusion for all using and working in the service. Staff shared that this approach gave them the confidence to share ideas and influence change within the service. Staff told us they felt valued and included.

The service vision and aims were being developed to include the views and ideas of staff, children and parents. This promoted a shared vision, values and ethos, and captured what was important to all using the service and those working there.

We recognised the positive relationships that had been formed with children and their families. The service had developed opportunities for families to share their views and contribute ideas, which supported the team with self-evaluation and plan improvements. Questionnaires sent to parents and daily chats encouraged them to evaluate the service and share suggestions to shape developments.

Some of the service quality assurance procedures needed to be reviewed and updated. For example,

observations of practice had not been carried out for a significant time, and the service should review policies to ensure they are current and reflective of provision. We recognise that the manager is very new to post, and she discussed her plans for developing systems to support procedures, audits and reviews. A quality assurance calendar had been developed which would support continuous improvements. There were now good foundations and clear plans for the monitoring of the service.

Team meetings offered the opportunity for staff to share information and reflect together. This allowed the service to tailor support and care delivered to families. Staff used this protected time to discuss individual children and evaluate the service. We discussed how more focussed self-evaluation could help to identify and plan further improvements in the service. We suggested using the Care Inspectorate's, 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare', to support the team to evaluate current provision, practice and identify strengths and improvements.

There was an improvement plan in place which identified key priorities for development. This had influenced positive changes within the service. The management team acknowledged that continuing with key improvements and evaluating progress and impact had been difficult during the recent changes in staffing. The team were now more confident that they could focus on continuing with improvements. We asked that the service continue to evaluate developments to support assessing the impact on outcomes for children.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

4.3 Staff deployment

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.

Staff were warm and responsive in their approach. They joined in play and followed children's interests and we observed staff and children have fun learning together. Staff knew the needs and interests of children, which allowed them to offer individualised support and care. We found the staff team to be enthusiastic and motivated and our discussions highlighted that they were passionate about their role.

Staff were flexible and moved with children dependant on their interests and needs, contributing to a child-led approach. Staffing levels throughout the day supported the well-being and safety of children using the service. Tasks were carried out at times that did not impact on children's experiences or the level of care they received. Staff were always available during drop off and pick up times. This allowed effective information sharing between the service and home and supported children during transition times.

We observed good communication across the team which contributed to the smooth running of the service and meeting the needs of the children who attend. Staff were observed to effectively communicate with each other, discussing children's needs, information and to offer support to colleagues.

Staff were all given time to take a break over lunch, allowing them time to rest and to refresh. This was managed effectively, ensuring ratios were still in place and appropriate support given to children, minimising the impact on children's day.

Staff had the opportunity to take part in training and gaining qualifications, and were motivated in continuing with their professional development. They were able to discuss the impact this had on their

practice and outcomes for children. Staff were encouraged to keep a record of their training and reflect on this, which contributed to improved outcomes for children. We discussed opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles to allow them to implement their skills and training to support with improvements within the service.

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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

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

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