

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

Day Care of Children

Letham Village Hall
Letham
Cupar
KY15 7RS

Telephone: 01334 652 276

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
20 December 2022

Service provided by:
The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

Service provider number:
SP2006008688

Service no:
CS2008176034

About the service

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery is registered to provide care to a maximum of 28 children aged from 3 years to 16 years. The service is provided from an outdoor location using the woodland areas within the village of Letham in Fife. The children met each morning between 08:30 and 09:00 in the play park opposite the village hall. This hall was used to prepare snack and was also available to use in extreme weather conditions.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19 December 2022 between 09:00 and 15:45. Feedback was shared virtually with the service on 20 December 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 several children using the service
- spoke with and gathered feedback from several families both in person and via email
- spoke with management and staff
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing support from staff.
- To ensure children's health and wellbeing and to protect them from infection the provider must provide running water for all handwashing during the sessions.
- Children were offered high quality experiences in the local woodland, which enriched their play and learning.
- Children were very happy, confident and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
- Staff supported children to benefit from and enjoy risky play, encouraging children to be confident and resilient.
- Staff had developed positive relationships with families who told us they felt well informed and involved in their child's experiences and learning.

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?	3 - Adequate
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

Children experienced nurturing care and support from staff. Interactions were warm and supportive. This resulted in children feeling secure and loved. Each child was respected as an individual and staff were responsive to children's needs, for example encouraging children to take risks in their play and to offer reassurance. This provided an enabling environment where children were able to understand their own abilities and develop their confidence. Staff were very skilled at supporting children to express their emotions and validate how they were feeling. This further supported children to feel valued and respected.

Children were supported by staff who knew them very well, including their individual needs, likes and preferences. Personal care plans were completed with children and their families which contained key details, for example contact information and health needs. Families told us they had opportunities to regularly review and update the information in their children's plan. This ensured staff had the most up to date information to support children and families. Staff worked closely with families and through daily discussions they shared key information to support children. Parents and grandparents commented on the positive relationships they had with staff. One parent told us, "children and families are very much part of the extended Secret Garden family".

Children's progress and learning was celebrated and shared with families using online learning journals. Staff documented learning and had a clear understanding of children's next steps to support their development. Next steps for children and any strategies to support development were agreed with parents and regularly reviewed to ensure children's needs were met. These consistent and effective procedures ensured positive outcomes for children and supported them to achieve their potential.

Mealtimes provided a positive experience for children. Staff ensured that both snack and lunch times were relaxed and unhurried. This supported children to be sociable and independent. Staff ate lunch with children, and this approach encouraged children to build positive relationships with food and each other. Staff were also able to ensure children's safety whilst eating and were knowledgeable about potential choking hazards.

Staff had a good understanding of children's health needs. Several staff were trained in first aid should children require medical assistance. This meant staff responded sensitively to ensure children's medical needs were met.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children had fun and were actively involved in leading their own learning. This resulted in children feeling respected and valued. Children were consulted daily and could make informed decisions on which woodland site they would use that day.

Staff clearly understood their role in supporting children's development and confidence in their own abilities. Interactions between staff and children were carefully considered and were respectful of children's rights, wishes and choices. Staff played with children when they were invited to do so and when they could

see that this would support children's experiences. This approach supported children to play without unnecessary interruption and encouraged a deeper learning experience. During interactions staff modelled use of language and supported children's communication and thinking. Children solved problems as they walked on ice and snow on their way to the woodland site. As a result, children were challenged and developed confidence in their own abilities and risk taking.

This fully outdoor service encouraged children to make connections with nature and they used a variety of natural resources to support their creativity and curiosity as they explored the woodland with confidence. This also supported children to feel connected to their community.

Planning approaches were child led and responsive to children's interests which supported them to feel involved and empowered. Children were given ownership of their play and encouraged to be independent.

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The outdoor setting provided children with daily opportunities for exercise and fresh air in all weathers. The 25-acre woodland site meant that children benefitted from a range of environments. For example, the "wedding place" encouraged children to climb up steep inclines and develop confidence. Two yurts were available and provided a warm dry space for children and staff to come together, to eat and to relax. This meant children could rest when they needed to.

Children experienced challenging and fun play experiences in a safe way. Risk assessments and daily checks were carried out to promote a safe environment for all children who were meaningfully involved in risk assessing. For example, children discussed road safety and how they could stay safe on the walk up to the woodland site. Children were supported to check on the log burners and to add logs when needed. Children were knowledgeable about safety and what was required to keep the fire burning. As a result, children were learning important life skills and how to stay safe from experienced staff.

We identified significant infection prevention and control concerns relating to effective hand hygiene. This resulted in children being at potential risk from the spread of infection. There was no running water in the woods, liquid soap or disposable hand towels available to support effective hand washing and to minimise the potential risk of infection to children. Disposable wipes were being used by children to clean their hands prior to mealtimes and after using the toilet. This was not in line with current best practice guidance from Health Protection Scotland (see requirement 1).

Requirements

1. By 31 January 2023, the provider must ensure that effective hand washing measures are in place for children and staff in line with current guidance.

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

a) ensure that all children and staff can wash their hands effectively with running water and liquid soap

b) provide suitable hand hygiene facilities for both staff and children, including running water, liquid soap and disposable hand towels.

This is to comply with The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210) Regulation 4(1)(a)(d) Welfare of Users.

This is also to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

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 vision, values and aims of the service were clear and children benefitted from a positive ethos and culture of continuous improvement. Effective policies, procedures and quality assurance processes were in place to support the development and continuous improvement of the service. Children, families and staff were consulted with, and their feedback helped to create improvement priorities. This was done meaningfully and ensured everyone's views were valued and included. Staff were enthusiastic and committed to the continuous improvement of the service to secure high-quality outcomes for children.

Staff told us that they felt very supported by management and the wider team. Management had carefully considered approaches in place to support peer learning. Staff spoke about the benefits of having a listening partner that they could talk to and were able to share both positive aspects of their job as well as share any worries or anxieties. Weekly meetings provided staff with opportunities to discuss children's individual needs, planning approaches and to be reflective. As a result staff were supported to improve both their individual and whole team practice.

Staff placed high importance on regular communication with families. This was achieved using a variety of methods, for example, the service used emails, newsletters, and the online learning journals to communicate. All parents told us that staff were approachable, and they had daily opportunities to talk to them. This contributed to the positive relationships between families and staff and supported children's continuity of care.

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

"The staff are amazing, and they bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the children."

As a small service in a rural community, the staff knew the families well and worked to ensure every family was welcomed and valued. Children waved and spoke to members of the local community on their daily walk to the woodland site. This contributed to creating a caring ethos with a strong sense of community within

the setting.

Children benefited from a passionate and caring staff team that knew them well. Staff had clear roles and responsibilities and communicated very well with each other.

Staff were skilled and experienced, and their individual strengths were used effectively to promote the best experiences for children. All staff were keen to improve and develop their own skills and knowledge and had undertaken training and professional reading to support this. This meant children experienced high quality care based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice

Staff were flexible within their roles, and we observed them being proactive during busier times of the day such as lunch time. The staff team worked effectively together to ensure that children's needs were met. Routine tasks were carried out with little or no impact to children. Transitions were managed well with children being comfortable about what was happening next. This resulted in children feeling included, respected and valued as they understood the routines of the day.

Effective arrangements for planned and unplanned absences were in place which ensured ratios were maintained. This approach ensured that children were kept safe, and well supervised by familiar staff, promoting a sense of security.

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?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
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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