

# Sunflower Family Nurture Centre Day Care of Children

Melgund Place  
Lochgelly  
KY5 9QY

Telephone: 01592 583 533

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Unannounced

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Fife Council

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## About the service

Sunflower Family Nurture Centre is a day care of children service in Lochgelly, provided by Fife Council. It is registered to provide care to a maximum of 123 children aged from two years to an age to attend primary school.

The service is provided across two sites in buildings which are close to each other. Purpose built accommodation includes office and reception areas, additional multi-use rooms, changing rooms and playrooms each with toilet and cloakroom areas. There are enclosed outdoor areas, which are directly accessed from the playrooms. Children have opportunities for outings within the community including to local shops, parks, and woodland.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 and 29 November 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 19 children using the service and eight of their family and reviewed email feedback from parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- All children experienced warmth and nurturing care from staff who knew them very well. The views of children and families were valued.
- Staff used personal plans effectively to meet children's needs and support high quality outcomes.
- Innovative practice meant children benefitted from a wealth of rich play experiences which supported and extended their interests.
- Indoor and outdoor environments provided a range of creative approaches that successfully engaged children's imagination.
- The culture of continuous improvement was driven by the entire team. Staff commitment to learning and development was exemplary.
- A group of professionals from different agencies met regularly to support the work of the service and this was having a very positive impact on outcomes for children.
- Children's exceptional play and learning experiences had been shared locally and nationally to inspire improvement in other settings and promote positive outcomes.

## 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?	6 - Excellent
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 evaluated this key question as very good with major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and families.

### Quality indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warmth and care from staff who knew them very well. Nurturing emotional wellbeing was embedded in the ethos of the service and was evident in all interactions between staff, children, and families. The emphasis on emotional wellbeing supported children to feel safe and secure. Comments from parents included, "I love it here. I cannot sing their praises enough. You feel like your child is the only child here. It's like an extension of your family and they know your child so well".

The individual care and support needs of children and families was at the heart of the service and approaches were adapted thoughtfully to suit them. Personal plans were effective in meeting children's needs and supported high quality outcomes. These were regularly reviewed with parents to reflect children's changing needs and routines. Clear strategies were understood and implemented by all staff to ensure children's needs were met. A continuous and effective cycle of observation, planning and assessment helped staff to understand what children needed. As a result, children were happy, confident, and making very good progress. One parent told us, "They adapt to what my child needs, and the progress has been unbelievable".

Staff had established strong links with a range of professionals to help them to fully meet children's needs. They gave us examples of recent training which had inspired them to realise the challenges that may be impacting on the children from day to day. For example, training had helped them to build children's resilience where needed. They had also gained a deeper insight into promoting strong mental health for children and families.

Children experienced positive snack and mealtimes which were sociable and unhurried. Children were provided with support and encouragement and were respected as they were given time to eat at their own pace. They had opportunities to be independent and learn new skills and there was potential to increase this further. Staff told us of plans to improve mealtime experiences and we supported this development.

### Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children benefitted from a wealth of rich play experiences which supported and extended their interests. In particular, they experienced innovative practice in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). For example, we saw staff supporting children to plan and design, collect resources, and use tools such as drills to create models. Children independently carried out all stages of the process, describing what they were doing and why. Children were also excited to tell us about the STEM bags which they created with staff and took home regularly to share with families. Involving parents in this way was building their skill as well as empowering children to lead on their learning in literacy and numeracy. The service had received a STEM Nation award acknowledging the effective practice. Staff led learning opportunities in STEM enabling practitioners both within the service and the wider local authority to benefit. The high quality, innovative practice was also recognised nationally with examples available on the National Improvement Hub. Staff in the service hosted inspiring webinars to engage others in a national conversation around STEM.

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play within a culture which promoted their rights. Staff valued children's interests and supported their play and learning enthusiastically. Children were provided with a wide range of innovative, rich, real life learning experiences which also provided challenge. They learned through a balance of spontaneous and planned experiences which promoted children's choice and independence.

Children had fun as they played with friends and developed positive relationships. Staff were playful in their interactions with children and there was lots of conversation, laughter and fun. Children were empowered to express their ideas, develop problem-solving skills, and feel a sense of achievement. Their thoughts, ideas and discussions were used effectively to extend interests and learning. As a result, children were confident, happy, and motivated to learn, both indoors and outdoors.

Planning approaches were child centred, and staff were very responsive to children's interests and choices in their play. Staff had exceptionally high aspirations to enable children to be successful. Very effective tracking and reflection on individual achievements ensured an appropriate level of support and challenge for each child. Staff shared a clear understanding of child development and used observations to meaningfully plan for each child. The resulting impact of this was outstanding breadth and depth of learning with children who were engaged and making excellent progress.

Highly effective questioning provided challenge for children's thinking, widening their problem-solving skills, and consolidating their learning through play experiences. This supported children to achieve their potential. A range of regular and sustained planned activities and programmes, such as visits to the local care home for intergenerational learning encouraged children to gain confidence. Children told us, "I love going to Mossview. I taught them to play games". Planning and ordering snacks and making goods to sell in their markets provided opportunities for learning skills for life and supported children to flourish and achieve.

## How good is our setting?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good with major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and families.

### Quality indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a safe, comfortable, and stimulating environment where they could play and learn. It was furnished to a very high standard throughout and careful consideration was given to creating spaces which felt warm and homely. Staff told us how they had used their knowledge and good practice guidance to create spaces which were appropriate for the emotional needs of the children and supported their stage of development.

Indoor and outdoor environments provided a very good range of well-considered, unique and interesting open-ended materials. Creative approaches successfully engaged children's imagination and enriched their play and learning. Staff shared the ways they reflected on setting up and monitoring each play area. Ensuring that all play environments offered excitement, were richly resourced and appeared attractive to children led to the exceptionally motivating play opportunities.

Children benefitted from challenging and fun experiences which took account of safety. Risk assessments promoted a safe and well-maintained environment and involving children further would develop their awareness of safety. Procedures in place to regularly review any accidents or incidents and identify possible risks also helped to keep children safe.

All children had access to well-planned outdoor play environments. Children were encouraged to play outdoors in all weathers and had free flow access from playrooms to the nursery gardens. Appropriate waterproof clothing was provided, and an exciting range of experiences was available. Children chose freely within different areas which included opportunities to, play with water using pumps and hoses, learn about growing, climb, balance, and dig. One child told us, "There's treasure down there. I'm digging for it". Using their imagination and being active in this way supported children's wellbeing.

The service made very good use of available resources within the local community. Children's experiences were enhanced by visits to local parks and shops. Children had opportunities for high quality experiences such as cooking outdoors in local woodland. This helped children to feel a sense of connection to nature and belonging in their local community.

Infection control practices supported a safe environment and minimised potential spread of infection. Rooms were bright, clean and were ventilated throughout the day. Children were encouraged to wash hands frequently and at appropriate times. Established routines meant children were supported to be healthy.

## How good is our leadership?

**6 - Excellent**

We evaluated this key question as excellent where performance was innovative and sector leading.

### Quality indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvements are led well

Outstanding leadership helped build staff confidence and empowered them to influence and share responsibility for well-informed change. The exceptional culture of continuous improvement which was focused on children and families was driven by the committed team. The impact of clear shared values was evident in the experiences provided and in the outcomes for children and families which were of an exceptionally high quality.

Children and families benefitted from the inspirational leaders who promoted shared leadership amongst the team. Staff were highly motivated and enthusiastic, and this positive attitude created a happy nurturing environment with an emphasis on caring for each other. Leaders were very supportive and reflective discussions about practice and learning needs encouraged staff to develop skills. This contributed to the positive experiences of children and families with one parent commenting, "I think the ethos and attitude of staff is amazing".

The innovative culture of learning, and providing staff with high quality learning opportunities, underpinned improvements which benefitted children and families. Planned and frequent professional learning was given high priority and was exemplary. For example, staff led a range of training both within the service and beyond in areas such as emotional wellbeing, interactions and communication. Peer support and monitoring was also used well to ensure high quality play and learning experiences and consistent approaches were provided for children.

Working in partnership was having a very positive impact on outcomes for children. For example, a collaborative hub of professionals from different agencies had been formed. They met regularly to provide advice and strategies to meet the needs and development of all children. Staff within the service and in the wider locality were able to benefit from their expertise. Their increased knowledge and skill meant they were able to provide what children needed and access appropriate support for children and families. A collaboration between staff within the service, an occupational therapist and a speech and language therapist supported families to play. A programme was developed to enable parents of children under three to support children through quality play experiences. Sharing this programme and leading training within the local authority provided opportunities for many staff, children, and families to benefit. Staff supported self-evaluation in a variety of settings and worked collaboratively with primary and secondary staff on initiatives to raise attainment in, for example, STEM. This approach to professional learning had a wide reaching impact on children's experiences and outcomes.

Leaders and staff advocated for families and worked with a wide range of other services to support them. For example, parents suggested that they would like to know more about being energy efficient. Specialist support had helped them to learn how to reduce their energy bills with some small changes. Children helped to stock and bag items from the 'Fareshare' and 'Big Hoose' initiatives which also provided family support. Acting on the views and ideas of parents and involving them in decision making contributed to their feeling of being respected and valued whilst also supporting their needs and wishes. Innovative family engagement showed the commitment and dedication of the team in supporting each individual child as part of their family. As a result of their creative, sustained strategic action positive outcomes were promoted for all children, families, and the wider community.

The service demonstrated that self-evaluation was embedded, continuous and influenced daily decisions. Regular meetings supported staff to consistently reflect well together to assess children's experiences and outcomes and bring about positive changes. A programme of continuous, sustainable improvement was carefully planned to ensure high quality learning through play such as the development of the outdoor areas. Children and families were the key drivers in influencing change and shaping improvement which was led by their thoughts, views, and actions. Decisions for planned changes by the service always took account of the relevance to their community and were linked to best practice guidance. For example, parents decided what they want to learn in parents' groups such as planning and cooking economical meals. Children were fully involved in the process of identifying improvements, raising funds, counting money raised and choosing resources. Suggestions to support improvement were responded to quickly and effectively creating a culture where people felt valued and respected.

### How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good with major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and families.

#### Quality indicator 4.3 Staff deployment

Appropriate numbers of staff helped to meet the varied needs of children in attendance. Effective use was made of the different experience, skills mix and knowledge of the staff team within playrooms. Staff were flexible and communicated effectively as children moved between play spaces. This ensured children's needs were met, children were supported and that they felt safe.

Staff were deployed in a way that reflected the needs of children attending each day. Staff positioned themselves in the play spaces both outdoors and indoors to ensure they maintained children's engagement and wellbeing. Staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. Children benefitted from this positive experience of continuity of care which allowed them to feel secure.

A strong and unique sense of community within the setting supported families. Parents praised how welcomed and involved they felt in the service. Parents comments included, "I trust the team and I'm more confident as a mum". They also praised the level of meaningful communication in which they were included and the ways they were kept informed of any changes. Parents told us that the development of their child and their relationship with them had been enhanced by the care, support and communication provided.

A robust induction process supported newly appointed staff well to meet children's needs. Use of the National Induction Resource by mentors helped new staff to settle into their role and become part of the staff team. It guided the induction process to build practitioner skill and support consistency of practice. As a result, staff were clear about their roles and responsibilities which maintained exceptional children's experiences. Meaningful support for staff wellbeing promoted positive attendance and meant that staff felt valued and respected.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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	6 - Excellent

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

How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	6 - Excellent

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

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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