

Acorn Day Nursery Day Care of Children

The Steadings
Kinaldy Farm
St. Andrews
KY16 8NA

Telephone: 01334 475 698

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 September 2021

Service provided by:
Acorn Day Nursery (St. Andrews)
Limited

Service provider number:
SP2018013053

Service no:
CS2018363762

About the service

The service registered with the Care Inspectorate on 26 September 2019.

Acorn Day Nursery is registered to provide an early learning and childcare service to a maximum of 52 children at any one time who are not yet attending primary school. Of these 52, no more than 19 may be aged under 3 years and of these 19, no more than 9 may be aged under 2 years. The service offers funded places for children aged three to five in partnership with Fife Council.

The service is situated on a farm steading close to the town of St. Andrews. It is surrounded by local farmland where the children can visit farm animals. There are also local beaches and woodland areas nearby. The children aged under three (the Seeds) have a large spacious playroom downstairs with toilets and changing facilities and children aged three to five (the Oaks) have a well-equipped playroom upstairs which includes toilet facilities.

The values of the nursery, which were put together after consulting with parents, carers and staff, include: "- Achieving: At Acorn we strive to support our children to play an active role in their learning and to celebrate their achievements.

- Child-Centred: We believe that every child is special to us and encourage our children to be curious and creative in their learning. We want our children to be confident and choose how they learn with us.
- Outdoors: Is at the heart of Acorn, we want our children to be able to explore the countryside and to learn from being in a rural setting. We want our children to experience being on a farm and discovering the wonders of being outdoors.
- Responsive: We pride ourselves on being child-led, our staff are always listening to the little sparks of imagination that comes from our children's play and using those sparks to be creative, building our children's learning.
- Nurturing: Acorn is our home from home for our children, we love and nurture our children as if they are our own."

We carried out an unannounced inspection of Acorn Day Nursery from Monday 20 September to Thursday 23 September 2021. We undertook an onsite visit on Monday 20 September 2021 and continued the inspection using virtual technology. Feedback was provided to the manager on Thursday 23 September 2021. As part of the inspection process, we undertook the following:

- observations of children's play
- discussions with children
- video call contact with the manager and staff
- email contact with parents
- review of written evidence such as personal plans, policies, procedures and risk assessments
- review of communication evidence for families including emails and social media posts.

As part of this inspection, we took into consideration Key Question 5 - Operating an early learning and childcare setting (including out of school care and childminders) during Covid-19 with a specific focus on Quality indicator 5.2: Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff. We will report on the overall performance of this indicator in Theme 1 Quality of Care and Support.

We check services are meeting the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (also known as GIRFEC), Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes and wellbeing of children by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them and their parent(s) to work with the services that can help them. There are eight wellbeing indicators at the heart of Getting it Right for Every Child: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

What people told us

Thirty-one children were present when we visited the nursery. All children happily spent their time outdoors, exploring the natural environment and playing with friends. Young children appeared safe and secure, receiving cuddles from staff and smiling as they had fun with each other. Older children were confident and mostly independent in their play. They were happy in the company of their friends and also liked spending time with staff, learning new things and exploring the garden. Some children were keen to share their thoughts on the nursery. They told us:

"I like the swings. They're my favourite!"

"That's to stop the caterpillars from eating the leaves." (pointing to string on the vegetable plants)

"You make a fire and put some bark in it."

"Sometimes we have pizza."

"I feel happy when I come to nursery."

"I go on the swing on my tummy. It's very fun."

We asked the nursery to share an email request for feedback from parents and carers at the beginning of the inspection. We heard from 15 families and they were generally very happy with the experience the nursery offered them and their children. They liked the amount of outdoor play children experienced and also praised staff for the warm and caring support they gave their children. They also felt that they had been kept well informed about any changes in the nursery, including when changes occurred during the pandemic. Their comments included:

"We are extremely happy with the experience offered at Acorn. The outdoor provision is fantastic including use of the minibus and forest. The learning experiences are varied and fun. Staff are brilliant. They all know the children well and are enthusiastic and committed."

"My (child) frequently says that (they) want to go to nursery, when it is not a nursery day for (them) - they must be doing something right!"

"I have nothing but wonderful things to say. The staff are truly wonderful and communication is top notch too. We regularly discuss all aspects of (my child's) health and well-being and are working together to enable (them) to become a more independent, responsible, talkative young (person)."

"Very regular email updates throughout lockdowns and afterwards, with both thorough and summarised information on procedures etc. leaving us feeling well-informed. In terms of day-to-day information, the nursery's Facebook pages are great resources for keeping us up to date on the children's activities and also on the latest improvements/equipment etc within the nursery."

"We have met our (child)'s key worker and she has been excellent in keeping us informed of our (child)'s progress, as well as letting us know of any issues as they arise. For example, we met as my (child) had been unsettled after returning to nursery after the Covid-19 restrictions related closure. We were able to identify ways in which to help (them) settle and resolve the issue quickly."

"Create a happy homely fun environment that my (child) loves to be part of. They also are very skilled at making parents feel welcome and included. They continuously think outside the box with activities and are very creative. I love how they encourage independence, spontaneity, wonder and fun within my child."

"They have worked safely and with the children at the heart of all decisions. They have been open and transparent about all decisions. I think they had difficult decisions to make at times but I knew it was fair and necessary."

"(My child) loves spending all the time outdoors, seems stimulated by the varied activities, the food sounds brilliant, likes the carers and mentally (my child) seems happy and settled. (My child has) now got some clear friends and appears comfortable and confident with the carers."

Some parents made suggestions on how the nursery could improve, including having more focussed discussions about children's individual progress. They were also keen to have a better understanding of how children's play is planned and what they can expect their child to experience while at nursery, including the possibility of spending some time watching children's play. They told us they would like to know more about the staff team and especially their child's keyworker. They were happy with the relationships they had but recognised that the pandemic had impacted on them getting to know staff as individuals.

One parent asked us to consider safety around the entrance gate, which is close to a farm road. We discussed this with the service who agreed to review this and assess the risk to protect children. There was also a query about medication procedures and we worked with the service to make some amendments to this procedure, in line with best practice guidance.

Self assessment

A self-assessment was not requested before this inspection. We reviewed the service's improvement plan and quality assurance processes and our findings can be found under Theme 4 Quality of Management and Leadership.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	4 - Good
Quality of environment	4 - Good
Quality of staffing	4 - Good
Quality of management and leadership	4 - Good

Quality of care and support

Findings from the inspection

Children's play was being well supported by staff who were keen to offer them fun experiences, especially outdoors. Staff took the lead in planning for play in most cases and we discussed how this could be improved to empower children to shape their own play. We also asked that they review the balance between freely chosen and organised play, so children feel respected and included.

Children were able to tell us about some of their play and learning experiences. Staff recorded this play for individual children in Personal Learning Journeys (PLJs) which helped children and families to re-visit significant experiences. We asked the team to consider how children and families could be more included in the PLJs, as well as improving how they plan to support children to reach their full potential.

Children's needs were met most of the time and they were offered cuddles and comfort, helping them feel nurtured. Children now need to be offered better support for their personal hygiene, for example, when managing coughs and sneezes. This would encourage children to respect their own needs while also reducing the risk of the spread of infection.

Children were offered healthy and nutritious 'homemade' meals. Younger children had a positive, unhurried mealtime experience which included time to build nurturing relationships with staff. However, older children were unsettled at mealtimes and had a less sociable experience. Children should be encouraged to be more independent at mealtimes and have a routine which allows this to be a sociable, relaxed and pleasant part of the day.

Medication procedures ensured children received the right support, most of the time. Some changes were made to medication forms, in line with best practice. We also asked the service to develop clear plans for children's longer-term health needs. This will ensure everyone knows what to do in an emergency, for example, when supporting children with allergies or asthma.

Children were safe and protected due to staff having a good understanding of what to do if they had a concern about any child's care, welfare or wellbeing. We asked the service to consider how they could learn more about the various categories of abuse.

We were satisfied that the service had appropriate infection control procedures in place to support a safe environment for children and staff. For example, children spent lots of time outdoors and there were detailed risk assessments in place to reduce transmission of Covid-19.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of environment

Findings from the inspection

Children were able to explore natural greenspaces, both within the nursery garden and in the local area. Outdoor play was a key value for the service and it was clear that children were confident outdoors, using their imagination and exploring their own curiosities. The local woodland area was well developed and children were excited to spend time there. The space had been risk assessed, however, we asked for these risk assessments to recognise a wider range of potential hazards. We also discussed how children and staff could be more involved in this process, including staff checking the area before children arrived. Staff should familiarise themselves with these risk assessments so that they work as planned, for example, when supporting young children walking on the farm road.

Recent investment in developing the resources and layout of both the indoor and outdoor environments offered children a good range of play experiences. While these experiences were fun for children, there were opportunities to make these more exciting and challenging. Staff should now consider how they can develop the resources available to help children develop key skills for life and learning. This includes ensuring that routines do not interrupt children's play unnecessarily.

The recent refresh of the indoor spaces had helped it to feel light and airy, with careful consideration given to how children would use this in their play. There were spaces for children to relax as well as spaces for them to spend time with friends. The nursery was generally well-maintained and mostly clean. Staff used the nappy changing area to offer children a nurturing and caring experience, singing to children while they did this to help them feel more comfortable. The overall cleanliness in the nappy changing space could be improved. We asked the service to pay closer attention to this space so that the risk of the spread of infection is minimised.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of staffing

Findings from the inspection

Staff knew children well and could talk about their needs. Families were confident that their children were supported with warmth and kindness by caring staff. Younger children's non-verbal cues were responded to quickly and sensitively due to the trusting relationships they had with staff. Older children enjoyed spending time with staff who wanted to offer them fun play experiences. Staff now need to use positive language consistently with children, celebrating their strengths and planning appropriate support for children who need this. For example, they should think about how they can better support children to resolve conflict.

The staff team worked together in their smaller groups to share responsibilities and support children in their play. They had developed some systems to communicate with each other about important aspects of children's care and support. However, the team need to work more closely and communicate more positively to ensure children receive the best experience possible. Developing teamwork and building constructive working relationships across the team will promote a happy environment where everyone feels respected and included.

Staff have completed training for some key aspects of practice, such as Child Protection and First Aid. This helps to ensure children remain safe and healthy in their care. Learning from the most recent First Aid course had resulted in accident forms being improved, showing the service's ability to use their learning effectively. However, staff were not yet using best practice guidance and other opportunities to improve children's experiences. We asked the team to focus their learning and development on what they want children to achieve, ensuring this is well planned and targeted.

This will ensure changes are implemented which offer children a high quality experience.

Most safer recruitment checks were completed, ensuring children were looked after by people who were appropriate for their roles. However, references had not been received for all staff and we asked the service to ensure this part of the process was completed or to have other measures in place if these were not received. When staff started, they received some support to understand their role. The induction process should now be improved to offer staff positive and constructive feedback on key skills such as interactions with children and planning for play.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of management and leadership

Findings from the inspection

Families had been kept well-informed about changes in the nursery, including when guidance changed during the pandemic. The use of online communication meant that this was both safe and accessible for families when they were unable to visit the setting in person. There were positive and constructive relationships with families which helped them to feel confident that the service was well-managed. We asked the service to consider how they could use this digital communication to include families even more in making changes, respecting their views, as well as supporting them to understand the importance of learning through play.

The new management arrangements in place were having a positive impact, for example, changes had been made to the environment which offered children a more positive play experience. The manager had worked with other professionals to identify some areas for development and improve children's experiences. Staff recognised the hard work and dedication of the manager and they were sometimes given feedback on their work. The manager now needs to consider how staff can be given regular, positive and constructive feedback on their work in a supportive way. Staff need to feel empowered, motivated and inspired to plan and make improvements to children's experiences, based on best practice and relevant guidance.

An improvement plan was being developed to plan, implement and evaluate important developments, such as literacy and numeracy across the nursery. There were checks in place for key aspects of practice such as identifying themes in accidents and incidents and maintaining First Aid supplies. This was mainly led by the manager and we asked the service to consider how staff could be more included in self-evaluation and improvement planning. Having regular opportunities to meet and discuss how they are doing, how they know and what they plan to do next will create an open, honest and reflective learning culture.

By using relevant self-evaluation tools, identifying the desired outcome for children and families and regularly measuring progress against these outcomes, the team will be able to make the changes needed to offer children a high quality, positive experience.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

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

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

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

Previous recommendations

Recommendation 1

The provider and manager should become familiar with the Care Inspectorate notification reporting guidance to ensure all relevant notifications are submitted to us within the appropriate timeframe.

This ensures care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standard 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.'

This recommendation was made on 25 November 2020.

Action taken on previous recommendation

We had received relevant notifications about significant events since the last inspection, which had helped us to support the service effectively. This recommendation has been met.

Complaints

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

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

Inspection and grading history

This service does not have any prior inspection history or grades.

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