

Flexible Childcare Services Scotland (Tillydrone) Day Care of Children

Tillydrone Nursery
Gort Road
Aberdeen
AB24 2YS

Telephone: 01224002445

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 August 2024

Service provided by:
Flexible Childcare Services Scotland
SCIO

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2022000006

About the service

Flexible Childcare Services Scotland (Tillydrone) is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 56 children from the age of two, not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is accommodated in a purpose built nursery, located in the Tillydrone area of Aberdeen, close to local amenities such as shops and parks and one of the local primary schools. The nursery has an entrance area which is secure and welcoming. Children have access to playrooms with good facilities. Free flow access to an outside garden allows children to choose where they would like to play.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 31 July 2024 between 08:45 and 17:00 and 01 August 2024 between 09:00 and 12:00. Two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate carried out the inspection. To prepare for 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:

- Observed and spoke with children using the service.
- Spoke with two families using the service.
- Received feedback from seven families from our online questionnaire.
- Received feedback from six staff members from our online questionnaire.
- Spoke with the staff and the management team.
- Observed practice.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy, confident and settled.
- Children were leaders of their own play and learning and could transport resources to meet their interests.
- Daily access to fresh air and outdoor experiences supported children's health and wellbeing.
- The staff team were motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were keen to undertake training to develop their practice.
- Staff and management should work together to ensure they have a planning, observing and tracking system in place with supports good experiences and outcomes for children.
- Staff would benefit for training around planning, observations and tracking children's development to support their understanding and give them confidence to ensure there is challenge, breadth and depth to children's learning experiences.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children experienced warm and nurturing care and support from a dedicated nursery team. Staff were caring and kind in their interactions with children and children were seen to engage with staff well, inviting them into their play. As a result, children were engaged, happy and well supported. A parent commented; the staff are so welcoming and I can tell they know my child well. My child talks about certain staff members a lot so I know they have a strong bond which means a lot to me as a parent and I feel confident leaving my child in their care." Another parent said; "They are professional, warm and kind."

Children benefited from being cared by staff who knew them well. They were able to discuss children's individual needs and preferences and adapted their practice to ensure these were considered. Personal plans were in place and reviewed with parents regularly. Some plans contained quality information supporting staff to meet children's needs. Others, however, had information missing and strategies to support staff with individual children could have been clearer. The manager had already recognised this and had plans in place to make improvements. For children that required a care plan for support, these highlighted triggers and strategies to reflect children's specific needs and support needed. This ensured children experienced consistent approaches from all staff, including relief staff members.

Child protection training ensured all staff were clear on their roles and responsibilities surrounding this. Chronologies were being used to capture significant events in the children's lives. These highlighted that staff were aware of potential safeguarding and wellbeing issues and that action had been taken, when appropriate.

Mealtimes had been an improvement focus. We saw that snack time was an unhurried and relaxed social experience which gave children choice and promoted independence. This included choosing when they ate, chopping fruit, serving their own food and pouring drinks. On both days of the inspection, food was nutritious and looked tasty however, on the first day lunchtime was not such a positive experience for children. They weren't able to choose when to come for lunch, there was limited space for children to be independent and the area was busy and got messy. We addressed our concerns with the manager and the lunch time experience improved on day two. Staff were better positioned to support children and to keep the area clean. This led to a more relaxed and calm eating experience. Management should continue to monitor mealtimes to ensure they are consistently a positive experience for children with opportunities to learn and develop important life skills.

The service had systems in place for the administration, monitoring and storage of children's medication. These ensured the safe management and administration of medications. Staff were knowledgeable about children's health and medication needs resulting in children being safe and well.

Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and Learning

Children were provided with opportunities to develop their play and learning. They were actively involved in leading their learning and chose what to play with and where.

They had lots of fun and were fully engaged during our visit. Life skills and independence were promoted. For example, staff encouraged children to help tidy up, and they were keen to sweep the floor using a pan and brush.

Staff allowed children to follow their interests and we saw a group of children get involved in a 'water party' outdoors. Children began by throwing stones into a muddy puddle and then used the water butt to fill ladles of water and throw them into the air. Staff promoted their thinking talking about the ripples and bubbles in the water and encouraged mathematical language by asking questions like 'how high did the water go?' a child replied, 'taller than me.' We did not see a follow on to this experience. Children were clearly interested in water, with a child saying, 'I love getting wet, we're having a water party.' We discussed how this might be extended through providing further experiences for children to explore water, directing them to pipes and gutters for example. This would promote children's curiosity, imagination and problem-solving skills.

Language, literacy and numeracy experiences were good and woven throughout the provision. These included calendars, old phones, scales and books. Staff were encouraging numeracy during play, counting fruit and encouraging number recognition. Early writing was promoted through a range of mark making materials available indoors and outside. Children enjoyed stories and songs spontaneously across the environment, individually and in groups. This supported the children's early language, literacy and numeracy development.

Planning, learning experiences, observations and tracking had been identified by management as an area for development and were documented within the setting's improvement plan. We discussed the importance of planning taking account of planned learning experiences and responsive planning around the children's interests. Floor books had been introduced to record children's experiences and allowed them to revisit their learning. These were relevant and linked to children's current interests such as going to school.

Management had identified that they needed to use the 'Caerus' App better to share planned observations of children's learning and achievements with families. They had already involved parents in information gathering around the App and were monitoring observations. From this they had identified further training was required for staff around observations, next steps and tracking to support staff's understanding and develop their confidence. This would ensure there was challenge, breadth and depth to children's learning experiences and would support families and children to feel like partners in their learning and development.

(Area for improvement one reinstated)

Learning opportunities for children were enhanced through connections with their wider community. Children enjoyed using the library and regular visits to a local care home. This intergenerational connection allowed the older people and children to spend time together to sharing activities they enjoyed, such as games. Children had the opportunity to play at local parks and had recently visited the zoology museum at the University of Aberdeen to explore the animals following their interest in mini beasts. Management had been working with Aberdeen city council to develop the community garden, which would encourage links with the wider community and allow the children to be involved. These opportunities supported children to feel connections to their community.

Areas for improvement

1. To further promote children's learning and development, the provider should ensure that an effective system is in place to support staff in identifying, assessing and recording children's learning and planning for their progression.

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

'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

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.

Quality Indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The environment was very well maintained and secure with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Resources such as natural materials on the walls, greenery, lighting and curtains, sofa's, rugs and cushions had been added to soften the atmosphere within room. These all helped create a very welcoming feel to the service. Some children's work and photographs were displayed throughout the setting, giving the children a sense of ownership and belonging. Children were observed to move around the spaces with confidence, while being able to choose where they played. One parent commented; "The setting is also great with plenty indoor and outdoor space, so my child never gets bored." Another parent told us; "I love the open plan and that my child can go play outside in the garden when they want."

The indoor and outdoor environments were developmentally appropriate spaces, offering children stimulating places to play. A very good range of age and stage appropriate resources were available for children to access. Loose parts and open-ended resources supported children to be creative and develop their curiosities. As a result, children were busy, engaged and having fun. One parent told us; "My child loves outdoor play and the nursery always encourage this. They regularly sing and dance which they also love. The nursery do fun activities where they learn about different things, one recent one was with items to see if they would float or sink in a tub of water." Another parent said; "They play in the mud with water, dancing, blowing bubbles, singing, everyday there's different activities."

Children benefited from free flow access to the outdoor space. Outdoors offered children a wide range of resources and opportunities for different types of play. These included a tunnel and slide, mud kitchens, planters of flowers, a digging area, bamboo tunnel and access to loose parts which supported a very good outdoor environment. Parents told us their children always have the opportunity to play outdoors. One parent said; "The nursery has a great garden space where the children can play, climb and jump around. They also have garden toys. The children go out in all weathers which we love and our child has lots of fun jumping in puddles and playing in the rain." Another parent said; "My child loves being outdoors and this setting has a large outdoor space, children have the opportunity to be out as often as they want."

Risk benefit assessments were in place and implemented effectively by staff to ensure that the environment was safe for the children attending. Children were encouraged to consider risks and staff were seen to support their understanding of potential risks within the environment during their play. We heard children refer to the 'purple elephant' helping to keep them safe. During snack while chopping fruit, one child said to another; "Remember the purple elephant is watching to make sure your fingers are safe."

Effective hand washing, cleaning practices and the use of PPE (personal protective equipment) at appropriate times such as nappy changing and food preparation, supported effective infection control practices, meaning, children's health and safety were maintained.

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.

Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurances and improvements are well led

The nursery's aspiration had recently been updated involving staff and families. A display within the setting shared everyone's thoughts in words and supported the nursery's welcoming ethos. This ensured that there was a shared aspiration for the service, capturing what was important to all using the setting and those working there.

Children and families benefited from a service that valued their involvement. Parents commented that they had enjoyed a recent stay and play session and an international Polish day. Parents supported these, bringing in food and resources. Parents told us they benefited from very good handovers regarding their child's day and liked looking at the photos posted on the Facebook page as these generated conversations with their children about their experiences. Regular newsletters were well thought out and considered diversity within the setting. A lending library, rag bags, swap shop and information about the community were available within the cloak room area to support families and we heard these were well used. One parent commented; "We have regular meetings to discuss my child and their needs. The staff are also always happy to discuss anything during drop off or collection." Another parent said; "There is always a member of staff available to discuss my child's care, play and learning. At the end of each day, we are given an update on the things they have done that day."

Feedback was encouraged from parents to inform future improvements using a range of questionnaires and the introduction of 'Friends of Tillydrone' a parent council. Parents told us they were involved in a meaningful way to develop the service. We saw that following a recent questionnaire around accessing the 'Caerus App', the feedback had been varied and management had taken this onboard. To support parents access the App, a help sheet had been created and shared on Facebook. This highlighted to parents how the setting have taken onboard suggestions and acted upon these contributing to positive outcomes for children and families.

Staff expressed that they felt very well supported by their team and management. They told us that they felt listened to and their ideas valued. Management took time to give staff 'shout outs' and awarded 'employee of the month' to ensure they felt valued and recognised for their hard work and commitment. Staff told us that their wellbeing needs and professional goals were recognised and supported by leaders through regular support and supervision which they welcomed. One staff member said; "Managers and seniors are great and welcoming. Always reassuring and always making sure we are all happy and nothing is too much. Staff appraisals take place often and feel happy to discuss anything." Another said; "When I am struggling with workloads I can talk to the managers and they may suggest ways to help or make a plan to help me with my workload. The manager and senior carry out support and supervision every eight weeks which helps with them knowing where I am with my wellbeing in the setting."

Quality assurance processes supported the development of the service, including monitoring and peer observations of staff practice. Staff were using current best practice guidance to evaluate the service, supporting them to identify strengths and areas for improvement to create an improvement plan. The setting recorded and collated this in a floor book where we could see the positive impact self-evaluation and findings from quality assurance processes had on the children's experiences. This was reviewed and evaluated with children, staff and families to support improved outcomes for children.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 4.3 Staff Deployment

Deployment and levels of staff were effective in ensuring good quality outcomes for children most of the time. The staff team worked well together and were courteous and respectful to each other. We asked that seniors were mindful of staffing levels at key times, such as during lunch, to supervise, engage, and keep children safe and well. Staff communicated well with each other throughout the day and were clear on their roles and responsibilities. Staff picked up on children's cues and one staff member was able to take time to cuddle and settle a child to sleep when they required it. This helped to ensure a happy, safe and relaxed environment for children.

Children appeared confident, happy and engaged in their play supported by staff who were observed to be warm and nurturing. Staff took a genuine interest in the children, having fun and chatting to them about what they were doing. We observed that positive relationships had been formed between staff, children and parents. Parents were seen to be welcomed into the service at drop off and collection times. This supported opportunities for building positive relationships and communication. All parents strongly agreed or agreed that they had a strong connection with staff caring for their child. One parent said; "The staff are very good at what they do. They are very nurturing and really take time to know my child." Another parent said; "The staff are all very friendly and approachable. I feel comfortable discussing anything with them."

Staff were appropriately qualified, some working towards gaining further qualifications and had a good knowledge of child development. They were able to discuss how they had identified areas for development and were supporting children with their social skills, language, and personal care.

Staff undertook regular training and were very enthusiastic and passionate about their roles and continuing with their professional development. They were reflecting on their practice and were able to discuss the impact training had on outcomes for children. For example, a few staff members discussed the benefits of 'Children's rights' training and how this has supported them as a setting to really think about giving children choice and promoting this in the setting around mealtimes, the environment and clothing. Management had recognised that staff would benefit from training around planning, observations and tracking children's development. This had been identified and was in the setting's improvement plan going forward. This would support staff in their understanding and give them confidence to ensure there is challenge, breadth and depth to children's learning experiences.

The setting had an induction programme in place to support students, relief and new staff. The 'Early Learning and Childcare National Induction Resource' was being used effectively to encourage questions and reflection. Staff told us this supported them to have a better understanding of their roles, responsibilities and effective ways of working.

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 further promote children's learning and development, the provider should ensure that an effective system is in place to support staff in identifying, assessing and recording children's learning and planning for their progression.

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

'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

This area for improvement was made on 10 October 2023.

Action taken since then

Planning, learning experiences, observations and tracking had been identified by management as an area for development. We discussed the importance of planning taking account of planned learning experiences and responsive planning around the children's interests. This still had to be developed.

This area for improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support positive outcomes and experiences for children through continuous improvement, the provider and manager should establish systems for the quality assurance and self-evaluation of the service. They should promote opportunities for effective feedback from stakeholders including families, children and other agencies.

This is to ensure that 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 10 August 2023.

Action taken since then

Quality assurance processes now supported the development of the service, including improvement planning, self evaluation, taking account of children and families views and staff monitoring. The setting recorded and collated this in a floor book where we could see the positive impact self-evaluation and findings from quality assurance processes had on the children's experiences.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure children receive consistent care the service should make sure deployment and levels of staff are effective, ensuring high quality outcomes for all children.

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

'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well' (HSCS 3.19).

This area for improvement was made on 10 October 2023.

Action taken since then

Deployment and levels of staff were effective in ensuring good quality outcomes for children most of the time. The staff team worked well together and were courteous and respectful to each other. We asked that seniors were mindful of staffing levels at key times, such as during lunch, to supervise, engage, and keep children safe and well.

This area for improvement 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.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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