

Albyn School Nurseries Day Care of Children

17-23 Queens Road
Aberdeen
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Telephone: 01224 322 408

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 February 2025

Service provided by:
Albyn School Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003003562

Service no:
CS2003016175

About the service

Albyn School Nurseries is provided by Albyn School Limited. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 125 children. A maximum of 40 children aged from two to three years and a maximum of 85 children aged three years to not yet attending primary school.

The service operates from the nursery building within Albyn School. Located in the west-end of Aberdeen, the service is close to local shops, cafés, parks and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 09:15 and 17:45 on 11 February 2025 and 08:30 and 16:45 on 13 February 2025. 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:

- Spent time with children using the service and spoke with five of their parents/carers.
- Received 23 responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff via our online questionnaire.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Observed practice and children's experiences.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm and caring interactions from staff, supporting them to feel loved and cared for.
- Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning.
- Children and families enjoyed a relaxed and welcoming environment.
- How children access outdoor play should continue to be developed to support children's health and wellbeing.
- Children's play and learning was enhanced through connections with the local community.
- Management and staff should continue to develop and embed quality assurance systems to support continuous improvement of the service.
- Staff worked well together to meet children's needs throughout the day.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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 evaluated different parts of this key question as good and very good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, nurturing and warm interactions from staff. Staff were responsive to children's needs providing reassurance and comfort when required. For example, when children were tired or upset, staff sat and cuddled them for as long as the child needed. This helped children to feel loved and cared for.

Children and their families were warmly welcomed into the service. This supported sharing of information and positive relationships. Most families told us they felt connected to the staff caring for their children. One parent commented, "The staff know my child very well and know how to meet their needs. I feel at ease dropping them off at nursery and seeing the positive rapport they have with the staff in the room."

Children's care was promoted by staff's knowledge of their needs. Families shared important information that helped staff provide individualised care to children. For example, health needs, sleep routines, dietary requirements and children's interests. Support plans included clear strategies of support for children with additional support needs to assist them to reach their full potential. Most parents strongly agreed they felt fully involved in their child's care. One parent commented, "The nursery have always respected any wishes I've had as a parent. I can share information with my child's key person which can be added to their personal plan." Another parent shared, "Regular parents evenings and child plans are a great way of understanding children's needs." The staff team shared with us they were in the process of moving from paper to electronic personal plans. We discussed the importance of ensuring that all plans are reviewed with parents at least every six months to keep them current and up to date.

Children were provided with appetising and nutritious meals and snacks. A rolling snack was available to the preschool children which promoted children's choice and independence as they chose where to sit, served themselves and poured their own drinks. The lunch time experience took place in the school dining hall where children enjoyed the food. Staff sat with children at the tables and most staff interacted well with children throughout. However, at times some staff were task orientated which resulted in missed opportunities for staff to promote a rich, social experience for children. We observed improvements during children's mealtimes on the second day of inspection. The manager and staff should continue to review mealtimes to help support positive experiences for children.

Children's safety, emotional security and wellbeing were supported through sensitive arrangements for sleep, rest and relaxation. Staff followed children's sleep patterns from home to ensure a continuity of care. Children were cosy, slept on mats on the floor and were appropriately supervised to ensure their safety. Children were able to cuddle and read stories with staff, which supported rest, recuperation and opportunities for attachment.

Medication was stored safely and securely and was easily accessible in case of an emergency. Information about the action to be taken by staff was documented and consent forms were completed with parents. However, a few medical care plans had not been reviewed with parents every three months in line with

current guidance. We advised that more details around administering medication were included in forms, for example what to do if medication was refused. Management took immediate action to address this.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children benefitted from a range of play experiences and activities that supported their development and interests. This enabled them to lead their own play. These included wooden blocks, musical instruments, art and crafts, a role play shop, sand and water trays. Open ended resources helped children use their imagination, curiosity and investigation. As they explored the sensory resources on offer, one child told us, "I'm making play dough cakes, it smells like chocolate." Parents commented positively on the range of play experiences stating, "Staff think of interesting activities to keep children engaged."

Staff interactions were supportive and helped to promote a fun and relaxed atmosphere. For example, staff joined in children's dramatic play using sticks as magic wands to create spells. They supported children's interest to write and were responsive to children's ideas when constructing a model. Effective use of questioning by most staff helped extend children's engagement, widen their skills and consolidate learning.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were naturally woven into daily experiences. Children enjoyed reading stories with staff in the comfortable reading areas and when visiting the school library. Some children enjoyed creating Valentine's cards and writing messages for loved ones. Mathematical language was used as children and staff counted, measured and built with blocks. The use of environmental print, such as labels and signs, provided opportunities for children to recognise and become familiar with letters. As a result, children were progressing well.

Planning approaches supported a balance of spontaneous and planned learning. Children's ongoing learning and developmental progress was supported by sharing observations and next steps with parents via a digital platform. Observations detailed significant learning and next steps were relevant to individual children. This meant children were effectively supported to learn and progress.

Meaningful links within the local community had been established and included visits to the beach, theatre, local parks and shops to buy resources. These enhanced children's play and learning experiences and promoted a sense of belonging within their local environment.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Children were cared for in an environment that was clean, bright, welcoming, and well ventilated. Overall, play spaces were well maintained and furnished to a good standard with ample space for children to play independently or in groups. Most toys and resources including natural materials were easily accessible and organised. This promoted children's curiosity, choice and interests.

Children had ownership of the environment through artwork and photographs being displayed. These provided children with opportunities to revisit experiences and learning and contributed to the children's feeling of belonging in the setting.

Children's health was supported by access to the school gym hall and outdoor areas where they enjoyed more active play. Children had fun gathering leaves, digging, climbing and riding scooters and bikes.

However, time outdoors was initiated by staff rather than individual children. Further consideration should be given to making the garden areas more accessible to children throughout the day. Aiming where possible, for children to be able to independently choose to play indoors or outdoors.

Children's safety was promoted by the secure access to the building. Risk assessments had been completed to identify any hazards and the mitigating actions taken to reduce the risk of harm. Staff positioned themselves well and had a good awareness of where children were. This ensured children were effectively supervised during play.

Infection prevention and control practices contributed towards a safe and clean environment. For example, children were encouraged to wash their hands after playing outdoors and before eating meals and play spaces were kept clean and tidy. This supported children to stay safe and healthy. Staff wearing aprons and gloves (PPE) while preparing and serving food did not always remove these before continuing with other tasks. We discussed the need to ensure that PPE is used in line with current guidance.

Arrangements for storage of children and families' personal information was well managed. Information was stored securely in line with guidance. This contributed to children and families' confidentiality being maintained.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

The service's vision, values and aims were displayed in the foyer and reflected their ethos and aspirations for children and families who attended the service. This included 'To promote a desire to be ambitious, to build confidence and encourage endeavour, where all children and staff try their best' and 'To encourage curiosity and develop resilience to enhance lifelong learning and personal growth.'

The manager and staff recognised the importance of consultation with children and their families to support improvement. Families who completed our online survey strongly agreed or agreed that they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Children's views were regularly sought through the use of planning and discussion. For example, garden representatives shared and researched ideas to improve outdoor areas. Parents were welcomed into the service and parental views were gathered using emails, questionnaires and regular conversations. This promoted children's rights and partnership working.

Positive experiences for children were supported by a realistic and achievable improvement plan. This detailed improvements such as increased parental involvement, children's support plans and the outdoor environment. Most recently an online platform had been introduced to support communication with families. Plans contained success criteria and were evaluated and updated to reflect current progress and further actions to be completed. This supported positive outcomes for children.

Quality assurance systems were in place to support the continual improvement of the service provided. These included a regular review of accidents and incidents, the environment and medication. We discussed with management where medication audits could be strengthened to ensure children's health and safety is promoted. The manager agreed to make the necessary changes.

Informal monitoring of staff practice was taking place by the management team. This was a positive start in supporting continual staff development that promotes positive outcomes for children. We suggested formalising this process to enable management to easily identify any training needs.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

Children were cared for by staff with a range of skills and experiences. Good communication and regular team meetings supported the sharing of these. Staff provided mentoring and modelled good practice which helped less experienced staff develop their skills and knowledge. This helped provide consistency of care for children. One parent described staff as, "Professional, welcoming and caring" and another commented, "My children are valued as individuals."

The nursery was appropriately staffed, and staff were suitably deployed throughout the day to meet children's needs. Overall, they were flexible in moving between areas to support the smooth running of the nursery and being responsive to individual children. Staff communicated regularly about children's individual needs and when a task took them away, such as when supporting toileting needs. The leadership team supported staff by spending regular time on the nursery floor. They should continue to review staffing over busy times of the day, including mealtimes to ensure all children's individual needs are met.

Most staff told us they were well supported by management who were enthusiastic, knowledgeable and motivated to continually improving the service provided. Some staff shared that they would welcome individual meetings opportunities with management. Implementing these would ensure that staff are fully supported to be confident in their roles. Management agreed this was an area for development.

Children benefitted from a staff team who were committed to their own professional development. Staff had completed core training including first aid and child protection, which contributed to keeping children safe and well. A range of additional training and learning had been undertaken. Some staff told us about the impact training had on their practice. This included supporting children's sensory needs and communication skills.

Children's safety and wellbeing was supported by staff's understanding of their role in identifying, recording and reporting any safeguarding concerns. Staff and management had undertaken relevant child protection training and a policy linking to current guidance was in place. Chronologies were used effectively to record significant events in a child's life that may impact on their health and wellbeing. Positive working relationships had been formed with other agencies such as speech and language therapy, health visitors and Additional Support Needs Advisory Project (ASNAP). This promoted opportunities for information sharing and consistent support.

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	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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