

Lanark Primary School Nursery Class Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 June 2024

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2003015306

About the service

Lanark Primary School Nursery Class is a daycare of children service provided by South Lanarkshire Council and located in the town of Lanark, South Lanarkshire. It is close to public transport links and local amenities. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 32 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The service is provided from the nursery wing of Lanark Primary School. Playrooms have direct access to a large outdoor play area, which children can independently access throughout the day. Children also make use of the extensive school grounds, including a woodland area to support their outdoor play and learning.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 17 June 2024 between 09:35 and 16:20. We concluded the inspection on Tuesday 18 June 2024 when we also gave inspection feedback to the management team. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Spoke with some of the children and two parents/carers. We also reviewed survey responses from six parents.
- Spoke with the service manager, depute and six staff. We also reviewed survey responses from nine staff.
- Observed practice and staff interactions with children.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and settled within the service. They were confident in seeking support because of the positive relationships they had formed with staff.
- Children had fun during their play and could choose from toys and resources to support their learning, both in indoors and outside.
- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with children. They knew children well and worked closely with parents and carers to ensure their needs were being met effectively.
- The service was passionate about improving outcomes for children through meaningful self-evaluation, which involved families.
- Very good staff retention and staff support ensured a staff team who worked well together in delivering high quality experiences for children.

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?	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.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support.

Children experienced warm, nurturing care from responsive staff, which contributed to them feeling secure, safe and loved. Keyworker groups helped children to form attachments with a trusted adult, which supported their emotional wellbeing. We could see from children's 'feelings' resources, which included stories, feelings monsters and individual handbooks, that children were supported to identify and express their emotions. As a result, children were developing the skills to manage their feelings effectively. There was also a sensory room, which offered children a quiet calm space to self-regulate their emotions, away from the bustle of the playroom activity.

Staff gathered information about children in the different parts of their personal plans, which helped support children's individual needs and track their care, learning and development. We encouraged management to provide an index to where people could find additional information about children's individual needs and preferences and how these would be supported. For example, strategies shared between the setting, external agencies and parents that ensured consistency in how children were cared for. Staff conversations with parents at children's drop off and pick up times were friendly and respectful. This made it more likely that parents would feel comfortable to share information about their child with staff or raise any concerns about their care. In response to our survey, parents confirmed that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan. Their comments included, "Her folder is accessible at all times for me to look at to keep me up to date. I have had two meetings with my child's key worker since she started in August also" and "They (staff) are always ready to help with any issues we have about my son and are always very positive".

Appropriate systems for recording children's medication were in place, such as parental consent, storage information and administration records. We made suggestions for expanding on storage details checked during the audit of medications, and management agreed to implement this. This contributed to children's health and safety.

Children were safe and protected from harm due to the clear child protection systems that the setting had in place. Staff participated in annual refresher training about safeguarding, which ensured they would be confident in supporting children's welfare and wellbeing if they had any concerns. Staff had been using the key messages from the Care Inspectorate's safety campaign, 'Keeping Children Safe - Look, Think, Act' (SIMOA) in a meaningful way with children. We observed children spontaneously playing with the SIMOA elephant, for example perching them on a tree to watch over them as they played in the woodland. A group of children took Simoa to lunch with them and chatted to us about potential dangers around them and how they kept themselves safe. One child explained, "Simoa is about keeping us safe so that we don't leave." The SIMOA campaign helps keep children safe by raising awareness of how, and why, they could leave a childcare setting without a responsible adult.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

During our inspection there was a very good balance between adult led activities and children's free play.

Children were empowered to lead their own play and learning, scaffolded by intuitive and knowledgeable staff. The organisation of the playrooms and outdoor areas encouraged children to independently select resources that supported their play ideas. For example loose parts, woodwork bench, construction toys and sensory materials such as playdough, mud and sand. 'Loose parts' are materials with no fixed purpose that can be moved and manipulated by children as they learn to problem solve at their own pace.

There were plenty of displays and resources to naturally stimulate children's curiosity in curricular themes, such as numeracy and literacy. As a result, children were using mathematical language in their conversations. For example, counting out how many cups needed for snack and using the interactive board to identify shapes. Using materials available for mark making was a favourite pastime for children. Their comments included, "Drawing pictures, going outside, block area, home corner, I love Miss Geddes" and "I like I can draw."

Floor books were being used by staff to encourage children to talk about their learning and what they wanted to know more about. This informed staff responsive planning that respected children's interests while offering challenge. We liked that staff were using 'Target Ted' to enable children to decide the next steps in their learning, which could also be about life skills. This ensured that targets were meaningful to children and that they would be motivated to achieve. The setting was at an early stage of using an online platform to share children's learning journey with their parents. Staff told us that training around observations had assisted with how they were recording children's learning experiences and tracking their progress. They should continue to embed this practice.

Parents appreciated the online learning journals, welcoming the opportunity to discuss their child's play and learning. They felt involved in planning for their child's play, learning and development as they could also share children's significant events and achievements from their life outside nursery. Parents were regularly invited into the setting for 'stay and play,' progress meetings or to participate in PEEP sessions. This ensured parents felt valued as active participants in their child's learning. The Peep learning together programme encourages parents to make the most of day-to-day learning opportunities with their children, such as listening, talking, playing, singing, and sharing books and stories together.

Parents comments about the quality of children's play and learning experiences included, "The friendships she's been able to grow; the obvious progression in her speech and confidence; the variety of learning she's achieving at the nursery; the stay and play sessions, to see how she learns and interacts at school and also how to help her do those kinds of things at home; that they have fun everyday but that she learns something new everyday too" and "I think the woodlands play sessions are very good. She loves the woodwork as she gets to use real tools. There is a great variety of things to play with".

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.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported by a calm and peaceful environment. Playrooms were bright with large windows for natural light and ventilation. They were safe, secure and well maintained with high quality children's furniture. Appropriate safety measures were in place to keep children safe. For example, a secure entry system, clear communication between staff that included running totals of children present, and dynamic risk assessments of the environment.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place throughout the setting to protect everyone's health and wellbeing. For example, children were reminded and supported to wash their hands at appropriate times. Staff used songs, posters, and conversations to reinforce the importance of good hygiene to prevent the spread of germs that might make children unwell. Children independently washed their hands throughout the day, including when out in the woodland. One child explained to us "You need to count to 20 to make sure they're (hands) clean".

Children benefitted from accessing a variety of rich resources and facilities, which included opportunities to participate in meaningful intergenerational learning experiences during visits to a local care home. Being part of the wider school community supported positive transitions for children, as they become familiar with the building layout and people within it. Some children were excited to tell us about the 'buddy' they had already met from the school, who would help with their transition and what to expect when in primary one.

The setting provided outerwear and wellies next to the outside door so that they were easily accessible by children, who could independently decide to go out to play at any time during their session. However, children came at the beginning of each day ready dressed to play outdoors. It was an aspect of excellent practice that all children began each day in the woodland area, which supported their physical development, inquisitiveness and overall wellbeing. One of the grandparents had helped build additional resources for the woodlands, such as a tyre swing, water station and firepit circle. Active play in different environments encourages children to experiment with how they use their bodies and widens opportunities to learn through sensory and physical experiences. We saw many examples of children participating in risky play, which helped them learn about their own limits and to navigate risks. Their comments to us included, "Do you see me upside down?" (from a child proud to demonstrate their ability to reach the top of the climbing frame) and "Don't worry I know how to get back down!" by a child bouncing on a tree branch in the woodlands.

Children used picture prompts to risk assess outdoors, which meant they were learning how to identify potential hazards and make judgements that were relevant to them. As a result, they were taking responsibility for keeping everyone safe.

Parents believed their children benefitted greatly from the range of outdoor experiences they participated in. Their comments included, "They have a great outdoor area, climbing frame, mud/sand kitchen, balancing items, a lovely hut for reading etc, a shed full of equipment that comes out, bikes, water play. They also have their woodland's area- it's amazing- games area, tree swing, tuff tray, a hut, balancing wood and tyres, mud kitchen, they have snack out there, campfire area. They have treasure hunts" and "During my visit to play day my daughter knew to put on wellies and a jacket before heading outside, she was very independent which was great. The outdoor space has everything including a quiet area".

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 assurance and improvement are led well.

The setting had a clear management structure with the school head teacher as the registered manager, the depute taking responsibility for the early level and a team leader supporting day to day running of the setting, including support for staff. This management team valued staff and were committed to ensuring

they were motivated and supported to carry out their roles effectively. Staff told us they appreciated the regular presence of the management team within the playroom, which they found supportive. Within our survey, staff strongly agreed that their wellbeing needs were recognised and supported by leaders. They also felt fully involved in the self-evaluation of the service. Debriefings at the end of each day and regular team meetings enabled staff to receive updates on the service, discuss the needs of individual children and share good practice. As a result, everyone was working together to ensure all children reached their full potential.

The setting had an improvement plan informed by self-evaluation, which aspired to high quality care and support tailored to the needs of children and families. The management team were using national benchmarking tools such as, 'How good is our early learning and childcare' and 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare', to evaluate and monitor practice. We encouraged the manager to use self-evaluation to give the nursery more autonomy within the whole school improvement plan, and to refine leadership roles across the team. We acknowledged that the well-established staff group liked to operate as a team but referred them to Scottish Social Services Council 'Step into Leadership' online resources, which would help them to reflect on the benefits of leadership across different contexts.

We found that the service had a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children and their families. Management and staff had formed strong connections with families. A good balance of information was displayed for parents at the entrance to the accommodation and within children's cloakroom area. This helped parents find out about how their child spent their day at the setting as well as the support available for their family within the wider community. It also ensured parents knew how they could influence and lead improvement within the service. Parents responding to our survey confirmed that their family had been involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Examples included in their comments were, "Questionnaires after stay and plays and PEEP sessions, suggestion box, 'our wish' after parents' meetings" and "I attend parent consultations where I see my child's keyworker and discuss her learning. Then we are asked to fill in a feedback form".

Children also had a voice within the setting, which was evident in the way they had been consulted when adapting the whole school values to make them more meaningful to the nursery. Annotated artwork and photographs ensured that children felt ownership of these values of 'good manners', 'kindness', 'teamwork' and 'learning'.

Children's personal information was stored securely to ensure families privacy. Information was accessible to relevant staff whilst remaining confidential. This demonstrated the service commitment to understanding and following guidelines on data protection.

The manager and staff engaged well during the inspection process, providing additional evidence and taking on advice and support, which demonstrated their commitment to improvement.

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.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

The setting had a very low turnover in staff and as a result the team worked very well together to deliver quality experiences for children. The service provider had safe recruitment practices in place that included

an induction programme so that any new staff felt welcomed and understood their role. We suggested to the management team that more explicit use of the national induction resource would familiarise the whole staff team to Scottish Government's expectations of the national standards for early learning and childcare.

Peer review of each other already supported staff to grow in confidence as practitioners. Staff were committed to their work and modelled the setting's core value of kindness toward others. They delivered a high standard of care through nurturing approaches and respecting the rights of children. This had created a happy and secure environment for children. We observed staff supporting and having fun with the children. Staff always placed themselves so that children enjoyed high quality engagement.

The staff team was supported through continuous professional development opportunities that included the service provider's annual appraisal system and access to their training catalogue. Being aware of the differing experience, knowledge and skills of individual staff assisted the manager in deploying staff in a way which best supported children's individual needs. We observed that staff instinctively communicated with each other, to ensure that they were available to support children's routines and activities throughout the day.

Families were welcomed by staff at the beginning and end of each session, which helped them build relationships with the team that would be looking after their children. Parents got to know more about who individual staff were and their role by looking at the photo boards at the entrance to the setting. Parents were confident that the setting was always well staffed by skilled and compassionate staff who knew their children's individual needs and personalities well. As a result, they were reassured that their children would be safe and well cared for at the setting. Their comments included, "I have always felt there is plenty staff when I have been in the nursery. And there are small groups per key worker so not overloaded" and "It's nice to see everyone has a key worker, I have always seen lots of happy friendly staff".

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
1.2 Children are safe and protected	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very 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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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