

# Riverbank School Nursery Day Care of Children

Riverbank Primary School  
Dill Road  
ABERDEEN  
AB24 2XL

Telephone: 01224 483 217

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
15 May 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeen City Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000349

**Service no:**  
CS2003014423

## About the service

Riverbank School Nursery provides a day care of children service to a maximum of 46 children at any one time, aged two years to an age to attend primary school, of whom no more than six are age two to three years. Adult: child ratios will be a minimum of two to three years 1:5, three years and over 1:8 if the children attend more than four hours per day, or 1:10 if the children attend for less than four hours per day. The service will have access to areas of the premises as designated by the headteacher.

The nursery is situated within Riverbank School. The nursery has a designated entrance area which has a secured door and large cloakroom area. The playroom provides a spacious area for children with direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area. Riverbank school is in the Tillydrone area of Aberdeen and has access to local amenities and easy bus travel.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 14 May 2024 and 15 May 2024 between the times of 09:30 and 18:00. 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 children and observed their experiences
- Spoke with staff and management
- Observed practice
- Spoke with approximately ten parents/guardians
- Received four online questionnaires from parents/guardians
- Received five online staff questionnaires
- Reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- Improvements required during the last inspect had been maintained.
- Staff provided children with cuddles, reassurance and praise.
- Families were welcomed into the playroom during arrival and departure times.
- Many children had formed friendships and had fun playing.
- Opportunities to explore and extend literacy and numeracy skills within play were limited.
- A development plan was in place which identified key areas of improvement.
- Gaining the meaningful views of families and children was at an early stage.

**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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate

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

## How good is our care, play and learning?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

### 1.1 Nurture care and support

Since the last inspection, improvements had been made which helped ensure children experienced warmth and caring approaches to support their overall wellbeing. Children were comfortable and relaxed within the setting. Most approached staff for help and recognition and most staff responded with cuddles, reassurance and praise. We discussed with the management team a few occasions where this could be further improved to provide consistency for all children. Parents made positive comments about the relationships that staff had with children. Comments included, 'the ladies in nursery are just lovely and helped my child come out of their shell so well', 'my child is always happy, well looked after and has lots of fun when there.'

Families were welcomed into the playroom during arrival and departure times. Important information was often shared from staff to help ensure families were informed about their child's day. At times this could be improved to ensure all families received positive feedback about their child's day. Parents commented positively on being able to enter the building. They told us they receive 'feedback about my child and they ask about my day.'

Informative and up to date personal plans for each child helped staff to provide care that supported children's overall wellbeing. We suggested that these should be reviewed to be more user friendly to ensure key information can be found quickly and easily. Most staff knew children well and, on most occasions, responded quickly and sensitively to children's needs. However, we discussed with the leadership team, examples where children could have been better supported in the moment had staff been more proactive. Staff worked with external agencies, key professionals and families to gather information to inform the development of personal plans. Key staff attended multi agency meetings enabling them to gain a better insight into the needs of individual children. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward (**see area for improvement number 2 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection'**).

Children received mixed experiences during mealtimes. Overall, children had opportunities to sit and eat with others during meals, having a nice time chatting to friends and staff. Children had a choice of what to eat and could choose and plate their own food, developing a range of self-help and physical skills and giving children a sense of respect and achievement. The lunch time routine was calm and organised, however snack time should be better prepared for. Tools and utensils, such as chopping boards, were not readily available. When we observed snack time, up to four different staff were given the role to support and sit with children. This did not create a consistent experience for children.

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children were engaged in their play and learning, as they extended and followed their own ideas and interests. Many children had formed friendships and had fun playing their made-up games such as catch and chase. Some staff engagement during play experiences helped contribute to children's development. However, skilled interactions from staff were limited and often staff did not use everyday opportunities in

children's natural play to maximise children's learning, development and choice. Further support and training would help to increase staff knowledge in how to take these opportunities forward.

Planning for children's learning had recently been revised and continued to be a development area identified by staff. Planned activities, such as those surrounding children's interest in bees and insects, were at times too adult led and did not provide appropriate challenges for children to extend their learning. Opportunities to explore and extend literacy and numeracy skills within play were limited. Increased opportunities for children to lead their own learning and explore their understanding, investigation, problem solving, and creative skills would provide more in-depth learning experiences for children and support them to progress and achieve. When asked about what could improve at nursery one parent responded, 'Engage the kids with more basic learning.' An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward (**see area for improvement number 4 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection'**).

We observed a positive approach to risky play and learning. Children were encouraged to explore jumping outdoors. Staff interaction during these times promoted the children's sense of achievement and learning. Children were encouraged to manage hazards in a way that kept them safe but promoted play and independence.

Parents told us their children enjoyed activities such as splashing in muddy puddles, running around, water play, group activities, riding little trikes, singing, arts and crafts and play doh. Children also enjoyed going on local walks in the community, visiting the local library, church and play parks. Other trips included visiting the beach and the zoology building.

A new online system called 'See Saw' had recently been introduced for staff to record observations of children's progress. Staff spoke positively about how this now gave a variety of ways to record children's learning such as written, photographs or videos and then share these with parents. Most parents gave positive feedback about this while others had not yet signed up. Parents told us, 'I get lovely updates about my child's day on the app, with pictures and videos' and, 'I can review my child's learning and development plan.'

At times observations recorded by staff did not hold enough meaningful information to support the planning of future activities to meet children's learning needs. Next steps were not always identified where appropriate. This meant that children were not fully supported to achieve and develop. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward (**see area for improvement number 4 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection'**).

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's overall wellbeing is supported through effective use of personal plans the provider should ensure staff are consistently working proactively using guidance detailed within these plans to meet children's needs.

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

'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23).

2. To support children's learning and development the provider should ensure:

- Planning processes are effective to promote children's learning.
- Staff demonstrate an understanding of child development and how to use spontaneous play to support children's learning.
- Observation and assessment of children's individual learning identifies and promotes their progress.

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 my education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

## How good is our setting?

### 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

The environment for children was full of natural light, well-ventilated and had plenty of space. This supports children's health and wellbeing.

Improvements had continued to be made following our last inspection. Changes to the room layout and the addition of a clean and comfortable sofa and other soft furnishings helped to create an area for children to relax and have some quiet time. Staff had begun to review their understanding of spaces for children and spoke about their further ideas to continue development in these areas. Many staff spoke about the need for cosy, welcoming spaces for children to support their wellbeing. In discussion with the management team, we suggested other ways that the environment could be developed including table cloths for mealtimes, plants, small relaxing spaces, real life materials, and increased mathematics and literacy items, such as measuring tapes, maps, magazines and catalogues. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward (**see area for improvement number 5 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection'**).

Cleanliness had improved throughout. Previous maintenance work following our last inspection had been maintained. Positive communication between the nursery and cleaning staff contributed to the ongoing cleanliness of spaces for children. Staff monitored children's toilets throughout the day to ensure they were clean and presentable for children's use. Staff supported and monitored children to wash their hands at key times throughout play and routine. This helped support children to be safe and healthy.

Children could exercise choice and move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. They could access resources themselves and transport these to where they wanted to play. There were a variety of resources both indoors and outdoors but some of these needed further developments. For example, outdoor areas such as the mud kitchen did not have enough utensils, a tuff tray planting activity did not have enough items such as trowels, seeds, plants and pots. Indoors children enjoyed the addition of a large sand pit where they could take off their shoes and explore with friends. A stage and music area invited children to sing and dance and look at themselves performing in the mirror.

Some safety measures were in place to help keep children safe. For example, secure entrances, secure garden and headcounts/registers. Entry and exit from the building was secure and monitored by staff during arrival and departure time. However, during the first morning of our visit a child was found in the cloakroom area on their own with no staff member present. Due to safety doors the child could not make

their own way back into the classroom. We raised this with staff who took immediate action. We discussed this further with the management team who made changes to staff practice. We were satisfied that they took actions to prevent this from happening in the future.

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children experience quality facilities that are well furnished, well resourced, comfortable and homely, the provider should ensure the continued development of indoor and outdoor spaces for children.

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

'The premises has been adapted, equipped and furnished to meet my needs and wishes' (HSCS 5.18).

### How good is our leadership?

### 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

The vision values and aims for the setting were displayed on the entrance door to nursery. This helped give information to parents and allowed them to understand what to expect from nursery. This included the overarching ethos of 'play together, learn together, achieve together.'

Gaining the meaningful views of families was at an early stage. This remained an area for improvement on the nursery development plan. Some activities had been introduced and had begun to have an impact. Information shared with parents within the cloakroom/entrance area had been refreshed and included a white board with information and questions to seek feedback. The introduction of regular emails and sharing information for parents through the See Saw app had been successful.

Consultations with children was in the early stages and should continue to be developed to ensure these are meaningful and threaded throughout. This will help ensure children are heard and valued within their setting, whilst influencing change and practice. Some children had been involved in a 'big voice' group to give ideas. For example, children voted on calling staff by their first name or surname. However, this group had not been maintained over time. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward. **(see area for improvement number 6 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection').**

Staff had been involved in some evaluation work and this remained an area for development. Guidance documents had been used by staff to reflect on practice and give a rating of how well they performed in identified areas. This was then discussed during regular team meetings. Staff had begun to take on leadership roles having responsibility for areas of classroom development. This had begun to make positive changes to spaces and experiences for children. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward. **(see area for improvement number 6 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection').**

Staff had recently completed training including 'child inclusion research into curriculum learning education' and 'the compassionate and connective classroom' along with attending a local learning festival. The staff team spoke positively about their learning from these events and about how they planned to implement this going forward. This will help support children receive quality nurture, care and learning.

A detailed improvement plan was in place which had been created using feedback from the Care Inspectorate, parents, children, and staff. A quality assurance calendar went along side this which allowed the management to monitor progress and areas of continued development. Staff were all committed to working toward the goals set.

Regular meetings between the manager (head teacher) and the senior early years practitioners provided opportunity to discuss any developments of the service. Staff received visits from the local authority early years team. They found this useful in supporting them to make improvements.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure quality care and experiences for children, the provider should ensure that quality assurance and self-evaluation is embedded into staff practice. This should mean that:

- Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence changes within the setting.
- Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans, leads to improved practice.

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 systems' (HSCS 4.19).

## How good is our staff team?

### 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impacted on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

The staff team had worked together and had begun to make important changes to practice to benefit the children and families they care for. The senior practitioner team worked closely with staff on the floor and were available throughout the day to provide immediate guidance and support. The manager had an active role in nursery spending time getting to know children and carrying out regular quality assurance work. Staff told us they felt supported by the management team.

Staff communicated well and supported each other in their roles and responsibilities. They were helpful and supportive of each other and showed a sense of belonging and commitment. Regular meetings helped support staff to discuss areas of their work and feel included as a team. This contributed to a relaxed environment where children felt comfortable and secure.

There was sufficient staff on duty to meet the minimum levels of staff to child ratio that is expected. However, some children required higher levels of individualised support. This meant there were times during the day where children missed out on attention or support that they would have benefitted from. Some parents told us they did not think there was always enough staff in this service to meet their child's needs. While others told us, 'There is always lots of staff, my child is very well looked after when there.' It would benefit children if a review took place to ensure there was the appropriate number of staff with the right skills to support all children throughout the day. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward. **(see area for improvement number 7 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection')**.



Daily rotas and allocated zones gave clear duties and responsibilities for staff to carry out such as snack time, cleaning checks and children's personal care routines. Arrangements for planned absences were in place to provide some consistency and familiar relief staff members. Whenever possible, the same members of relief staff were appointed to cover unplanned and longer-term absence, such as sick and annual leave. This helped provide continuity and staff familiar to children helping them feel safe and secure.

### Areas for improvement

1. To meet the care and learning needs of all children, the provider should ensure effective supervision and quality engagement for all children across the day.

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

'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me' (HSCS 3.16).

## 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

The provider, manager and staff should ensure that children are nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience in a way that is suitable to them as an individual.

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 meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19); and 'As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure' (HSCS 3.10).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Since the last inspection improvements had been made which helped ensure children experienced warmth and caring approaches to support their overall wellbeing. Children were comfortable and relaxed within the setting. Most approached staff for help and recognition and most staff responded with cuddles, reassurance and praise.

This practice could be developed further when considering spaces for children and how these can positively impact on a nurture ethos of care.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

## Previous area for improvement 2

The provider, manager and staff should ensure children's overall wellbeing is supported through effective use of personal planning.

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

'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2023.**

### Action taken since then

Informative and up to date personal plans for each child supported staff to provide care that supported children's overall wellbeing. We suggested that these should be reviewed to be more user friendly to ensure key information can be found quickly and easily. Most staff knew children well and, on most occasions, responded quickly and sensitively to children's needs. However, we discussed with the leadership team examples where children could have been better supported in the moment had staff been more proactive.

**This area for improvement has not been met and has been reworded.**

## Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure all children get the support they need to reach their full potential, the staff should increase their knowledge and skills in relation to adverse childhood experiences.

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 meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2023.**

### Action taken since then

Staff had recently completed training including 'child inclusion research into curriculum learning education' and 'compassionate and connective and classroom' along with attending a local learning festival. The staff team spoke positively about their learning from these events and about how they planned to implement this going forward.

Staff working with external agencies, key professionals and families to gather information to inform the development of personal plans. Key staff attended multi agency meetings enabling them to gain a better insight into the needs of individual children.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

## Previous area for improvement 4

The provider, manager and staff should ensure that children have fun and experience high quality play, learning and development opportunities.

This should include but not be exhaustive to:

- Ensuring planning process are effective to promote children learning.
- Ensure that staff demonstrate an understating of child development and how to use spontaneous play to

support children learning.

- Ensure that observation and assessment of children's individual learning identify progress.

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 my education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Planned activities, such as those surrounding an interest in bees and insects, were at times, too adult led and did not provide appropriate challenges for children to extend their learning. Planning for children's learning had recently been revised and continued to be a development area identified by staff. Opportunities to explore and extend literacy and numeracy skills within play were limited. Increased opportunities for children to lead their own learning and explore their understanding, investigation, problem solving, and creative skills would provide more in-depth learning experiences for children and support them to progress and achieve.

At times observations recorded by staff did not hold enough meaningful information to support the planning of future activities to meet children learning needs. Next steps were not always identified where appropriate. This meant that children were not fully supported to achieve and develop.

**This area for improvement has not been met and has been reworded.**

#### Previous area for improvement 5

To ensure children experience high quality facilities, the provider, manager, and staff should ensure that the indoor environment provides a well-furnished comfortable and homely place for children.

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

'The premises has been adapted, equipped and furnished to meet my needs and wishes' (HSCS 5.18).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2023.**

#### Action taken since then

Improvements continued to be made by staff following our last inspection. Changes to the room layout and the addition of a clean and comfortable sofa and other soft furnishings helped to create an area for children to relax and have a quiet time. Staff had begun to review their understanding of spaces for children and spoke about their further ideas to continue development in these areas. Many staff spoke about the need for cosy, welcoming spaces for children to support their wellbeing. In discussion with the management team, we suggested other ways that the environment could be developed, including table clothes for mealtimes, plants, small relaxing spaces, real life materials, and increased mathematics and literacy items such as measuring tapes, maps, magazines, and catalogues.

**This area for improvement has not been met and has been reworded.**

#### Previous area for improvement 6

To ensure quality care and experiences for children, quality assurance and self-evaluation should be embedded into practice.

This should mean that:

- Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence changes within the setting.
- Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans, lead to high quality care and support.

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 systems' (HSCS 4.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2023.**

### Action taken since then

Consultations with children were in the early stages and should continue to be developed to ensure these are meaningful and threaded throughout. This will help ensure children are heard and valued within their setting, whilst influencing change and practice. Some children had been involved in a 'big voice' group to give ideas. For example, children voted on calling staff by their first name or surname. However, this group time had not been continued over time.

Staff had been involved in some evaluation work and this remained a key area for development. Staff used guidance documents to reflect on practice and give a rating of how well they performed in identified areas. This was then discussed together as a team during regular team meetings. Staff had begun to take on leadership roles, having responsibility for areas of classroom development.

**This area for improvement has not been met and has been reworded.**

### Previous area for improvement 7

To meet the care and learning needs of all children, the manager and staff should work together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day.

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

'People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me' (HSCS 3.16).

**This area for improvement was made on 18 April 2023.**

### Action taken since then

There was sufficient staff on duty to meet the minimum levels of staff to child ratio that is expected. However, some children required higher levels of individualised support. This meant there were times during the day where children missed out on attention or support that they would have benefitted from. It would benefit children if a review took place to ensure there was the appropriate number of staff with the right skills to support all children throughout the day.

**This area for improvement has not been met and has been reworded.**

## 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?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	3 - Adequate
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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