

Hazlehead Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Provost Graham Avenue
Aberdeen
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 October 2024

Service provided by:
Aberdeen City Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000349

Service no:
CS2003014435

About the service

Hazlehead School Nursery is provided by Aberdeen City Council. The service operates from within the primary school and is close to local amenities such as shops and parks. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children, aged three years to those not yet attending primary school, at any one time.

Hazlehead School Nursery operates from a dedicated playroom within the primary school. The premises consist of an entrance area and an open-plan playroom. Children have direct access to toilets, nappy changing areas, and kitchen facilities. The service has free-flow access from the playroom to an enclosed outdoor area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 October 2024 between the hours of 08:45 and 16:45. 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 during their play.
- Spoke with staff and management.
- Spoke with parents/carers during the visit.
- Received 23 parent/carer online questionnaires.
- Received staff online questionnaires.
- Observed practice and daily experiences.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were very settled and happily engaged in play and learning.
- Children led their own play through a well-balanced mix of activities.
- Children received nurturing care and support from staff who knew them well.
- The staff team were motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and were very keen to continue with training to further develop their practice.
- To ensure continued high-quality care and experiences for children, self-evaluation and quality assurance should continue to be a focus.

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 and nurturing care from staff. Children were very settled, relaxed, and confident. When children needed reassurance or support, we saw that staff were responsive to their needs. Positive attachments had been formed which supported children to feel safe and secure.

Staff knew children very well and were able to confidently discuss their interests, likes, dislikes, and support needs. Parents felt they had a strong connection with the staff. One parent said; "Every single teacher there will take the time to talk to me. Not just about what my child has been up to that day, but they actually care about how I as a parent am doing as well." Another parent said; "They are very professional and care about everyone including the parents not just the children."

Personal plans were in place for all children. The format included the wellbeing indicators which helped the setting to gather meaningful information. This ensured children received care and support that was right for them. Support plans were in place for children who required one. These included clear strategies to support staff to tailor individualised care. Evaluating and reviewing these plans regularly with families ensured they contained relevant and the most up-to-date information.

Mealtimes took place in the dining area of the school. Consideration had been given to creating a homely space and flowers had been placed on tables. Staff sat with children, helping to provide support and keep them safe as they ate. Friendships and positive social interactions were promoted through chatting together about the activities the children had enjoyed. Children ate food that was nutritious and supported their preferences and dietary needs. There were opportunities for children to develop independence through setting the table, serving food and drinks, scraping and washing dishes. Parents told us their children could choose from a range of healthy meals and snacks which reflected their individual, cultural, and dietary needs.

Medication was stored safely and securely out of the children's reach. It was however, very easily accessible to staff. Medication records sampled contained relevant information to support staff with safe administration. We found that the service had updated their medical information including a section on action taken should a child refuse medicine. This was already in place for new children and will be updated during reviews for others.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun and were fully engaged throughout the inspection. Staff were very responsive to children's interests and supported their choices with regard to where they wanted to play.

The pace of the day was very relaxed and unhurried which meant children had time to explore their ideas. Children had opportunities to lead their play and we saw them problem solve and use their imagination. Some children used wooden blocks to create enclosures for cats. They worked together stacking blocks in different ways and spoke about making them 'sturdy'.

Others pretended to be cats and climbed inside the enclosures, using loose parts for food and to create a roof. Children were using the wide range of resources available to them very well and this supported their curiosities and thinking skills.

Staff interactions were calm, patient, and encouraging. During discussions with children, staff adapted their pace and language, which supported children's understanding. Most staff were skilled and knew when to step back and observe, and when to intervene with open-ended questions to support children's learning. For example, when creating hedgehogs with play dough questions, such as "what do we call it when hedgehogs go to sleep for a long time?" were used which developed their thinking and supported their engagement in the activity. Later a child created a hedgehog in a bed, covered with leaves and said; "it's hibernating". This highlighted that learning was very meaningful and provided appropriate challenge for children.

Opportunities for literacy and numeracy were embedded within the environment and children's play. Children engaged very well with real resources such as old phones and measuring tapes in the construction area. Adults sang and read stories with children in groups and spontaneously. Vocabulary and mathematical language were being supported through play. For example, when playing with cars in the construction, adults used language such as "fast" and "faster" to support children's understanding. Children benefited from a variety of books and mark making materials available throughout the environment and used these to support their play and learning. This ensured there were lots of opportunities available for literacy and numeracy within play spaces and experiences.

Planning processes were effective and a planning wall supported staff contributions. Staff worked together to promote a balance of intentional and responsive learning experiences for the children. This was evident in the approach to learning during the inspection. Floor books were used to gather children's ideas, evidence learning, and reflect on this. These books were shared with parents and children were able to reflect on these encouraging life skills, such as questioning, memory, investigating, and explaining.

The 'Seesaw' App was used to capture children's learning through snapshots and observations. This approach provided an opportunity for families to see their child's play and learning in more detail. The observations sampled identified learning which supported staff to assess children's achievements and progress, allowing them to plan the next steps with children and their families. The setting was successfully tracking children, which allowed them to tailor support and challenge, and identify gaps in learning. They were working on using evaluative language to support their evaluations which should give them a better understanding of children's achievements.

Children benefited from very good connections with the school and wider community. Children had access to areas within the school including the library, gym hall, messy garden and grassy hill. The setting had created links within the community for example, Woodlands care home and Hazlehead Park Pets corner. Following on from the experience of hatching ducklings in nursery, the children transported them to the pet's corner where they now live and are regularly visited by the children. This contributed to children's sense of belonging and supported them to have opportunities out with the setting.

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 experienced an environment that was very well furnished and well maintained with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Children's artwork and photographs were displayed, providing children with ownership of their setting as well as creating a sense of belonging. Resources were of a very good quality and included lots of loose parts to promote children's imagination, curiosity, and creativity. Soft furnishings, such as sofas, rugs, cushions, and blankets, provided cosy spaces for children to rest during their busy day.

The layout of indoor play spaces ensured that children could move around areas with ease, allowing them to access resources independently. Children were very confident while moving around these spaces, exploring their ideas and interests. They also had the freedom to transport and move around resources to extend their play and learning further.

Children had free-flow access to outdoors which benefited their health and wellbeing, extended their play and learning, and gave children choice in where to play. Children dressed appropriately for the very wet weather and spent time on the school astro turf and in the garden. All parents told us their children's development was supported through interesting and fun play experiences and they had the opportunity to play outdoors. One parent said; "They have lots of different activities set up that [they] can take part in and have taken trips out which [they] have enjoyed. [They love] taking home items [they have] made on woodwork table. The hatching of the baby chicks was really a memorable experience for [them] and also visiting a local care home." Another parent said; "There has been lots of opportunities for outdoor play. When the children were learning about their bodies there lots of relevant props in the role play corner that my child loved to play with and this type of role play carried on at home."

Systems were in place to help keep children safe. Robust risk assessments helped staff to mitigate risk and enhanced children's safety. Benefits were considered alongside these to support risky play and resilience. Children were being involved in developing their skills and awareness of staying safe through exploring the Care Inspectorate's SIMOA campaign using soft toys in the setting. This supported the children's understanding of risk and keeping themselves safe.

Infection control measures were understood and implemented very effectively by staff. Robust hand washing routines were in place, with staff modelling good practice for children. Staff protected children by providing a clean and hygienic environment and personal protective equipment (PPE) was used at appropriate times, such as during food preparation. This contributed to keeping children safe and well.

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 improvements are led well

The setting shared the school vision, values, and aims which complemented what the nursery were trying to promote. They had their own aims which sat alongside this. It was clear children were accessing a safe, secure environment where they were developing their confidence, creativity and curiosities. The vision had been shared with everyone, ensuring that they were meaningful and captured the needs and wishes of those using and working in the setting.

Children's and families' views and suggestions about their care, play, and learning were valued by staff. The feedback we received from parents highlighted that they felt they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service.

Opportunities to attend trips, monthly PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership) sessions and Daffodil teas supported families and included them in their child's experience, providing time to showcase the play and learning offered in the setting. Feedback from various Microsoft Form surveys were positive and highlighted that parents felt their children were respected, their confidence was supported and they enjoyed attending the setting. Suggestions had been acted upon to ensure parents felt listened to, meaning there was a collaborative approach to improvement.

Staff told us they felt very well supported by leaders in the service and were motivated to improve the service provided. Staff said that their wellbeing needs and professional goals were recognised and supported by leaders through regular support and supervision and monitoring of practice which they welcomed. Staff told us; "I feel we are always given the opportunity to learn more at Hazlehead. Recently I have attended Emotion works training and have been embedding this into my practise on a daily basis. This has allowed us to set up an emotional 'check in' station with the children and allow them to talk and express themselves freely." Another staff member said "I feel the [Senior leadership team] are always supportive of the ELC. [They offer] support on a daily basis, [they make sure they come] into nursery everyday and always know what we are doing or any changes etc. I feel I am supported at all times and if anything arises that I need help with I know I can go to [them]." This contributed to staff feeling supported and valued.

The nursery was using a quality assurance calendar to effectively support procedures, audits, and monitoring within the nursery. These were evaluated and shared with staff to ensure everyone was clear and knew the outcome and the impact of these.

An improvement plan identified relevant and meaningful areas for development. These were shared with everyone and displayed on the cloakroom wall. A self-evaluation e-book was used to document improvement planning and captured progress made. This system allowed the team to acknowledge their successes and help to measure the impact improvements have had. This supported the pace of change and ensured improvement was maintained.

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

Staff demonstrated an interest and warmth towards the children they cared for. Parents told us that, overall, they were very happy with the care and support their child received at the setting. One parent said; "They have helped my [child] grow in confidence and develop relationships with friends and experience a wide range of activities and fun! The staff are fantastic and I couldn't ask for better." Another parent said; "Lots of fun things happening in nursery that my child is always happy to discuss and tell us about. Seesaw updates are so regular and it's great seeing pictures of learning and this is a great starter point for discussion. I feel the staff know my child very well and I really appreciate the little comments and updates they give at pick up that is personal little comments that makes me feel they care for and know my child well. My child is very happy at this nursery." This supported children to feel settled, happy and valued in the setting.

The leadership team recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed at all times. Overall, the deployment of staff was very effective.

They were flexible in their approach while communicating well with each other. Although staff had key areas of responsibility, they moved with children, where needed, to support the running of the service and meet the needs of children.

Staff were appropriately qualified. Some were working towards gaining further qualifications and had a very good knowledge of child development. Staff were able to discuss how they had identified individual areas for development and were supporting children with their social skills, confidence, and speech and language. One parent said; "I think we see this all round in our child's confidence, what [they] talk about and share at home and in [their] developing interests and abilities - attending Hazlehead nursery definitely has brought this on immensely." Another parent said; "The nursery have been so helpful in developing [my child's] social skills which [they] sometimes struggle with, [their] confidence has come on leaps and bounds and [their] ability to socialise is improving everyday." This contributed to children's learning and development.

Staff were very committed to their professional development ensuring they delivered a high-quality service and improved outcomes for children. Staff had undertaken a range of learning which included formal training, professional discussions, and self-directed reading. This supported staff to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, children's care, play, and learning was informed by current research and best practice.

Staff inductions had supported staff knowledge and awareness of their role and responsibilities. The setting had started using the 'Early Learning and Childcare National Induction Resource' to encourage questions and reflection. This would support staff to have a very good understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and effective ways of working.

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
1.3 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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