

# Dunbar Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

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Dunbar  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
8 October 2024

**Service provided by:**  
East Lothian Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002600

**Service no:**  
CS2003015827

## About the service

Dunbar Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 144 children aged from two years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time. Of those 144 children, no more than eight children are aged two years to under three years.

The service is provided across five separate playrooms within Dunbar Primary School. Children had direct access to outdoors and the addition of a small sensory room. The service is close to local parks, woodlands and amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 07 October 2024 between 09:45 and 17:00. We returned to the service on 08 October 2024 between 09:30 and 17:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors.

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

To inform our evaluations we:

- spoke with and observed children using the service
- received written feedback from 39 families
- spoke with staff and received written feedback from 22 staff members
- spoke with the manager and the leadership team
- observed practice and children's routines and experiences
- reviewed documents.

**Key messages**

- There was a strong sense of belonging for children within the setting, which supported them to feel safe, comfortable and confident.
- An effective personal planning approach contributed to children's overall health and wellbeing.
- Staff were skilled at identifying when children required additional support and responded to this in a supportive way.
- Children were having fun as they led their own play, followed their own ideas and experienced high quality play, learning and development opportunities.
- The setting had plans to continue to grow and strengthen their partnership working with families and look for new and creative ways for them to be involved in their child's learning.
- Ongoing self-evaluation enabled the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children's and families particular needs and choices.
- Staff reflected well together and used these reflections to bring about positive change to outcomes for children and families.
- Staff deployment and staffing levels took account of the skills mix, routines and activities of the day.
- Staff were passionate about their ongoing professional development.

**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?	4 - 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 kind, warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff. There was a strong sense of belonging for children within the setting, which supported them to feel safe, comfortable and confident. Staff knew children and families well and responded sensitively to their individual needs. Parents told us, "The staff are nurturing, friendly and very professional, as my child need extra support and they are there for them" and "Friendly staff who listen and act on the needs of my child". Staff valued and recognised the importance of nurturing strong relationships and attachments. This was evident through many of the practices and discussions with staff across the service. Individual, tailored plans were developed to support children and families as they settled into the service. These thoughtful, meaningful approaches contributed to children's overall wellbeing and happiness.

An effective personal planning approach contributed to children's overall health and wellbeing. The service proactively worked with a number of key professionals to support children's individual needs and inform the development of meaningful support strategies. For example, working in partnership with speech and language therapists, health visitors and occupational health therapists. This involvement helped to promote children's rights, needs and choices through a clear and accessible written and visual plan. Staff valued these as meaningful working documents that were updated as and when changes to children's care, play and learning needs occurred. This contributed to children experiencing consistency and continuity in their care.

Mealtimes had been developed since our last inspection. Adaptations and improvements to the over all routine, supported children to experience a relaxed and sociable mealtime. Staff joined children for lunch, this created opportunities for staff and children to engage in positive interactions, build secure relationships, learn from one another, provide emotional support, promote language and inspire learning. Children's ability to make choices and self help skills were promoted through self serving salad, bread and fruit from the centre of the table and tidying away once they had finished. The service had introduced a 'lunch club' to support children that would benefit from a smaller, less busy experience. This was led by a consistent member of staff and supported by key staff from each playroom. This responsive approach to ensuring that routines were flexible and adapted to meet the needs of individual children, contributed to children's overall health and wellbeing.

Children's individual needs were being considered and planned for in relation to the wider group across the setting. Staff were skilled at identifying when children required additional support and responded to this in a supportive way. Parents told us, "The staff are very attentive. When my child is upset there is always someone to comfort them" and "My child is fully happy at nursery and the staff go out of their way to help them feel relaxed". Additional staff were in place to support individual children within the space. The service was focussing on developing consistent signs and visuals across the setting to support children's communication and participation. Staff could confidently talk about individual children's needs and how these were being supported within the space through consistent strategies and strong partnership working with families and other key professionals.

Staff were skilled at listening to children, being down at their eye level, whilst using their tone of voice, body language and facial expressions to interact. Staff also shared their knowledge and skills that had come from targeted training such as the 'Language is fun together' (LIFT) programme and how this had encouraged them to reflect on and further develop their practice. One staff member told us, "Our Lift training has proven very valuable to allow me to assess my practice and provide language tools to support individuals". This supported children to feel heard as their preferred mode of communication was understood and supported, whilst their feelings were recognised, validated and listened to.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun as they led their own play, followed their own ideas and experienced high quality play, learning and development opportunities. Children were empowered to be fully involved in their play and learning through the skilled interactions and actions of staff. Staff were confident in their critical role in supporting children's current interests and curiosities to promote their learning and development. This was evident throughout the space as staff could confidently talk about children's interests and how these were being extended. As a result, children were deeply engaged and focussed in their learning.

The staff team used their very good understanding of child development to inform their daily practice. The service had developed a newly adapted tracking system, which supported them to monitor and plan for children's learning and progression. This captured and considered the needs of the child and their family. Learning conversations with the leadership team supported all staff to reflect on individual children's learning and progression, and addressed possible gaps or areas that required further challenge. This contributed to children's overall learning, development, progression and wellbeing.

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences that promoted choice and independence. Well considered innovations and creative approaches successfully engaged children's imagination and enriched their play and learning. Play experiences developed children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. As a result, children were progressing well, and were happy and confident.

The setting had developed community links and strong partnerships which had provided a number of new opportunities to enhance children's play and learning experiences. The community garden was instrumental in this, and had provided ample opportunities to extend family engagement and learning opportunities. A recent example of this was the sharing of recipes and fresh ingredients to bake together, which had encouraged shared learning between home and setting. Further opportunities, such as, an achievement wall, teddy bears picnic, numeracy trail, family information evening, newsletters and daily conversations, had supported to build strong relationships with families. One parent told us, "We can see through the newsletters this term that the nursery are trying to work with parents more to develop the nursery". The service had plans to continue to grow and strengthen their partnership working with families and look for new and creative ways for them to be involved in their child's learning. This would contribute to positive outcomes for all. One staff member told us, "We strive to maintain positive relationships with all parents and carers so we can work in partnership with them so the children have the best possible outcomes".

## 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.

### Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a positive, calm and relaxed atmosphere within a welcoming and clean environment. Staff had given thoughtful consideration to what makes a quality play space and had been working hard to develop and improve children's play spaces both indoors and outdoors. Children's current interests had influenced the planning of play spaces and resources. This supported children to feel important and sent the message that they mattered.

Children's play spaces reflected their current interests and had been thoughtfully developed to ensure they were inviting for children. These were further enhanced with thoughtful displays and invitations to play that promoted children's curiosity and imagination. The use of visuals within the playroom at different areas supported to create a well organised, predictable and secure environment. We asked the service to reflect on the environment and consider where some areas may feel very visually busy for some children. The leadership team were receptive to this feedback. Addressing this would further support a sense of calm within the environment.

Children benefitted from the use of the 'Puffin room', which was a small separate sensory room. This had been improved since our last inspection, and now offered a clean, calm space with soft lighting and sensory resources. Staff had plans to develop a second quiet sensory space in a separate part of the building. This would create further opportunities for children to experience a quiet, calm space when needed.

All playrooms had their own garden space, and children were freely moving between indoors and outdoors. Children were confidently and independently accessing the provided outdoor clothing as they transitioned outside. Many families commented on this being a strength of the setting, one parent told us the most positive aspect was, "The caring, nurturing staff and the freedom of indoor/outdoor play". Children had access to a wide variety of resources and were using these to follow their own ideas and be creative. The service had plans to further develop the resources, play spaces and experiences in the garden areas. This would contribute to the positive environment that children experienced.

Infection prevention and control practices had improved across the service. Clean and well organised communal areas, such as, nappy changing areas and laundry spaces contributed to the effective day to day running of the service. This helped to create a calm, well organised and clean space which contributed to the wellbeing of both children and staff.

**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**

Leaders promoted and sustained a shared vision for the setting that reflected the aspirations of children, families, partners and the wider community. This helped all staff know what was important for the setting to meet the needs of children and families. Leaders created conditions where staff felt confident to initiate well-informed change and shared responsibility for the process. As a result, the service had made significant improvements across all areas of practice.

Children and families views were actively sought to inform the development of the setting. Successes and achievements were shared with children, families and partners and were used as a starting point for future improvements. Strong leadership supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children and families in reaching their full potential. This contributed to the positive atmosphere that had been created.

The leadership and staff team had worked collectively to implement an ongoing quality assurance system that covered key areas of practice. This was flexible and responsive to areas of practice that staff were focussing on. Staff and members of the leadership team had used a balance of observations, peer reviews, reflective discussions and quality audits to bring about positive changes and improve outcomes for children. Staff proactively reached out and looked for external quality assurance. For example, staff had contacted speech and language therapy, and asked them to observe their use of specific resources that had been developed to support children's language and communication. This ensured that staff were confident in their roles and resources were being used effectively in meeting children's needs. This contributed to the culture of openness and continuous improvement that had been developed.

Leadership at all levels was celebrated and valued. Staff had taken on a variety of leadership and champion roles which recognised their individual strengths and areas of interest. Ongoing self-evaluation enabled the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children's and families particular needs and choices. Staff reflected well together and used these reflections to bring about positive change to outcomes for children and families. One staff member told us, "In the last 12 months I feel that setting has reflected and changed their procedures and practice to improve the experiences and learning for the children. All the staff have worked hard to embrace these changes at a quick pace to improve our setting for our young people and families". This demonstrated staff dedication to reflecting on and swiftly adapting their practice to enhance learning experiences and overall support for children and this families.

## 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 worked well together and had clearly built strong relationships across the team. This contributed to the kind, caring and respectful environment that children experienced. One parent told us, "The staff feel like family, they are the most attentive and supportive people you could ever meet". Staff modelled this through their actions and their language. For example, staff members recognised and responded, when someone in the team potentially required support when working with individual and small groups of children at different points throughout the inspection. Staff responded quickly and sensitively to this. As a result, children experienced warm, nurturing interactions.

Staff communicated well with one another, and deployed themselves across the spaces, ensuring that they communicated effectively with one another if a task was going to take them away from children. Staff understood when to engage and when to stand back and enable children to develop their play at their pace. Through skilful sensitive engagement, opportunities were provided for children to develop their skills, lead their own play and share their ideas. One staff member told us, "Training has made me rethink what I do as a practitioner. I now slow my pace down when engaging in a conversation or play. I observe beside the child and wait for them to invite me to interact. Through these exchanges, the children share information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings". As a result, children were busy in their play and the environment felt calm and relaxed.

Staff deployment and staffing levels took account of the skills mix, routines and activities of the day. Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensured positive transitions and communication. Leaders recognised the need for high levels of interaction and support to promote wellbeing and safety, and staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. For example, additional staffing at busier times of the day, such as, lunchtime and an overlap of staffing between shift patterns enabled effective communication and staff handovers. This ensured safety and high-quality outcomes for children.

Staff were passionate about their ongoing professional development. Staff could confidently talk about training they had accessed, along with professional reading, research and reflective discussions that had impacted on positive outcomes for children. Staff had high aspirations for the children, families and the service. Families were complimentary of staff's dedication and ongoing support, as parents told us, "Amazing staff, can't fault them" and "All the staff are amazing, and go above and beyond for my daughter". This contributed to the positive atmosphere that children and families experienced.



## 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 ensure children and families are cared for by staff who feel valued and supported, all staff should have the opportunity to receive and participate in regular support and supervision. To empower staff this should be carried out by skilled leaders. This should reflect the needs of individual staff, support ongoing meaningful reflective discussions that in turn contribute to bringing about positive changes to outcomes for children and families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled' (HSCS 3.14).

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

#### Action taken since then

An ongoing cycle of support and supervision had been implemented. This provided staff with a safe space to have open, honest discussions and meaningfully reflect on their practice. Through our written feedback, all staff agreed with the statement, "My wellbeing needs are recognised and supported by leaders". The staff had worked closely with the leadership and management team to bring about positive changes and make improvements across the service. This had contributed to positive outcomes for all.

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

### Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

## 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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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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