

# Cornbank St. James' Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

34 Marchburn Drive  
Penicuik  
EH26 9HE

Telephone: 01312 714 575

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
7 November 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Midlothian Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002602

**Service no:**  
CS2003017288

## About the service

Cornbank St. James' Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 64 children from age 3 to not yet attending primary school at any one time. The service is located in a residential area of Penicuik, Midlothian.

Cornbank St. James' Primary School Nursery is an integral part of Cornbank St. James' Primary School. The nursery accommodation consists of one large and spacious playroom, kitchen and dining area, toilets and nurture room. There is also a cloakroom area and small staff office. The enclosed garden area can be accessed directly from the playroom. The nursery has its own entrance, which is accessed via a secure entry system. The nursery make use of the wider school playground and adjacent wooded area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 29 October 2024 between 9:00 and 16:40. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service and some of their family members
- considered written feedback from nineteen families
- spoke with staff and received written feedback from eight staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents relating to the care of children and the management of the service.

**Key messages**

- The warmth, kindness and compassion from staff enabled children to feel valued, loved and secure.
- Staff were skilled at identifying when children required additional support and responded to this in a supportive way.
- Children benefited from carefully planned and responsive play and learning opportunities.
- Lunchtime was relaxed and unhurried. Children were actively encouraged to engage in the social experience.
- Quality assurance and monitoring processes should continue to be developed.
- Staff deployment and staffing levels took account of the skills mix, routines and activities of the day.

**From this inspection we evaluated this service as:**

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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 received warm and nurturing approaches from staff, which contributed to their overall wellbeing. Children approached staff for reassurance and cuddles, staff were kind and caring and knew children well. Children were sharing stories and achievements with staff. They showed interest and listened attentively to children. Staff were down at children's' height and their positive body language and facial expressions supported children to be heard and participate. This fostered positive relationships and sent the message to children that they were being listened to and that they were important.

The keyworker system worked very well and allowed children and parents to build positive and trusting relationships and attachments. Children were cared for in a calm and supportive manner. Strategies were in place to support children's development, these were working well. We saw progress children were making and it was clear through noted discussions that parents valued staff views and support. One family commented, "I think it's a brilliant setting and my child loves to go to nursery. They have made them feel very welcome from the start and have catered for their needs, and as parents we have been listened to with our concerns about our child and it has all been actioned better than we have expected".

Personal planning, was effective and supported children's wellbeing. Pastoral notes and wellbeing meetings indicated parental involvement and ensured relevant information was kept on children's changing needs. These contributed to improving children's experiences and supported staff in providing safe and compassionate care. Considerable effort had been put into place for children who experienced blended placements. For example, the leadership team had written a blended placement policy and shared this with other settings. This promoted good communication, and the sharing of information to support individual children's development.

Children experienced a calm and unhurried social lunchtime experience. Staff listened to children and were responsive to their needs as they sat with them at mealtimes and provided assistance when required. Children's choice was encouraged as they made their own lunch choice every morning. They appeared confident within the lunch hall, which was an area not normally used by the children. Snacks were well organised. Children were actively involved in making snack choices, baking and cooking. This time was used well to support opportunities for independence, choice and social interactions with children. Children's self-help skills were promoted through the hand washing routine, pouring their own drinks and making mini pizzas for snack. These opportunities extended children's independence while fostering a sense of responsibility.

There were clear systems in place for administration and recording of children's medication. The leadership team took time to review medication records and action plans as part of their quality assurance audits. Moving forward, for the safety, health and wellbeing of children medication should be reviewed every three months.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Staff gave careful thought and consideration to the needs of individuals. Children benefitted from carefully planned play and learning opportunities. We saw children's preferences and needs were considered. A strength of the team, was encouraging children to make choices in their play and learning. Children were happy, confident and having fun, and friendships were being formed.

Children enjoyed exploring the learning environment. They could choose between indoors and outdoors. Most children were confident in leading their own play. Family feedback was positive, "The children have a wide range of activities that they can get involved in daily, lots of free play and choices they can make. They get to go on daily outings if they wish to the park, library or woods, have access to the gym hall or music room. My child really likes the water table and sand pit. Lots of creative making and baking/cooking to". As a result, children's choice, curiosity, creativity and imagination was developed and extended through the varied experiences they participated in.

Children transported items to other areas of playrooms and staff supported this, showing their understanding of schematic play and child development. Schematic play is repeated actions or behaviours that children display as they explore the world around them. For example, children enjoyed transported items to the construction area and sand pit. As a result they were developing their motor skills and independence.

The playroom was rich in literacy, language and numeracy resources that supported children's developing skills. They benefitted from the introduction of a variety of text, symbols and images throughout the learning environment. Staff used Keys for Communication, to support children within listening groups. Children confidently chatted to us and shared the nursery's manual sign of the week, for example skeleton. Some adult directed experiences helped children to progress their literacy, numeracy, and understanding of mathematical and science concepts. Such as, fast, slow, and gravity.

There were ample opportunities included for mark making. For example, recipes in the home area, and a wide range of arts and craft which engaged children in drawing, designing, and junk modelling. There was a well resourced woodwork bench where children developed problem solving skills and learnt about keeping safe. Small world and imaginative play, including puppets were popular with the children.

Staff confirmed a new intentional planning process had recently been introduced and they were getting used to the new system. We suggested the leadership team should continue to review the planning system to reduce the amount of detail. This would ensure it was more meaningful, manageable and achievable for staff **(see areas for improvement 1 within 3.1)**

Children were confident and proud in sharing their learning stories, learning experiences, and achievements with us, which demonstrated a sense of belonging in the setting. Floor books were used as part of the planning cycle, they recorded children's learning voice and ideas. Children had ownership of these. There were some very confident children in the setting, asking questions and telling us about what they were doing and what they liked. This promoted children's self esteem, engagement and learning.

Observations of children's interests and activities were shared with families as they were detailed in their learning journals. This ensured families were able to see what children had enjoyed and celebrated their successes. Learning and achievements from home were shared with staff through the achievement tree. Regular observations, learning priorities, and discussions with families were used to plan experiences

tailored to each child. This supported a holistic approach to planning for children's learning. Staff supported children to reach their full potential, to achieve, grow and belong in the service and community.

Children chose to spend a lot of time playing outdoors which was facilitated well by staff. Children were developing their physical and problem solving skills through building. Staff joined in with play when invited, and were responsive to children's interests. They were skilful in knowing when to step back from play and join in again, to spark children's interest and curiosity.

## 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 benefitted from an indoor environment that was clean, welcoming and well organised with direct access to the outdoor space. There was plenty of natural light and ventilation which supported children's wellbeing.

Staff had worked hard to develop the learning spaces for children. All areas indoors were inviting with good quality furniture and equipment. Staff were vigilant and spread around the playroom to support children. The indoor environment was a developmentally appropriate space. There were some real life resources, loose parts and open-ended resources which offered children opportunity to problem solve and be creative. Children could access the resources independently. The attention to detail within the indoor space was evident. This ensured a safe, supportive and stimulating environment.

Children were encouraged through nursery routines to tidy away resources once they had finished with them, and at times, staff reset areas during the day. Staff encouraged children to care for the resources and fabric of the service. This promoted respect and a sense of responsibility as children learnt to take ownership of their environment. There were comfortable areas for children to have a quiet time and relax both indoors and outdoors. These provided homely spaces and children used these well. Wall displays respectfully presented children's work. As a result children feel secure and valued.

Children had direct access to outdoors and were freely moving between indoors and outdoors. The outdoor environment provided a range of resources and play experiences. Some areas were in need of attention, for example, the general upkeep, this included the mud kitchen and garden tools (**refer to area for improvement 1 under 3.1**). Outdoor play was popular with the children. The outdoor classroom provided some protection from the elements. Families were encouraged to provide suitable outdoor clothing for their child. Staff told us, the outdoor provision had improved greatly and this was a priority for continued improvement. For example, to develop the resources and enhance the play opportunities outdoors for children. One family confirmed, "My child experiences a lot of outdoor or nature oriented play which suits their interests". We signposted the service to the Care Inspectorate, good practice resource, 'My World Outdoors',(2016) and 'Out to Play' (2016) these can be found on the Care Inspectorate hub. [hub.careinspectorate.com](http://hub.careinspectorate.com)

The staff had revisited the SIMOA (Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) campaign and implemented this into practice. For example, they used the Look, Think, Act campaign to raise awareness of children's safety at nursery, with children, families and staff. The SIMOA mascot, purple elephant was loved by children, they related the elephant to risks and keeping themselves and their peers safe.

Accidents and incidents for children were recorded and signed by parents. However, minor accidents and incidents for children were recorded on one record sheet. We found some of these records had not been viewed or signed by parents. The service had taken action after the inspection to develop individual sheets for recording minor accidents and incidents to support confidentiality. Moving forward, clear monitoring of accidents would ensure these are seen and signed by parents and would support the wellbeing of children (**refer to area for improvement 1 under 3.1**).

Children were protected as staff took necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection. Children washed their hands at key points throughout the day supported by staff when needed. Toys and resources indoors were clean and well maintained. Children's toilet facilities were regularly checked during the day to make sure they were hygienic. As a result children were kept safe and free from infection.

### How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

#### Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

Good leadership of the service and relationships between staff and families supported meaningful involvement and development of the service. Families' views were actively sought through a range of methods such as, X twitter, questionnaires, nursery planning, stay and play sessions. Families commented, "The nursery have taken my wants/opinions into consideration and my ideas" and "We are asked for opinions regularly and feedback is greatly encouraged. I feel if I had an issue or any feedback to give that this would be received openly". Consequently, genuine partnerships had created a trusting environment where children and families could confidently share their feedback and contribute to the service.

The enthusiastic and committed leadership team had worked alongside staff to develop a strong team. They had progressed and supported the teams understanding of the adult role, planning for children's learning and providing in house training for staff.

The service had an improvement plan which identified strengths and areas for development within the service. Key priorities were outcome focussed targets. Seniors were monitoring and reviewing the priorities, meaning there was a clear overview of progress. A quality assurance calendar was a working document that had been evaluated and adjusted to reflect the priorities within the service. Moving forward, the leadership team need to ensure that all monitoring systems were robust. For example, the monitoring of minor accidents and incidents records, to make sure these are viewed and signed by parents, intentional planning, to ensure it is meaningful, manageable and achievable for staff, and monitoring of the outdoor area to make sure all resources and areas are well maintained (**see area for improvement 1**).

The leadership team had made links with other professionals within the shared Early Learning Childcare, ELC team to share good practice. They had piloted training on Keys for communication, which looked at supporting interactions and communication development for children. This demonstrated their commitment and motivation, knowledge sharing and collective learning.

## Areas for improvement

1.

To ensure positive outcomes for children, high quality standards and to support further improvement within the service. The provider should ensure there are robust audit and monitoring system in place. These should include but not be limited to, the leadership team monitoring:

Minor accident and incidents, to make sure these were viewed and signed by parents

Intentional planning, to ensure it is meaningful, manageable and achievable for staff

The outdoors environment and resources to ensure these are clean and well maintained.

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes'. (4.19)

## 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. The staff team were motivated and wanted to do well, they were engaged and open throughout the inspection to our ideas and suggestions.

The deployment of staff was managed well and effective to meet children's needs. Families confirmed, "The staff are consistent and there is not a very big turn around in staff which is great in building a rapport with children and getting to know them" and "I would like to say how well the staff do daily at Cornbank to support children and they should all be so proud of themselves". Staff shared a common vision and worked hard to achieve good quality care and learning for children. They communicated very well across the team and worked together to support children's individual planned experiences, needs and preferences. As a result, we could see children felt safe, secure and nurtured through positive, trusting and responsive relationships.

Staff were skilled, compassionate, and very good at reading children's cues. They anticipated when extra support was needed. This created a respectful atmosphere which ensured children's experiences were positive and appropriately supported throughout the day. The staff team were committed to professional development and had undertaken additional training and learning to meet the care needs of children. Staff confidently described training they had accessed, along with professional reading, research and reflective discussions, that had impacted on positive outcomes for children.



The leadership team recognised and valued the importance of ensuring that the service was well staffed in supporting children's needs. Staff were flexible, attuned and responsive of each other, recognising when support may be needed. Staff provided good role modelling throughout our visit to less experienced staff. The wellbeing of staff was carefully considered which promoted a culture of care and respect where staff felt valued. As a result, they felt part of a highly skilled team that delivered very good care. This had a positive impact on the outcomes for children and families. Staff told us, "Overall, I feel incredibly fortunate to be a part of the team at Cornbank ELC. We have a wonderful team, group of learners and families which makes going to work enjoyable" and "I feel that I am listened to and if I did have a wellbeing need this would be acted upon and a plan put in place".

## 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?	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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

0345 600 9527

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