

# Burnbrae Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Burnbrae Early Years  
Chesters Court  
Bonnyrigg  
EH19 3PS

Telephone: 01312 714 605

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
19 November 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Midlothian Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002602

**Service no:**  
CS2003016398

## About the service

Burnbrae Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a service maximum of 132 children at any one time aged from three years to not yet attending primary school.

The setting shares a campus with St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School. The setting has its own entrance and is set across three playrooms, the 'Oak, Chestnut and Rowan' rooms. Each playroom has access to a kitchen, children's bathroom and direct access onto the large enclosed outdoor area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 13 November 2024 between 09:30 and 15:40 and Monday 18 November 2024 between 09:30 and 13:00. 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 using the service;
- received on line questionnaires from seven families using the setting;
- spoke with staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents;
- spoke with a visiting professional.

## Key messages

- The welcoming environment supported almost all children to feel important within the space and contributed to their overall wellbeing.
- Staff confidently discussed children's individual needs and how they were supported.
- Further professional learning and continued engagement with the relevant agencies supporting individuals would ensure all children experience an inclusive, supportive, and emotionally secure environment.
- A variety of resources both indoors and outdoors, with natural materials and loose parts created engaging play spaces.
- Parents were highly complimentary of the staff team and the nurturing care and support their child received.
- Deployment decisions should be reconsidered to ensure all children's best interests and needs are being met.

## 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?	4 - Good
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 different parts of this key question as adequate and good, with an overall grade of adequate where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support.

Almost all staff demonstrated nurturing and caring approaches, fostering positive engagement with children. One family highlighted this in our online feedback, stating, "The teachers are very warm, caring, and have encouraged my child to be the best person they can be". Almost all children experienced staff engaging at their level, using body language and facial expressions to show genuine interest, while pausing, waiting and listening. Interactions between staff and some children were being supported with visual communication aids, such as, visual timetables. This helped children feel secure, valued and heard resulting in many children appearing settled and engaged in routines. However, the way in which these strategies were used and the consistency across the team needed to be improved and strengthened. Whilst staff were kind and caring, some needs were left unmet, with instances of children spending prolonged periods without meaningful interaction. One child, for example, wandered alone for considerable time, with staff passing by without engaging and standing unnoticed in the bathroom. This lack of attention, if allowed to continue had the potential to hinder the child's connection with the setting.

Staff provided various resources to help children understand and express their feelings, such as a mirror for self-reflection during registration, an emotions display, and books with puppets to encourage emotional discussions. Children also had access to comfort and transition objects, supporting emotional literacy and self-regulation. This work was appreciated by a parent who told us, "Emotional check-ins are all amazing things". However, strategies to support some children's self-regulation were inconsistently applied, leading to missed opportunities to support children. A staff member noted, "We could provide more support and learning opportunities, particularly for children with additional support needs". During an interaction with staff, a child became distressed. The child was not provided with any explanation of what was happening, which contributed to their distress. They were then taken by the hand and led to the sensory room without any clarification. This lack of clear communication and reassurance negatively impacted the quality of the interaction, increasing the child's confusion.

While the positive interactions we observed showcased good practice, the negative ones had a noticeable impact on some children. These could not be overlooked or softened by the good practice, as they risked undermining children's emotional wellbeing, sense of security, and ability to engage meaningfully in their environment. We were encouraged by a family commenting, "My child has needs and the staff have been amazing trying to understand everything and help keep me feeling confident in their care". However, our focused observations of children in the space highlighted the need for action to ensure that all children experience an inclusive, supportive and emotionally secure environment **(See requirement 1)**.

Families could engage through a variety of ways including, a lending library, settling visits, stay-and-play sessions, consultations and individual meetings. These opportunities, helped families connect with their child's learning and progress. All parents told us they were always welcomed into the service and have the opportunity to discuss their child's care, play and learning. However, this could be further improved as families were not routinely being welcomed into the playroom at drop-off and pick-up, reflecting practices that could unintentionally hinder strong partnerships. One staff member said, "I would like to see parents in the setting more," while another noted, "Last year we offered Parents Early Education Partnerships (PEEP), I

feel we could be better at family learning". Allowing regular access to the playroom would strengthen the home-setting connection and give families more insight into their child's day. The manager and staff were open to this change and agreed to implement it, with careful planning. We have identified this as an area for improvement to assess how it would be effectively actioned **(See area for improvement 1)**.

Personal plans were reviewed and updated with families, ensuring 'All About Me' forms reflected children's current interests. Staff confidently discussed individual needs and how they were supported. In our online feedback, all families agreed they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan. Children with additional support needs had individual plans with specific strategies. However, as noted in requirement one, staff did not always follow these strategies, resulting in some children's needs not being met consistently. Communication sheets documented discussions with families and professionals, ensuring continuity of care for most children, while pastoral logs tracked each child's care, play and learning needs. Moving forward, the setting should strengthen their personal planning approach to ensure that these are consistently used by all staff to inform their daily practice and approach with children.

Lunchtime was a positive experience, with kitchen staff supporting the setting and an efficient meal tracking system. Staff ate with children, creating a family-style atmosphere, and there were positive interactions where staff encouraged children to try new foods and offered individualised alternatives. Children confidently asked for seconds and seemed to enjoy their meals, feeling supported and comfortable expressing their needs. However, outside mealtimes, children did not have access to drinking water, which raised concerns about their hydration. This issue came to light when a visibly thirsty and coughing child was initially denied a drink, with staff explaining that water would be available at snack time, 30 minutes later. Following the inspector's intervention, the child was given a drink. Staff explained that they had removed the water stations because children were playing with the water. This highlighted a need for immediate action, and the manager agreed to address the issue to ensure children had access to drinking water throughout the day.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

The setting offered a variety of resources both indoors and outdoors, with staff using natural materials and loose parts to create engaging play spaces. A family told us they were particularly impressed with the, child focussed approach, with excellent provisions for all learners. Children had the freedom to access and transport these resources, which supported imaginative and cooperative play. For example, children demonstrated good coordination as they transported water in a ladle and used scarves for creative movement. A group of children engaged in block play, worked together to create a balancing beam while chanting and laughing. Their play involved problem-solving, negotiating, and using mathematical language such as "long," "big," "too small," and "heavy". This play fostered creativity, teamwork, and the development of early mathematical concepts, showing how children were extending their own learning through active engagement.

Literacy and numeracy was threaded throughout the play spaces, with the addition of a variety of resources. Staff had developed a variety of environmental print that appeared in signs and labels, which helped bridge the connection between letters and emergent reading. This supported children to begin to associate print with meaning as they began to understand that signs and words were there to convey a message. Moving forward, staff should refresh and update signage within the environment to ensure it remains engaging and visibly effective.

Children benefited from both paper copy learning journals and electronic journals. The paper journal books were easily accessible, and children enjoyed sharing them with us, recalling past experiences and talking

about their friends and family. These journals included a mix of handwritten observations, links to the online 'Seesaw' platform via QR codes, children's voices, and artwork. While these provided valuable insights into the children's experiences, there was potential to strengthen the documentation to better showcase a clear, ongoing narrative of each child's learning and progression. Many observations were isolated and did not fully capture the continuity of their development, making this an area that could be further strengthened.

Books were available around the environment in different areas, with children taking the opportunity to sit quietly and explore books alone or with adults on a one to one. Routines such as snack time also supported children's early literacy and numeracy skills. These routines were supported with visuals which supported children to understand the sequencing of the routine. Simple everyday tasks, such as setting the table for lunch, collecting snack items in order from left to right, supported children's early tracking skills, which were important for later reading development.

The setting was fortunate to have a sensory room and a nurture room, both of which were valuable spaces designed to support children's emotional and sensory development. The purpose of the sensory room was to provide a calming, sensory-rich environment where children could engage in experiences that helped them regulate their emotions and sensory processing. The nurture room was intended to offer a safe and supportive space where children could receive individualised care and attention, particularly those who may need additional emotional support. However, we observed children in the sensory space and discussed our concerns as to how this space was being used and staff deployment during these sessions. Staff needed to carefully consider the resources available in these areas and how they catered to the differing needs of up to four children using the space at the same time. Ensuring that these rooms were equipped with appropriate materials and used in ways that effectively supported the diverse needs of the children would enhance their value and promote better outcomes.

## Requirements

1. By 19 May 2025, the provider must ensure that staff create a more inclusive, supportive, and emotionally secure environment for all children.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum ensure:

- a) all children receive consistent and timely interactions, particularly those requiring additional support;
- b) established strategies are consistently followed, monitored and evaluated to support children in self-regulating their emotions, ensuring that these practices are integrated into daily routines including the use of additional spaces such as the sensory and nurture rooms;
- c) staff engage in further professional learning and continued engagement with the relevant agencies to enhance their understanding of individual children's needs and to embed consistent practices across the setting.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of Users), Regulation 4(2)(b) (Privacy and dignity of service users) and Regulation 5(1)(2) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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).

## Areas for improvement

1.

To strengthen connections staff should routinely welcome families into their child's playroom.

This is to ensure 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).

The manager, and staff may find the following document useful to support them in meeting this area for improvement:

'Me, my family and my childcare setting' (Care Inspectorate, 2024).

## How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator 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.

The environment was welcoming, and natural daylight complimented the space. Neutral colours, wooden furnishings and quality soft furnishings added to the nurturing, calm and relaxed atmosphere. Staff used furniture to create small spaces which promoted a sense of privacy and cosiness for children as they played in small groups. The large shared outdoor sand area, along with another space featuring a large climbing frame, provided children with the opportunity to play with friends from other playrooms. The comments in our on line questionnaires, highlighted families' appreciation for the setting's outdoor play areas and resources. They noted that their children "enjoyed a mix of free and structured play, with activities such as climbing, sand and water play, drawing, chalking, and using musical instruments in the outdoors". The variety of equipment, including climbing frames, tunnels, a mud kitchen, and brick-building, was praised for keeping the children engaged and excited.

The arrangement of key facilities, including toilets, kitchen, storage, and a direct door to the garden, supported the smooth operation of the setting. The kitchen's low-level areas enabled children to independently select snacks and participate in baking. This layout allowed staff to respond promptly to children's needs, encouraged independence by giving children easy access to essential spaces, where routines ran smoothly and efficiently.

Children had ample space to move around and could choose to be indoors or out, respecting their choices. Wall displays, although some up very high, respectfully presented children's work and celebrated their family home lives, fostering a sense of value and belonging. The well-resourced areas supported children to freely move resources. The freedom to move resources enhanced problem-solving skills, creativity and social interaction among the children.

Children had access to a variety of spaces within the nursery setting, as well as the wider school and playground, providing them with opportunities to explore different environments and engage in a variety of experiences. We agreed with staff who suggested that a more efficient booking system was needed to ensure better use of areas within the school, such as the sensory room, which would allow children to have longer, more consistent periods of time in these spaces.

The sleep environment needed careful consideration to ensure it promoted comfort and wellbeing. For example, one child was placed on a plastic sleep mat without a sheet, which did not provide a comfortable sleeping experience. The sleeping area was very small and enclosed, blocked off by a table, creating a cramped and isolating space. The setting needs to consider how to better meet children's sleeping needs by providing a more comfortable environment that helped children feel secure and relaxed.

## How good is our leadership?

## 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The manager demonstrated strong engagement during the inspection by actively participating and supporting staff in the space. This hands-on approach allowed the manager to observe key aspects of practice directly, gaining valuable insights into day-to-day practice. Through these observations, the manager was able to experience examples of effective practice that promoted positive outcomes for children. The manager was also involved in child planning meetings, ensuring they had a clear understanding of the needs of children and families. Whilst strengths in practice were observed there were important gaps in practice that needed to be addressed through a more effective quality assurance system.

The staff team told us they worked well together, with strong communication and a shared commitment to getting it right for children. They collaborated effectively, reporting to us that they "played to each other's strengths", and regularly reflected on how to improve. The team made use of planning meetings and a group chat app to stay updated on any changes or key information. Staff felt well supported by senior leadership, telling us they were "approachable" and fostered a "positive working environment". The team held weekly room meetings, ensuring ongoing dialogue and reflection on their improvement plan, which was visibly displayed for all to see. The team told us they were dedicated to continuously enhancing their practice, including recent changes to the garden area to make it more engaging.

The setting's approach to quality assurance, centred around a calendar being broken down into monthly focus areas, involving staff in the ongoing monitoring process. Recently, self-evaluation had shifted to a whole-setting approach, following feedback from the Local Authority's Quality Improvement Officer (QIO). This included external support from the Education Inclusion Officer and regular parent feedback through questionnaires. The setting had recently moved to one self-evaluation floor book across the three rooms to promote consistent practice and collaboration. This was complemented by an online floor book which captured minutes of meetings, training opportunities provided as well a staff hand book and guidance for staff.

Despite the described approach to quality assurance, self-evaluation, and regular feedback processes, we observed that staff practice did not always consistently meet the needs of all children. While the staff team had made efforts to improve collaboration and address challenges, there seemed to be a gap in identifying and addressing areas where practice may not be fully aligned with the children's needs. We agreed with a staff member who told us, "We could be better at recording our success/progress/self evaluation. We are continually learning from each other within our own rooms and are striving towards a consistent approach across the full setting - equally it is important that each room responds to the needs of the children within it". Moving forward, management need to provide individualised support to staff, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary resources and guidance to make well informed changes that prioritise the best interests of the children. In order to do this, management should oversee staff practices and address any gaps to ensure consistency. The outcome of this approach would be a more effective, collaborative team,



where decisions are made with the children's wellbeing at the forefront and staff are empowered to provide positive outcomes for all. We have identified this as an area for improvement to assess how it would be effectively actioned (**See area for improvement 1**).

When asked what was the most positive aspect of the setting, families appreciated the "commitment to creating a safe, welcoming, and nurturing environment where children felt happy and understood". They valued the "focus on individual needs, choice, and freedom in play and activities, including the option to change lunch choices". Key successes included "fostering friendships", "encouraging free play indoors and outdoors" and "teaching valuable skills for primary school and beyond". The setting's "experienced staff" and the environment were highly praised. Families suggested a more "tailored app to enhance communication" but overall, they were extremely satisfied with the quality of the setting.

In our online family feedback, we received a heart-warming comment from a child who shared, "I look forward to going to the nursery every morning when I wake up so that I can play with my friends and see the grown-ups. I love everything about it. I like playing on the climbing frame, listening to the songs. When I am indoors, I love reading, figuring out time using the clock". This beautiful feedback was a testament to the genuine joy and enthusiasm the child experienced from the wide range of play and learning opportunities provided at the setting. It highlighted not only the child's excitement about their time in the setting but also the positive impact these experiences had on that child's development and sense of belonging.

### Areas for improvement

1. To support children's overall wellbeing, management should provide clear guidance and individualised support to staff, ensuring that they have the knowledge and resources to make well informed changes that prioritise the best interests of the children. Everyone should take shared responsibility for fostering a nurturing and supportive environment. Management should actively oversee staff practice, identify any gaps, and implement strategies to address them to ensure that high quality care is consistently provided.

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

'I experience high quality care and support based on evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

### How good is our staff team?

### 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this quality indicator as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

#### Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

Families were complimentary of the staff team, with all confirming they had a strong connection with the staff caring for their child. They described staff as "So friendly and so warm", "Brilliant in dealing with my child and meeting their needs", "Very open with communication, helpful and caring" and "Just wonderful and amazing". This highlighted praise from families about staff's ability to meet their child's needs.

Staff communicated well across the spaces to ensure that they were all working together to best meet the needs of individual children. Staff informed each other and children as they were about to leave play areas. This supported positive relationships and children were being reassured as to where key members of staff were and when they would return.

In our on line feedback families confirmed there was always enough staff in the setting to meet their child's needs. However, the setting had experienced absences in the team which made it difficult to maintain the appropriate level of staffing to meet needs. Staff expressed that, "despite always maintaining the required ratios, the level of support sometimes felt insufficient" as the "logistics of managing staff absences", and the additional responsibilities for them to support areas across the school often made it "difficult to provide the necessary support to children". Our observations throughout the inspection supported these statements. The management team told us they were committed to finding ways to improve this situation and ensure that the needs of all children were met.

Throughout the inspection the setting operated within ratio. However, on the first day of our inspection, we observed a lack of staff to support children during lunch in one playroom while staff had their lunchbreaks. By the second day, we were informed that children in that room would be moved between two other rooms in the afternoon as part of a trial, with the movements occurring between 12:20 and 14:00, and then varying by day, children and rooms. Our discussions with staff revealed that the primary reason was to accommodate staff lunch breaks.

Although we recognised the importance of staff breaks, this raised concerns about whether the arrangement prioritised children's need for routine, familiarity, and stability. From speaking to staff it was clear this change had not been well planned or informed by good practice guidance or staff knowledge of child development. Whilst we acknowledged that staff had tried different methods, we strongly recommended that the setting reviewed this practice to ensure it centred on children's wellbeing, not just staffing logistics. At feedback, we were told this routine was discontinued. Moving forward, when making deployment decisions to allow for staff breaks, the importance of familiar routines and the complexity of individual children's needs in addition to the wider group and circumstances should be taken into account. We have identified this as an area for improvement to assess how it would be effectively actioned **(See area for improvement 1)**.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's routines, familiarity, and individual needs are prioritised, staff deployment should be carefully planned and informed by child development knowledge and good practice guidance. The setting should develop a clear strategy for supporting children's needs during staff breaks, ensuring that transitions and staff movements do not disrupt children's routines and sense of security.

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

'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work well together'.  
(HSCS 3.19).

## 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 manager should ensure that all staff are clear about their responsibility to maintain registration with the Scottish Social Services Council and the Codes of Practice. A system should be developed to ensure this is effectively monitored.

This is to ensure 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, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.'  
(HSCS 3.14).

**This area for improvement was made on 12 October 2021.**

#### Action taken since then

The local authority central team had responsibility for ensuring staff maintained their registration with Scottish Social Services Council. Additionally, the setting manager had oversight to monitor this, ensuring that staff registrations were consistently kept up to date.

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

### 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	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

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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