

Stenhouse Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

4 Saughton Mains Street
Edinburgh
EH11 3HH

Telephone: 01314 431 255

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 March 2025

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002576

Service no:
CS2003015868

About the service

Stenhouse Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 40 children between 3 and 5 years old at any one time. The service is provided by the City of Edinburgh Council.

The service is located in Stenhouse Primary School, near to shops and amenities and has good transport links. The premises is made up of a large double playroom with direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 03 March 2025 and between 09:00 and 15:30 and continued on 4 March 2025 between 09:00 and 11:30. One inspector carried out the inspection. A Team Manager was also present at the inspection as part of the Care Inspectorate's quality assurance processes.

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

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service and some of their families.
- considered feedback from 8 families through an online form.
- considered feedback from 7 staff through an online form.
- spoke with staff and management.
- observed practice and daily life.
- reviewed documents relating to the care of children and the management of the service.

Key messages

- Staff worked hard on developing relationships within the community.
- Families had a strong connection with the service.
- There was a mix of planned and spontaneous experiences which supported children to learn and develop through play.
- Play spaces and experiences indoors and outdoors promoted learning and engagement.
- There was a culture of continuous improvement with strong supportive leadership.
- Some self-evaluation around staff deployment indoors is needed to ensure all areas of the nursery are supervised to enrich children's learning and keep children safe.
- The manager and staff are committed to providing positive outcomes for children.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We evaluated different parts of this key question as good and very good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcome for young people and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

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

Children's overall wellbeing was being supported by the warm and caring interactions from staff. Staff knew the children well. When staff listened to children, their positive body language, tone of voice and facial expressions conveyed to the children that they were being heard and that their voices mattered. Interactions with children were supported by the use of sign-a-long in the service. This supported children to feel safe, confident and nurtured. One parent told us, "Every child is treated with the utmost care and respect. It does feel like you are a part of a very special family. I love how all the children are included in a variety of activities and learning and most importantly they feel safe and happy, and I believe my children are in the best care.' Overall children benefited from a caring and skilled staff communication; however, sometimes staff deployment limited opportunities for enriching interactions and to engage children, as discussed in detail under 'Key Question 4: How good is our staff team' of this report.

The transitions in the service were well supported through the strong relationships built with families prior to children starting and during their time in the service. Groups such as 'PEEP Learning Together Programme' were offered to children and their families prior to children starting. This supported the foundations of the strong relationships formed with families using the service. A daily soft start and end to each child's day allowed for families to be welcomed into the service, where they could spend time in the environment with their child. One child told us about 'Free flow Fridays' when they get to play in the primary one outdoor space. As a result of transitions being supported, children were calm and relaxed in their environment and had built strong connections with the staff in the service.

Snack and mealtimes were unhurried, and children benefited from the relaxed and homely atmosphere created. As part of their improvement planning, staff had worked hard to develop the mealtime experience for children and had recently moved to a rolling lunch model where children could come for lunch when they were ready. Meals were provided by an external caterer which also catered for any dietary needs. One parent told us, "The food was the main reason their child loved nursery and often asks for food the same as nursery at home". Children's independence was supported by children collecting and clearing their own plates. Children were supported to self-serve from the kitchen or from the table. Lunch time was a sociable experience; however, the team could now reflect on opportunities staff had to be able to sit at the table with children whilst safely observing mealtimes. This would ensure staff can meaningfully engage with children during the mealtimes and continue to observe and monitor their safety.

Staff had a good understanding of children's health needs. Allergies were displayed on the cupboard door and on the children's name cards that they used for mealtimes. We asked the service to ensure they considered UK General data protection Regulation (GDPR) when placing allergens on display within the room. Medication was well documented, all stored appropriately, and paperwork was in place.

Administration of medication was carefully audited in accordance with current guidance. This ensured children's wellbeing and safety.

Children's overall wellbeing was mostly supported using personal planning. Staff worked well with families to get to know the individual needs of the children. Plans included registration information, all about me and next steps in their learning. All families agreed that they felt involved in developing and reviewing their child's personal plan. Plans were reviewed at least every six months in line with legislation. One parent told us, "Staff and we as parents chat regularly about how our child is doing and develop ideas for next steps to encourage them". Staff worked hard in creating strategies for children using 'children and young people planning' documents and worked closely with other professionals to support children. The service could now consider developing plans further to consistently record any agreed need, updates and strategies of support in individual children's plans. This would ensure staff had access to accurate up to date information to assist them in meeting children's needs.

1.3 Play and Learning

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good, where we found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

Play spaces and experiences indoors and outdoors promoted learning and engagement. All children had access to low level storage units, this encouraged them to make choices and decisions of what they wanted to play. During free play the children chose to explore resources such as sand, water, blocks, dinosaurs, imaginative area with natural resources and materials, paint and playdoh. Outdoors there were lots of opportunities for risky play and the resources available were appropriate to the children's age and stage of development. Children were having fun with lots to do and explore. Real attention and detail had been placed on each area of the playroom to support play experiences which included interactive displays. This meant that there were opportunities for children to engage in purposeful play and learning in the environment.

There was a mix of planned and spontaneous experiences which supported children to learn and develop through play. These were being documented in intentional plans, floor books and responsive planning. Planning had been a focus in the improvement plan and this work was continuing. This had resulted in more responsive planning taking place which supported the children's interests, learning and development. One parent told us, "My children are so excited to tell me about the amazing activities they have done every day covering a huge variety of topics. My children are asked for their input for what they would like to learn and how they would do it. They are given plenty outdoor play which my children love. They are given plenty of opportunities for free play, structured play and imaginative play. Through these types of play I firmly believe my children learn about the world around them while enhancing creativity and imagination". This meant that children could direct their own play and freely access a wide range of experiences suitable for their developmental needs.

Planning for children's learning is well supported by detailed observations. Observations had recently been developed as part of their improvement plan to ensure they were meaningfully reflecting the child's individual learning journey. Staff were able to discuss learning and development of children formally and informally on a regular basis ensuring children's individual needs were being met. This ensured each child was supported in their play and learning to reach their full potential. The service should now continue to monitor this through their quality assurance processes and ensure observations begin to reflect the learning and developments of any next steps identified.

Staff worked hard on developing relationships within the community. We saw that parents were warmly

welcomed into the setting. An area parents could use to have a warm drink whilst waiting on their child had been developed in the foyer of the nursery. The commitment to building trusting and reciprocal relationships with families meant there was a high engagement in activities that promoted home learning opportunities. For example, families joined staff, and at times the children, during World Book Day activities and cooking groups. As a result, they fostered a welcoming environment for families using the service which supported children's play and learning. One staff confirmed this and told us: "Our relationship building with families is what makes Stenhouse special. We meet families where they are, have open and warm relationships, can help families when they are worried and often resolve queries quickly at the coal face. Families and more importantly relationships are key to everything we do at Stenhouse".

Visits to the local shops, parks and community centre helped children develop a sense of community and the world around them. Celebrating a diverse range of cultural celebrations and events in different faiths led to an inclusive learning environment. As a result of these children and families felt included.

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.

2.2 Children Experience High Quality Facilities

Children were welcomed into a comfortable, homely and inviting setting. The play areas benefitted from natural light and ventilation. The playroom was furnished with good quality furniture suitable for children's developmental age and stage. Homely touches, decoration and child-led displays helped children to feel welcomed and included. Staff worked hard to ensure their environment was inclusive for a diverse range of families and had carried out work in relation to United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC). One parent told us, "My child also takes great interest in the various cultural and religious occasions their setting have been celebrating". Links to stories and songs in different languages were shared in the nursery cloakroom for families to access. Families were invited to write their child's name in their language, so children were supported to recognise these within the cloakroom area. This gave a strong message to children and families that they mattered.

Health and wellbeing was promoted through outdoor play experiences. Children had lots of opportunity to freely move around indoors and outdoors through the free flow approach to the garden for the full nursery session. The availability of open-ended resources enabled children to engage their imaginations, develop life skills and spark curiosity. As a result, children were motivated, engaged, confident and having fun in the environment. The service could consider ways to ensure the indoor play spaces were kept warm whilst the door to outdoors remained open. This would ensure children continue to have an environment that meets children's wellbeing needs and wishes.

Staff understood the importance of rest for children's overall development and had created a quiet room within the indoor environment. Sleeping mats were available at children's request and staff followed best practice guidance in relation to safer sleeping. The service could consider the resources on offer in the quiet room to ensure it remains a place that is intended for quieter play that supported rest, relaxation and sleep.

There was ample space in the setting for children's care, play and learning needs. On occasions the space presented an issue for staff deployment and due to this the cloakroom had to be closed on a number of occasions throughout the day. Some self-evaluation was needed around how children could independently access their coats and boots when access to the cloakroom was restricted. This would ensure children had

access to their belongings, so they are more easily encouraged to wear appropriate clothing for outdoor play throughout the day.

Children benefitted from a safe and well-maintained setting with a range of measures in place to ensure children's safety. Accidents and incidents were recorded and shared with families. These were audited to identify any recurrent themes which helped keep children safe. Infection and prevention control supported the safety of the children through practices such as good hand hygiene. Staff could now consider the deployment of staff to offer supervised hand washing at key points throughout the day. This would further support children's health and wellbeing. Staff worked well together to identify and remove risks to children within the setting both indoors and outdoors. We highlighted that some further consideration around the safety of the nursery gate and some fencing areas in the garden could be re-visited to help better secure the spaces used by children. General risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed, as a result children in the setting were safe.

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.

3.1 Quality Assurance and Improvement are well led

The manager and staff are committed to providing positive outcomes for children. Vision, values and aims are visible to families within the parents' space and are shared with new families and staff members. The service had a clear vision of playing, learning and growing together and this was evident through the strong connections and opportunities they had developed with families. This resulted in a strong ethos across the team and service, and one parent told us, "I feel free to speak to any staff member about any concerns I have".

There was a culture of continuous improvement with strong supportive leadership. Staff had leadership roles in delegated areas where they took responsibility for developments. Staff were given development time at least once a week where they took turns to share, reflect and lead developments in the service. We observed a motivated and enthusiastic staff team using reflection to positively inform their practice. Change was welcomed within the staff team and self-evaluation was at the centre of their approach. Regular training opportunities and reading of best practice guidance allowed staff to reflect on and develop practice. Staff could now consider a more formal approach to recording the impact of any training and how it can develop practice in the service.

The service used a variety of methods to engage families in their auditing, evaluations and improvement planning. One parent told us, "There's a question of the month that parents are invited to provide answers/information to", another said "We are encouraged to submit feedback and ideas". Initiatives were set up to encourage parental feedback to help develop the service. This meant that families were encouraged to form a genuine partnership and to be involved in improving the service.

Clear, robust self-evaluation, as well as a moderation cycle were enabling the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children and families' particular needs and choices. Improvement plans had been developed with feedback from staff and families taken into consideration. Improvement plans had been developed into a family friendly version and displayed for parents to make sure that everyone knew of their improvement journey. It was clear through discussions with the team, observations of practice and review of various documentation that a number of improvements had been made to the service.

Developments to the planning approach ensured there was more regular responsive planning supporting the children's current interests. Self-evaluation had been effectively used, and they knew about measuring the impact of changes. This was particularly evident in the development of the lunchtime experiences. Real consideration had been taken to planning improvements and learning from the implementation of changes. As a result, experiences for children had been improved.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

4.3 Staff Deployment

The service was appropriately staffed at all times. The team was made up of skilled staff, who had different knowledge, skills and experiences. Staffs individuality was really valued. When we asked families what the most positive aspects of your child's experiences in the service are, some said, "Friendly, inviting staff", "She has a strong bond as well with some of the teachers" and "They have positive relationships with both peers and staff". On the day of inspection there was a number of changes due to staff absences; however, staff worked very hard together to try and ensure they were meeting the needs of children. Staff absences and deployment challenges sometimes resulted in missed opportunities to engage children and provide further learning support, as staff were busy with routine tasks. We discussed this with some of the team, including the team manager, and by our second day visit staff deployment had improved. We observed this had improved on day two of our inspection where we observed staff meaningfully engaged with children in the indoor environment. As a result of better staff deployment children's play and learning opportunities were enriched from the supportive interactions from staff.

There was a high number of children with additional support needs and staff worked well together to ensure their safety. Due to the high demands of the room this meant there was not always enough adult support where it was needed, and this left some areas of the playrooms unsupervised and unsupported. The service had already identified the need for additional staffing to ensure safety and supervision. One parent commented, "More support in regard to children that require additional support. And by this, I mean more support for the staff not from the staff". The service had recently recruited to two posts which would start once recruitment checks were complete. The recruitment of further staffing will help to better support the needs of the nursery and staff deployment in the service. Some further self-evaluation around staff deployment indoors is needed to ensure all areas of the nursery are supervised to keep children safe.

Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensure positive transitions and communication with families. Staff and keyworkers were available to chat and exchange information with parents. Parents valued this and were complementary about the staff. One parent told us, "The nursery staff are lovely, welcoming and helpful. I feel happy knowing that my son is at nursery with them". We saw staff sharing information about children during the day and working together to support individual children. Staff were responsive to meeting the needs of children and worked hard to create a positive ethos.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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