

Whitdale Early Years Centre (Nursery) Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 March 2025

Service provided by:
West Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002601

Service no:
CS2003016152

About the service

Whitdale Early Years Centre (Nursery) is registered to provide a day care service to a maximum of 100 children, aged from two years to primary school entry, of whom no more than 10 children are aged two.

The service is provided by West Lothian Council and operates from Whitdale Primary School. There is one main playroom with several other spaces available, including a lunchroom and two garden areas. The service is located in Whitburn, Bathgate close to local shops and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 11 March 2025 between 10:00 and 17:00 and Wednesday 12 March 2025 between 09:00 and 16:00. The inspection was carried out by one inspector 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 online feedback from 10 parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Staff and management invested in building relationships with children and families, supporting overall wellbeing.

Children were very well supported through highly effective use of personal planning. This information was effectively used to promote consistency and continuity of care.

Support plans were highly effective and showed that children were making good progress.

The headteacher highly valued early years and invested greatly in strengthening one community across nursery and primary.

Children were having fun as they experienced a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality play, learning and development opportunities.

Strong leadership supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their ability to support children and families to reach their full potential.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff were kind and caring, valuing children's rights. This meant that children were nurtured throughout their daily experience. As a result, all children were settled and happy. Staff and management invested in building relationships with children and families, supporting overall wellbeing. A parent told us, "Staff are all extremely friendly, welcoming and care a lot about my child. I feel safe leaving them knowing they are looked after."

Where children required support with personal care, interactions throughout were respectful. This helped children to feel valued and to develop self-worth and confidence. For example, a staff member asked if they could help a child to wipe their nose. The staff member guided the child to a mirror so that they could see their own face, supporting them to learn this skill.

Children's overall wellbeing was very well supported through highly effective use of personal planning, taking account of the wellbeing indicators. Children and families were central to this process. This ensured that staff were well informed about children and families' needs, wishes and preferences. This information was effectively used to promote consistency and continuity of care. Support plans were highly effective and showed that children were making good progress. Staff were confident to work in partnership with a range of professionals to support children's needs. This ensured that outcomes for individual children improved to support them to reach their full potential. Staff confidently spoke about their role in contributing to children's planning meetings. As a result, children who needed additional support were well supported. West Lothian Council Early Years team and the management of service had invested time and support to improve this process to enhance outcomes for children.

Well considered transitions through home visits meant that positive relationships were established before children started the service. This opportunity helped staff to learn about the child and their family to know how to support. This was complimented by a tailored transition to support individual needs as children moved onto school.

Management of medication was very good. Almost all staff had been trained to administer lifesaving medication which resulted in a child being well supported to keep them healthy. Management audited medication procedures to ensure that information was updated to reflect any changes to children's health needs or medication requirements.

Meals and snacks were nutritious, and children could choose the alternative option that was provided every day. As a result, children ate well and enjoyed the sociable lunch time experience. Staff sat with children and talked with them about their families and home life. This helped them to know that they mattered. Similarly, children were kept safe while eating because staff provided support and close supervision. Independence skills were promoted through self-service and clearing away dishes and cutlery. Some children asked for afternoon snack because they were hungry. Moving forward, the timing of afternoon snack could be reviewed to ensure that it is consistently offered at a suitable time before children become hungry. This would reduce the risk of quieter children being hungry who may not ask for food.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun as they experienced a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality play, learning and development opportunities. Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. This resulted in them being meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning.

Consultative planning was on a journey of improvement with more emphasis on planned assessment focuses to support development and learning. Management prioritised supporting staff to develop their practice to effectively evaluate the impact and outcome of planned experiences. This would enable them to plan experiences, with more focus on supporting children's specific next steps to further enhance progression in learning. It would also support their development in recording significant learning and progression in children's individual learning journals. Staff were given protected blocks of time to record children's learning and review children's support plans. This was helping them as they developed their skills of recording children's learning and achievements.

An interactive learning wall showed the quality of learning experiences which linked to planning. Staff and children contributed by adding artwork and their own photographs, which they printed with instant print cameras, to the wall.

There was a focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy, and maths skills. Staff told us about a recent focus to support children to develop listening and attention skills. They shared their understanding of the importance of children developing these skills to have a good foundation to support learning. An assessment focus was learning about size and length to support maths skills. Children were supported through resources, such as measuring tapes, and planned activities. Staff were heard engaging with children discussing and comparing different sizes and lengths of play materials.

Outdoor play was valued as an important part of children's learning and development. Children benefited from continuous free flow opportunities to engage in outdoor play. Similarly, play and learning was enhanced through strong connections to the local community. For example, intergenerational learning with the residents in the local care home. This included shared learning through arts and crafts and wellbeing activities such as relaxation and breathing techniques. Exciting plans were in place for children to become involved in caring for the community allotment, working in partnership with the primary school. Parents appreciated that their children connected well with the community. One parent said, "My child likes going on a bear hunt in the nearby wooded area."

Staff recognised the importance of engaging families in understanding how to support learning in the child's home environment. Families were invited to share children's achievements from home through the online App which were then shared and celebrated in the setting. Children engaged well and actively encouraged their parents to share their achievements with the nursery. Staff regularly shared children's daily experiences with families, through the online App, various displays, and through the informative monthly newsletter. Similarly, there were several opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the setting. For example, monthly stay and play sessions. As a result, parents felt involved and included in their child's learning. One parent told us, "We like to go to stay and play sessions."

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was comfortable and furnished to a high standard, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. The welcoming entrance hallway clearly displayed helpful information for families. Which informed them about experiences that children were getting, and about forthcoming events. This gave a strong message to children and families that they were valued and mattered to the staff team.

Several improvements had been made to the setting since the last inspection. For example, the environment was well maintained, and 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.

Children were kept safe and protected when attending the service. The setting was safe and secure, potential safety issues had been carefully considered and measures put in place to remove hazards. For example, the outdoor classroom area was closed during the inspection as workers were conducting essential repairs to ensure that the area was safe. Children were supported to develop an understanding of risk and how to keep themselves safe. SIMOA the elephant mascot supported them with this, and the toy elephant went out into the community with children to help them to assess risks. Staff used the, Keeping children safe: Look, Think, Act campaign (Care Inspectorate, 2021) to raise awareness of children's safety in the service and at home with children and families.

Play spaces enabled free movement, encouraging children's choice, independence and self-led play and learning. Areas reflected children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate resources and materials to support learning. For example, herbs and spices, and natural resources used in the playdough area to provoke creativity and imagination. Various comfortable areas gave children opportunities to rest and relax and enabled them to set their own pace of day. Break out rooms were available for children to have a quiet space if they were unsettled or needed a quieter space. Recent training had supported staff to develop their understanding about the important role that environments contribute to children's play and learning. As a result, positive changes had been made to several play spaces to enhance learning experiences. This included enriched literacy and numeracy opportunities being provided, mostly indoors. Moving forward, increased focus on considering where gaps may still exist and clear expectations around sustained standards will further enhance learning opportunities. For example, consistent resetting of play spaces for the afternoon session.

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 improvement are led well

Management promoted a shared vision which reflected the aspirations of children, families, partners, and the wider community through 'The Whitdale Way'.

They created conditions where all people could feel confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for the process. A parent told us, "We got to help choose the nursery's values and what is important to us all."

The headteacher highly valued early years and invested greatly in strengthening one community across nursery and primary. This improvement had positively impacted on relationships and partnership working to improve continuous learning, particularly when children were transitioning onto primary school. The open-door ethos benefited children and families. Siblings could visit each other in the neighbouring setting when they were feeling unsettled.

A well-planned quality assurance and self-evaluation process was in place. There had been a clear plan to spend time laying foundations for sustainability. Strong leadership supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their ability to support children and families to reach their full potential. Improvement plan priorities and self-evaluation enabled the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children's and families' particular needs and choices. As a result, several improvements had positively impacted on outcomes for children. Some examples included staff level of engagement to support children's learning with a focus on developing interests and strengthened connections through family learning with parents sharing children's achievements from home. As a result, there was an embedded ethos of continuous improvement.

Management were in a strong position to embark on future improvement plans. These included developing distributed leadership in self-evaluation, which will include peer monitoring opportunities for staff. Similarly, plans were in place to continue to develop consultative planning. This was with a view to enhance staff knowledge when assessing children's learning through effective use of available tracker tools.

Moving forward, management and staff should continue to embed their very good practice in leading quality assurance and improvement well.

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

Deployment and levels of staff were effective ensuring high-quality outcomes for children. Management recognised the importance to consider the needs of children when planning staffing levels. Devolved funding was distributed to provide an additional Early Years Officer. As a result, the strengthened staff team enhanced outcomes for children.

The staff team worked well together to promote continuity of care across the day to ensure positive transitions and communication with families. They were proactive in recognising and remedying gaps in staffing levels and communicated very well with their colleagues. For example, confidently asking colleagues for help to ensure that children were effectively supervised to keep them safe. Arrangements were in place to support continuity of care, particularly for children who needed extra help. Similarly, key workers knew children's needs well.

This meant that children received consistent care and support by familiar adults, helping them to feel confident and secure. A parent told us, "I feel the staff are approachable, they all seem to really care about the children and what is best for them."

Staff had a very good understanding of child development, relevant theory, and practice, and skilfully used this to support high quality play and learning experiences. They were aspirational and had an enabling attitude which supported children to achieve their potential. They visited other services to experience areas of good practice. Staff spoke positively about these opportunities and confidently told us about improvements they had made because of knowledge gained from the visits. For example, introducing emotional check in for children to enable staff to know how children are feeling and to provide appropriate support. Similarly, improvement was made to the sensory area to support children's emotional wellbeing and regulation.

Staff were committed to continuing their professional development to improve practice with a view to enhance outcomes for children. Recent training opportunities included staff learning about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and the impact that this can have on children's wellbeing and resilience. This had resulted in staff who were focussed on providing nurturing approaches to secure children's wellbeing.

Delegated leadership roles empowered staff team members to acquire new skills and make decisions. Staff worked in smaller groups to lead on developing learning opportunities for children. For example, some staff led on developing technology opportunities for children, while others led on an improving the young workforce project. Plans were in place to introduce Forest Schools Experiences for children when the delegated staff member completes this training.

There was a focussed investment in supporting the wellbeing of staff. Staff told us that they felt well supported. One staff member said, "Achievements are celebrated and we have also had lots of support from the central team."

Moving forward, staff could continue to consider the length of time that they are deployed in an area. This should support the ongoing development and sustainability of consistent standards and expectations for specific learning areas.

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

For all children to make progress at a pace that is right for them, the provider should ensure observations and tracking of individuals are focused clearly on strengths, significant learning and specific next steps. This should then inform responsive planning. Observations should be regular so that there is ongoing understanding of the stage that each child is at in their play and learning.

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

'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me'. (HSCS)

This area for improvement was made on 5 December 2023.

Action taken since then

Management had invested time, training opportunities, and ongoing support to build foundations to enhance staff skills when observing and tracking individual children's learning. Good progress had been made, and support is ongoing.

As a result, staff had a good understanding of the stage that each child was at in their play and learning. Improvements in staff skills to observe and track individual children with focus on strengths, significant learning and specific next steps continues to progress.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To protect children's health, wellbeing and safety needs, the provider should ensure children are cared for in a safe and hygienic environment. This should include but not be limited to:

- Ensuring effective use of PPE.
- Carrying out appropriate maintenance and repairs within the children's toilet including identifying the cause of the malodorous smell.
- Ensuring children and staff carry out regular handwashing at key times throughout the session.

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

'My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells,' (HSCS 5.18)

and

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment'. (HSCS 5.24)

This area for improvement was made on 5 December 2023.

Action taken since then

Improvements had been made to ensure that children were cared for in a safe and hygienic environment. Staff were using protective clothing (PPE) appropriately. Children and staff carried out regular handwashing at key times throughout the session.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure the quality of children's experiences are improved, the provider should implement robust quality assurance processes, including self-evaluation, covering key areas of practice. This should include, but not be limited to, monitoring children's personal plans, children's play and learning experiences, monitoring of staff practice, and evaluating and improving the nursery as a whole.

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'. (HSCS 4.19)

This area for improvement was made on 5 December 2023.

Action taken since then

Robust quality assurance processes, including self-evaluation, covering key areas of practice were in place. These processes had resulted in significant progress being made in several areas. Some examples include; improving the quality of children's personal plans, play and learning, staff confidence, practice, and wellbeing, and management of medication procedures.

This area for improvement has 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.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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