

Smiley Stars Nursery - Pollokshaws Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 April 2025

Service provided by:
Marfern Limited

Service provider number:
SP2016012754

Service no:
CS2016348634

About the service

Smiley Stars Nursery Pollokshaws provides early learning and childcare to a maximum of 60 children from birth to not yet attending primary school in the following categories:

- 20 children, zero to under two years;
- 15 children, two years to under three years;
- 25 children, three years to not yet attending primary school.

The provider Marfern Limited, operates three other services within the city of Glasgow.

The service operates Monday to Friday, 08:00 to 18:00, all year round. The service is based within a detached property in the Pollokshaws area of Glasgow. There are four main playrooms and an enclosed garden to the rear of the property.

The service is close to other schools, nurseries, parks, shops and transport links.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 9 and 10 April 2025. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. There were 39 children present on both days of our inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with 15 people using the service
- received electronic feedback from 16 families whose children attended the service
- received electronic feedback from eight staff who worked in the service
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

Key messages

- Children were happy and enjoyed participating in interesting experiences indoors and outdoors.
- The management team should continue to work with and support staff in developing their skills in observation and assessment.
- The provider was committed to the continuous improvement and refurbishment of the environment and resources.
- The provider and management team should continue to support unqualified staff to achieve childcare qualifications.

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?	4 - 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 this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff. Staff knew children well and cared for them sensitively in line with their care needs. For example, when children arrived at the setting staff took time to welcome them with a smile and gentle conversation. This supported children's wellbeing.

Staff had developed strong relationships with families. Parents were invited into the building and play spaces at the start and end of the sessions. Staff spent quality time chatting with parents about their children's day and individual needs. The service valued the importance of involving parents in the service. We saw evidence that parents had been invited to participate in stay and play sessions and be part of a parent's forum group. Most parents provided positive feedback about the relationships they had with staff and the benefits this brought to their children, one parent was less positive.

The service had systems in place to store and administer medication safely. The medication policy and procedures were in line with best practice guidance. Overall medication was stored safely and administered safely. Staff should be mindful to check medication records completed by parents to ensure they match the prescribed instructions.

Every child had a personal plan which clearly recorded their needs, likes, dislikes and changes to their routines. Children's information stored in line with GDPR using online password protected apps. Staff have access to support caring for children. Personal plans were developed in partnership with parents. Personal plans were reviewed and updated regularly on the app, and contained the key information that staff needed, to respond sensitively, quickly and compassionately to changes in a child's life. This meant children benefited from good personal planning process that supported their wellbeing. We received mixed responses from parents who commented about their involvement in reviewing and informing their child's personal plan told us:

"I am updated with any changes to her plan, but staff are quick to support any changes I request and implement them." and "Haven't seen my child's plan other than when he moved into the room and one parents evening which was almost a year ago."

The manager and staff team should ensure that they monitor how parents are engaging in reviewing and updating plans. They should ensure that parents are familiar with the service's App. This will ensure that all parents feel valued and involved in their child's care at the setting.

We observed the mealtime experience for children across all playrooms. Overall, the lunchtime experience for children had improved since our last inspection, although we observed some missed opportunities where children could have been better supported. We noted that the provider had recently changed from providing home cooked meals to using a catering service. Staff told us that overall, the quality and quantity of the foods provided were of a high quality. On the second day of our inspection we noted that there was not enough food provided for all children. Staff responded to this by providing additional sandwiches to children.

We asked the provider to consult with the catering supplier to ensure that there is always enough food for children at mealtimes. The provider agreed to do this.

Staff were aware of children's allergies and food intolerances and responded to and respected these. Overall parents were happy with the foods provided some of their comments included:

"I am happy with the meal plan provided by the nursery for my child. She has no special dietary requirements and enjoys 95% of the food provided, often asking for more as she enjoys her meal."

"I have been disappointed by the removal of the cook/kitchen, but the meals served do generally seem to be healthy."

"Good, varied menu. My child eats everything, so I have no issues."

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun and engaged in a variety of experiences. They had opportunities to lead their own play and learning, which impacted positively on their development and wellbeing. Staff joined in with play and were responsive to children's interests.

Children chose to spend a lot of time playing outdoors which was facilitated well by staff who were motivated and excited to support the children. Children were joining in risky and challenging play when using, loose parts, apparatus, balance beams and climbing up hills. This supported them to develop their physical skills and movement.

Children had access to a range of resources, which promoted their curiosity, imagination and problem-solving skills. Resources were set out attractively to invite children to learn. This included play dough, block play, creative materials. The play spaces had been developed by staff after recent training to be more homely, support curiosity, wonder, wellbeing and children's understanding of their emotions.

Play opportunities supported children's development of literacy and numeracy skills. For example, children were regularly invited to read stories and sing songs. This was particularly evident in the under three rooms where children enjoyed lots of stories, rhymes and songs. Parents who provided feedback were happy with the types of experiences and learning opportunities their child had at the service. Some of their comments included:

"My child can be involved in a range of opportunities and fun experiences to meet their individual needs and support their development."

"My child has had opportunities to be involved in basic baking and science activities and allowed to read books and make their own decisions on play activities."

"The daily update (including photos) always shows a range of activities undertaken each day. My child normally comes home animated and happy from nursery. Activities include reading, crafts, exploration, free time, outdoors play, short field trips (park, library, local supermarket)."

Staff recorded observations of children's learning and progress on the service's App. Some observation highlighted key skills and significant learning while others were descriptive in nature and lacked some depth and analysis. Planned next steps were at times generic and linked to the activity rather than the development of the child. We noted that staff were at varying stages of confidence when recording observations. We saw that some journals had gaps in frequency of observations shared. A more robust approach to auditing children's learning journals and continuous staff training would support this to develop and improve.

Management should continue to work with staff on their approach to play and learning. Supporting staff to respond to children in the moment, facilitating support and challenge will support staff to gather a clear picture of children's progress over time and support their overall development.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The providers were committed to continually investing and improving the environment. We could see where improvements had been made to increase and improve play spaces for children. As a result, children had more space to play and learn in an environment that was safe and well maintained.

The setting was comfortable, furnished to a high standard, welcoming with plenty of light and ventilation through open doors and windows. Children had lots of space for their needs. This sent a message to children that they matter.

Improvements to the outdoor play spaces meant that children were enjoying play outdoors every day, where they benefitted from fresh air and exercise. Parents were happy to see their children playing and learning outdoors. Some of their feedback comments included:

"I often find the class outside in the garden at pickup, the nursery undertook work in the year to put a roof over the garden making it accessible all year round."

"The garden has recently been completed to allow more time outside and covered so it doesn't matter if it rains."

"In the garden most days however, don't often do trips out of the nursery."

"Seems like good use of new garden space. It would be nice to see better use of local area and parks too as previously commented. Also, there are now bikes which I really welcome, again good to see some use of these on a regular basis for all children."

Indoor and outdoor play spaces were sensitively structured to take account of children's interests, needs, and stages of development. For example, outdoors younger children enjoyed climbing on loose part and climbing apparatus. Staff had recorded they were interested in climbing and were supporting their physical development. This meant children benefited from a resources environment that supported their stages of development and extended their learning.

The service had a clear infection prevention and control policy and implemented several procedures to reduce the spread of infection. For example, staff practiced good handwashing, playrooms and resources were clean, and cleaning staff were on hand to ensure the building was clean for children. In contrast to this good practice, we noted some improvements could be made in other areas to prevent the spread of infection. This included cross contamination between clean and dirty food containers at lunch times and laundry management. On the second day of inspection the staff and management had taken action to improve this.

Children, families and visitors entered the nursery through a secure entry buzzer system. A register was used to account for children, staff and visitors in the building. Staff communicated well with each other as children left the nursery with their adult and updated the electronic register accordingly. This meant children were being accounted for and kept safe within the service. Two parents who provided feedback highlighted concerns around the safety of garden gates. As part of our focus about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning we checked the perimeter fences and garden gates. We noted that the tension in the gates was tight and as a result gates did not always latch securely. We also noted potential hazards around the perimeter fencing of the garden where objects were placed which could potentially assist children to climb over. We highlighted these concerns to the provider who immediately instructed tradesmen to release gate tension and address the area along the perimeter wall. These potential hazards were both addressed before the end of our inspection visits.

We looked at how the provider and management team identified risks within the setting. We found that risk assessments were brief and generic to the provider group. As a result, they did not contain important identified hazards or control measures to support children's safety. We discussed this with the provider who agreed to involve staff in the development of robust risk assessments which would be specific to the setting.

CCTV cameras were installed in all playrooms and corridors and monitored in the manager's office. The use of CCTV was lawful, fair, and proportionate. A CCTV policy was in place and shared with all staff and families. This meant CCTV was used to support safe, effective, and compassionate care for children.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The management team engaged with the inspection process well, and were keen to take forward areas suggested for improvement. Positive working relationships between the provider, management and staff contributed to a shared vision for the service. All staff spoke positively about their relationship with the management team. They felt their views and ideas were welcomed by the manager, and their wellbeing supported. One member of staff told us "The management team are mental-health trained, and have the "open door" policy, meaning that the office door is always open. This makes me feel comfortable, knowing that I can always talk to my manager if I need help with anything. My manager also frequently reminds us of this. Furthermore, my manager has introduced a well-being check up, and has encouraged us to check up on each other, especially on those we do not frequently talk to. This has allowed the staff to bond more, by encouraging and helping each other."

The manager had good working relationships and support from other managers within the company. They met regularly in person and online to share ideas and support each other. Management meetings allowed for the managers to come together and look at new guidance and plan future developments across the services. This shared context created a foundation for empathy and practical advice.

The service had improved how it communicated and involved families in the service. We saw tools such as suggestion boxes, surveys, you said we did walls and stay and play sessions were used to involve and consult with families.

We observed existing and prospective parents coming into the service. We could see how they were warmly welcomed. Staff spend quality time with them listening to their views and wishes about children's and their specific care needs. Gathering people's views ensured staff were working in partnership with families to meet their wishes and show how they valued their contributions. The manager should continue to engage with parents to reintroduce the parents forum group.

Quality assurance systems in place included regular monitoring of different aspects of practice, such as children's personal plans, learning journals, staff performance, medication and accidents. Where areas for improvement were identified, this was shared with staff and plans put in place for improvement. These processes highlighted the service's commitment to self evaluation and improvement.

The manager had begun to involve staff in self evaluation and reflection of their practice. We could see that staff were more confident in doing this. Staff told us that they reflected on their practice through room observations, meetings with their manager and through training. Staff were now more confident in recognising areas for improvement and implementing strategies to improve outcomes and experiences for children.

All 17 families who provided feedback strongly agreed or agreed that they were happy with the service provided. Some of their comments included:

"They seem to have great relationships with the staff. The manager is constantly improving the nursery."

"Our overall experience since putting our son into Smiley Stars 3 months ago has been overwhelmingly positive."

"Made big improvements with building in last year."

"The staff are always upbeat, take time to chat at start and end of day to discuss how our son has been, what they've been doing, new developments etc. Each and every staff member knows our son and is able to comment on his progress (even if they are not in his room). We feel very comfortable leaving our son with the team knowing that they seem to genuinely care about his welfare and educational needs."

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff were kind, caring and respectful of children and families. They were happy at their work and told us that they supported one another well and had good working relationships with each other. Staff were motivated to continue to develop their own skills and knowledge through a programme of continuous training. Parents who provided feedback commented very positively about the staff team and the relationships they had with them and their children. Some of their comments included:

"The staff throughout the nursery recognise me and my children when doing pick up and drop off. They know what is going on and can give personalised updates on my child's day."

"Recently moved room so don't know them as well yet but baby room staff were fantastic. They always do thorough handover at end of the day and know my child's needs/wants well. Update on accidents/any deviation from the norm on the Family app through the day. My child tells me the staff are her friends and looks forward to going into nursery."

"The staff are very friendly ask for status of my child on drop off and provide good updates on collection. They seem very caring and competent."

There was a mix of staff's skills and knowledge across the playrooms. Some staff had been employed with the service for an extensive period, while others had recently joined. Staff were deployed across the service in line with their skills and experience. New staff were supported with an induction. We sampled recruitment files of newly appointed staff and found that appropriate systems and checks were in place to ensure staff were safely recruited.

At our last inspection we were concerned about the amount of unqualified and untrained staff working in the setting at any one time. We found that although there was still a high number of unqualified staff employed in the setting, they were all undertaking qualifications, engaging in training and being supported by skilled and experienced staff. As a result staff employed as assistants demonstrated confidence, skills and knowledge to support children. The provider shared with us their intention to ensure that all staff hold suitable childcare qualifications and continuously engage in relevant training opportunities.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 1 February 2025, the provider must ensure that staff are deployed in a way that ensures children's needs are met. To do this, the provider must at a minimum:

- a) ensure that children are closely supervised when eating
- b) ensure children are supported by skilled staff who understand how to meet their needs
- c) provide learning for staff on child development

d) address the balance of qualified and unqualified workers.

This requirement was made on 16 October 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

Overall supervision of children at meal times had improved. We highlighted occasions where staff became task orientated and therefore supervision of children was not as robust.

Staff demonstrated a better understanding of their roles and the theory and practice of child development. A variety of training opportunities which staff had engaged in had impacted positively on outcomes for children.

The service employed a high number of unqualified staff. We noted that this had reduced since our last inspection. Unqualified staff had engaged in training relevant to their roles and demonstrated skills and confidence. The provider has provided reassurance that unqualified staff will be supported to gain qualifications.

We have concluded that this requirement has been met.

Met - within timescales

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To support children's development and learning, the provider should ensure staff access training about how children learn and apply it in practice. This should include but is not limited to, learning about observing and assessing children's learning.

This area for improvement was made on 16 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff demonstrated a better understanding of their roles and the theory and practice of child development. A variety of training opportunities which staff had engaged in had impacted positively on outcomes for children. We have therefore concluded that this area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure that children and families have a voice in all matters that effect them, the provider should review and respond to feedback received.

This area for improvement was made on 16 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Families had opportunities to be involved in the service. A variety of tools were being used to engage families and seek feedback. A what you said and what we did display demonstrated how the service responded to families ideas and suggestions. We have therefore concluded that this area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's wellbeing and parent's confidence in the service the provider should ensure that children receive consistent care and support. This should include but is not limited to, keeping parents informed of any staff changes.

This area for improvement was made on 16 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff photographs were displayed outside rooms informing parents of who was working in their child's room. In addition to this we saw evidence on the service's App that staff information was shared. We have therefore concluded that 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.

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	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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