

Noblehill Nursery Day Care of Children

Noblehill Primary School
233 Annan Road
Dumfries
DG1 3HB

Telephone: 01387 252 167

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 May 2025

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003501

Service no:
CS2003015533

About the service

Noblehill Nursery is a daycare of children's service and provides full day, part time and flexible session for families and operates between 8:00 and 18:00 on a term time basis.

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 53 children, not yet attending primary school, at any one time. No more than 53 are aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school full time.

Noblehill nursery is a purpose built service that is attached to Noblehill Primary School. The service is located in the town of Dumfries, in the council area of Dumfries and Galloway. It is close to shops, parks and local amenities. The service comprises of a spacious playroom, cloakroom, children's toilets and an extensive outdoor play area.

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.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 May and 27 May 2025 between 9:45 and 16:00. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. Forty three children attended the service on the first day of inspection and forty four children attended on the second day. 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 and five of their families
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed and sampled documents
- obtained feedback from families.

Key messages

- Children were happy, safe, secure and confident
- They were having fun, leading their own play and learning
- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing
- Staff knew children well and met their individual needs
- The service was well designed to support children's play
- The service was led well
- The skilled team supported children's care, play and learning
- Feedback from families was positive.

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

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|--|---------------|
| 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 evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support.

Children experienced high quality nurture, care and support from staff who knew them very well. It was evident through observations and documentation that nurture principles were embedded in practice. Staff interacted with children in a meaningful way. For example, they consistently positioned themselves at children's level and used positive body language and calm voices when interacting with children. This caring and nurturing approach meant that children felt safe, secure, and confident.

Staff had formed positive and trusting relationships with children. They were responsive towards children and offered reassurance and comfort when they needed emotional support. A key worker system was in place and this helped ensure children's individual needs were well known and supported.

Children's rights were embedded in practice. Staff consistently spoke with children in a respectful manner and valued their views and right to play. They sat with children and listened to their voices as they made choices and decisions about their play. Staff promoted children's independence and asked them for permission to help, for example, when putting their jackets on. Staff encouraged and reminded children to respect other children's privacy, particularly when using the toilets. This meant that children's rights were promoted.

A tailored transition plan was in place to support children starting school. Each child's needs were considered, to determine what level of support was required prior to starting school. For children who needed extra support, external services, school staff and families were involved in decision making about the child's future support needs. Transition to school plans included regular visits to the school, eating lunch in the dining hall and receiving visits from primary 6 and 7 children who became buddies. This helped ensure children made a smooth transition to school.

Personal plans reflected children's health, safety and wellbeing needs. Wellbeing indicators were used to identify children's support needs, and staff were skilled in using the information to ensure children were consistently supported. All staff were aware of children's individual plans and they shared strategies effectively to support children's needs. Staff worked well to ensure children's targets were linked to their learning plans. As a result, staff had a shared understanding of children's individual care, play and learning needs. Families were meaningfully involved in developing and reviewing their children's plans with their key worker. This helped ensure continuity of care.

Mealtimes were relaxed, unhurried and sociable experiences. Children enjoyed the social experience and sat with their friends as they chatted about their day. They were encouraged to select their crockery and pour their water and milk. Staff served children their meals and they were offered several choices and extra food was available if they wanted more. Children cleared their plates and disposed of unwanted food when they had finished their lunch. We asked the service to continue to review the lunchtime experience to further support children's independence. A rolling snack routine meant that children could decide when they wanted to eat from a selection of healthy snacks. This helped promote children's independence, preferences and social skills.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun playing with their friends. They were leading their play learning and actively explored the indoor and outdoor environment. They were playing in the mud kitchen and water trough, 'making ice cream' and using real life sweeping brushes to clean the areas and fence. One child told us, 'We're working'.

Staff introduced clay to the children and they were excited about the new experience. Children enjoyed the sensory experience as they explored the clay with their hands. They squeezed and moulded, added water and watched it change texture. They made shapes and models which enabled them to express their thoughts and ideas. This helped develop children's creative skills.

There were plenty of opportunities for children to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills. Staff invited children to read together. Children listened intently to their favourite stories as they recalled and predicted events in the story. Card games provided fun opportunities for children to recognise and name shapes, patterns and numbers. Staff extended children's learning through effective questioning skills. As a result, children were progressing well.

Art and craft experiences were popular with children. They were offered a broad range of creative resources to help children explore their ideas through different kinds of painting experiences. For example, children painted together using cotton wool, water and fine brushes. They mixed the paints and watched the colours change as they experimented and shared the resources. This helped promote children's social and creative skills.

Children had opportunities to participate in their community. They visited the school eco park, went food shopping and visited the library. Regular visits to a supported living residence enabled children to make social connections with older adults. They took books, puzzles and games to play together and form intergenerational relationships. This helped children make strong connections to their community.

Staff planned children's learning through a responsive and child led approach. They observed children's interests and a balance of intentional learning helped ensure children's experiences reflected their interests and stages of development. Their progress was very well documented through the use of observations and developmental trackers which highlighted children's skills and identified gaps in learning. This meant that children were progressing very well.

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

2.2 children experience high quality facilities

The service had relocated to a purpose built nursery and had settled well in to the new setting. The design of the building provided free flow access from the play room to the outdoor play area, and children could access the cloakroom and toilets from outdoors. The service was warm, welcoming and attractive, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Security measures were in place to ensure children's safety. As a result, children were happy, safe and secure.

Staff and the management team worked well together to create a rich, stimulating and interesting learning environment with well-defined areas for children to play and learn. They considered the layout of the indoor and outdoor areas and carefully planned how to incorporate different aspects of play. Play areas were well resourced and provided children with fun and exciting opportunities to engage in their play and learning. They had access to a broad range of natural, real life and open-ended resources to spark their curiosity and interests.

The playroom was well designed and learning areas were accessible and well used. This meant that children could move around the playroom and choose where they wanted to play. For example, they played in the construction area and the home corner which enabled children to develop their imaginative skills. We asked the service to provide a cosy area for children to rest and relax and provide some soft furnishings including cushions and rugs.

The arts and craft area offered a range of experiences for children to explore different mediums. They had access to paints, pens and different art materials and tools such as real life objects, scissors, glue and collage. This provided children with choices and opportunities to develop their creative skills.

Children played outdoors. The popular outdoor play area provided children with opportunities for active and energetic play. They ran, jumped, skipped, climbed and used their balance to participate in risky play. The tunnels were fun as children climbed over them and crawled through them at speed. They used tyres and big blocks to build and develop their ideas and problem solve. The walk-in sand pit, water troughs and mud kitchen were positioned close to each other which enabled children to make connections to their learning.

The large cloakroom provided children with their own coat peg and shoebox and a separate rack for children's outdoor clothes and boots meant that children could change their clothes independently. Children's art work including self-portraits and their successes and achievements board was displayed in the cloakroom. This sent a message that children mattered and provided them with a sense of belonging.

How good is our leadership?**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service was an integral part of the school community. A shared vision and values created a positive ethos, where children were placed at the centre of the service. The vision was to provide an inclusive, nurturing, safe learning environment where children played, had fun, explored and became curious. We observed children having fun as they played and explored all aspects of the learning environment.

Staff promoted the services values which included care, respect, kindness and rights. They thanked and rewarded children when they were helpful and acknowledged children when they were kind and caring towards each other. This contributed to children's confidence and self-esteem.

The manager led the service well and had developed positive and trusting relationships with the team. They involved staff in reviewing children's learning through planning, tracking and monitoring children's progress over time. Staff told us they felt valued and supported by the manager and that their individual strengths and qualities were celebrated. As a result, children benefited from a motivated and dedicated team.

The head teacher and manager had developed a strong working relationship and worked well together to continuously improve the quality of the service. The manager met with the head teacher weekly to provide an update on self-evaluation processes and improvement planning. Priorities were identified and agreed with staff and there was clear expectations to work collaboratively with a range of services to help improve outcomes for children.

Relationships with families was very positive. The service recognised the importance of involving families in their children's play experiences. Families were encouraged to spend time in the service and participate in stay and play sessions and share their skills by leading activities. Families were encouraged to provide feedback and their views were implemented. The service continues to develop creative ways to seek the views of families and further develop strategies to support children's learning at home. This will help ensure families are meaningfully involved in their children's play and learning.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff knew children very well and had formed positive and respectful relationships with children in their care. They were kind, caring and nurturing towards children and they praised them when they helped other children or persevered in challenges. Children's achievements were celebrated and their emotional wellbeing was well supported. This helped build children's confidence and resilience.

The team was well established and staff worked well together to ensure children's individual needs were met. They communicated well and shared information about children daily. A shared understanding and collective responsibility meant that children who needed extra help received the tailored support they needed.

Staff were committed to providing children with high quality play and learning experiences. They were skilled and asked children open-ended questions in a conversational manner to extend their learning. They supported children to problem solve and use their thinking skills. As a result, children were developing their life skills.

Regular training opportunities were provided to enable staff to refresh or further develop their skills and knowledge. This helped ensure staff were up-to-date with current practice and enabled them to put their learning in to practice. There was a willingness to undertake leadership roles to help further develop staff's skills and knowledge within the service. This helped staff contribute to the development and quality of the service.

Staff morale was high. They told us that they learned from each other and that they recognised and acknowledged each other's skills, qualities and strengths. They supported each other and were flexible in their approach to ensure children's experiences throughout the day were positive.

Staff were deployed in different play areas which was rotated daily. We asked the service to consider deploying staff in areas for longer periods of time. This could enable staff to extend children's play and learning through ongoing observations that are carried out over an extended time.

Feedback from families was very positive. We spoke with several families and they told us that they had good relationships with their key workers and that children were happy and confident in the service. One family commented, ' I really love the nursery, I think the staff are all excellent and I am really happy with the care my child is receiving'.

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

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| 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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