

Old Station Nursery Day Care of Children

Melrose Station
Palma Place
Melrose
TD6 9PR

Telephone: 01896 823 892

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
31 July 2025

Service provided by:
Zara Hedley trading as Old Station
Nursery

Service provider number:
SP2009010548

Service no:
CS2009231888

About the service

Old Station Nursery is registered to provide a day care service to a maximum of 41 children at any one time between the ages of three months and 12 years, of whom no more than 15 may be under two years.

The service operates from a converted railway station building located close to the centre of Melrose. It currently comprises two adjoining playrooms for children aged 0-3 years. This layout is a recent change and the provider is aware that a variation must be submitted to reflect the reduction from three to two playrooms. This change will impact the number of children who can be cared for at any one time.

A small veranda type outdoor area is accessible directly from the playroom. A larger outdoor garden space is also available; however, it is currently not in use as it is not fit for purpose. The provider is aware of this and has plans to address it. The setting benefits from being close to local amenities, schools and green spaces, offering opportunities to enhance children's experiences within the wider community.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 30 July 2025 between 09:30 and 14:10. 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 the three children in attendance on day of inspection
- spoke with two families by telephone
- spoke with two staff, the manager and provider
- observed practice and accompanied the staff and children on a walk
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

As part of this inspection, we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how service supports 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 experienced warm, caring interactions with nurturing adults who knew them very well.
- Positive attachments were evident throughout the inspection visit, particularly during the walk in the community and the lunchtime routine, where interactions were relaxed, unhurried and respectful.
- Children were confident and happy and their voices were heard.
- Staff were responsive to their interests and provided choices throughout the day.
- The provider should carry out the planned work in the larger outdoor area, which had the potential to improve the quality and variety of outdoor experiences 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?	3 - Adequate
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 and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, respectful and individualised care from attentive staff who knew them well. During the visit, three children were present. This enabled staff to be highly responsive to each child's needs and emotional cues. Staff promoted children's wellbeing through calm, nurturing and sensitive interactions. They took time to listen, offer comfort and support and celebrate achievements, helping children feel secure, valued and confident. In their feedback to us, families described strong, trusting relationships with staff, with children talking positively about them and forming close relationships.

Staff demonstrated an understanding of the children and worked closely with families to support consistent and responsive care. For example, they had worked in partnership with a family to support a change in the home routine that had a positive impact on the child's health and wellbeing. Children's voices were consistently respected. Staff were observed asking children's permission before carrying out personal care routines, such as nappy changes and responded to their cues. This respectful approach promoted children's rights and contributed to trusting relationships.

Personal plans captured children's individual needs, routines and preferences. Staff used these effectively to guide care and ensure continuity between home and the setting. Where relevant, plans included information about allergies and medical needs. Although no children were currently receiving medication, systems were in place to manage this safely and effectively should it be required. Staff kept chronologies for each child to help identify patterns and support children's wellbeing over time. With reduced numbers of children attending recently, staff had engaged in more verbal discussions about children's experiences and circumstances, but had not always recorded significant events in their chronologies. Moving forward, staff should re-establish the routine of documenting key events consistently to ensure children's records remain accurate and meaningful.

During lunch, staff created a calm and nurturing environment. Children made choices about how their food was served and which cutlery they used. Staff sat with children, role modelling social behaviour and encouraging natural conversation. These interactions supported children's communication and sense of belonging. With the exception of breakfast, families provided all meals for their children. The manager was reflecting on how mealtime experiences could be further enhanced to promote more independence, autonomy and choice.

Children's sleep routines were relaxed and well supported. Staff followed children's individual preferences and created a calm, unhurried atmosphere to help them settle. They remained nearby and offered comfort until children were asleep. This approach supported emotional wellbeing and strengthened attachments between children and familiar staff.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children experienced play and learning that was child-led, engaging and reflective of their interests. Staff were responsive and tuned in to what mattered to children. For example, when a child had previously expressed a wish to make play dough, staff remembered this and planned the experience for later that day. This showed that staff listened carefully to children's ideas and used them meaningfully in their planning. Families told us they valued the range of experiences available.

Children went out for a walk at least once, and often twice, a day. These opportunities included paddling in the stream, riding bikes along the walkway and visiting play parks. Such experiences supported physical development, encouraged positive risk-taking and promoted creativity and connection to nature. We accompanied the children and staff on a walk through the local area. This included passing a stream and horses in nearby fields, and exploring nature along the way. Staff encouraged children to notice wildlife and changes in the environment, making effective use of opportunities for spontaneous learning. They chatted with children about what they saw and heard, encouraging curiosity and language development. The walk continued through the town, where staff used the opportunity to help children observe and talk about the hustle and bustle of daily life in the community. These outings provided rich, real-life learning experiences and helped children feel part of their local area.

During the walk, staff supported children to practice important road safety skills. They gave clear, calm instructions when crossing roads and reminded children about listening, looking and staying close to an adult. These everyday experiences helped children develop awareness of how to keep themselves safe.

Staff had an understanding of child development and confidently used responsive and flexible planning approaches. They extended children's learning in the moment, asking open-ended questions and following children's interests. For example, after making play dough, a child chose to wash the dishes. Staff sensitively allowed this to develop further and the child began washing some of the playroom resources, showing independence and care. Outdoors, a child took the lead in building a ramp using tyres and wooden planks. Staff supported them to safely assess the risks as they walked up and balanced on it, promoting resilience and confidence through physical challenge.

Children's learning and development was recorded using both paper and online journals. These were used to reflect children's progress, identify next steps and strengthen links with home. A recent issue with the internet had resulted in fewer updates to online journals. The provider assured us that the issue would be resolved shortly. In the meantime, staff had access to alternatives, such as using a mobile hotspot, and continued to capture learning through paper-based records.

A floorbook had previously been used to share group learning and promote home links. While this had not been updated recently due to changes in the group of children attending, staff planned to reintroduce it in a way that reflected the current children's interests and experiences.

How good is our setting?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was generally clean, tidy, and well maintained. Staff carried out daily cleaning and a cleaner attended weekly. This helped reduce the risk of infection and contributed to a comfortable and hygienic environment for children.

Children had access to two adjoining playrooms. As the setting was currently operating with small numbers, all children were able to move freely between both rooms. This supported independence and enabled children to make choices about where and how they played. The playrooms were appropriately furnished and resourced, although there was scope to further enhance quieter areas to support rest and relaxation.

A small garden space directly off the playroom provided some opportunities for fresh air and outdoor play. However, this space was limited in size and not fully suitable for more active physical play. Staff responded to this well by making very good use of the local community, ensuring children accessed local parks and green spaces daily.

A larger garden space was available but not in use at the time of the inspection due to maintenance issues. The area contained broken and worn-out toys and equipment, making it unsuitable and unsafe for children. In addition, the steps leading down to this area had uneven surfaces and were overgrown with weeds and bushes, posing a further safety risk. These issues restricted children's access to high quality outdoor play experiences. Following the inspection, the provider gave assurances that the damaged items would be removed during the following week. Clearing and making the steps safe would also be essential. This would allow staff to begin developing the space, although further planning and investment would be needed to ensure it supported rich and meaningful outdoor learning. An area for improvement was made at the last inspection relating to the ongoing maintenance and repair of the environment. This will remain in place to reflect the current issues within the main garden and the surrounding access. **(See Area for Improvement 1).**

Staff had worked hard to make the spaces and experiences suitable for children under the age of three. The mezzanine level was being used for storage following the reduction from three to two playrooms. Consideration should be given to storage solutions that would allow this area to be opened up to support children's play and learning.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children experience a quality environment, the provider should ensure that well-functioning arrangements for monitoring, maintenance and repair of the setting and resources are consistently implemented. This should include the replenishing and replacing of resources and addressing maintenance and repair issues within a timely manner.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.' (HSCS 5.22).

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Quality assurance and improvement processes were in place and contributed to positive outcomes for children. The manager had a clear understanding of their responsibilities and showed a strong commitment to continuous improvement. They had recently completed a Bachelor of Arts (BA) qualification in childhood practice, which further strengthened their knowledge and leadership capacity. Families recognised the visible role of the manager in leading improvements, making changes to the environment and ensuring good communication.

The manager had a visible and active presence in the playrooms each day. This helped ensure that they remained closely connected to children's experiences and able to oversee staff practice. Staff told us they felt well supported and valued the manager's regular involvement in play and routines. This hands-on approach contributed to a shared sense of purpose and helped to provide better standards of care, play and learning.

A range of quality assurance processes were in place. These included regular audits of personal plans, medication records and accidents. Staff appraisals supported ongoing professional development and helped identify training needs. The team used a private group chat to share current guidance and best practice, which helped keep everyone informed and reflective. The manager and staff team were open to feedback and demonstrated a willingness to learn and improve. We saw that changes had been made in response to previous inspection findings, including improved staff breaks and stronger staff deployment arrangements. This meant children were consistently well supervised and supported, whilst staff remained rested and able to engage positively in their care, play and learning.

Due to a recent reduction in the number of children attending the service, the manager recognised that families were not as actively involved as they had been in the past. They planned to re-engage families by encouraging contributions to the home-nursery link floor book. This was a positive step that had the potential to strengthen relationships and give families a greater sense of involvement in their children's learning.

The smaller group size was also seen by the team as an opportunity to focus on quality, build stronger individual relationships, and support staff development. The manager was aware, however, of the need to sustain this momentum in the event of the setting becoming busier. Continued focus on quality assurance processes will help ensure that children continue to experience high-quality care, play and learning as and when numbers increase.

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.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

At this inspection, staffing levels and deployment supported positive outcomes for children. There were enough staff to meet the needs of children throughout the day and staff were deployed effectively to ensure children remained well supervised, safe and nurtured. A calm, relaxed atmosphere supported children's wellbeing, with staff able to spend meaningful time engaging in one-to-one interactions and small group play. This enabled them to build trusting relationships and respond sensitively to children's needs. Families told us staff were approachable, responsive and flexible to meet their needs, including accommodating additional sessions at short notice.

Staff communicated well with one another and with children. They were clear about their movements, ensuring everyone was aware of where they were going, which supported continuity of care and safety. Transitions between activities and areas of the playroom were calm and well managed, contributing to a sense of security and stability for children. Families valued the way staff worked together to ensure children were well supervised and supported, which reassured them that children were safe and nurtured throughout the day.

Daily routines such as lunch preparation and personal care were organised effectively, without compromising the quality of interactions or supervision. This reflected good planning and strong teamworking. Children benefitted from staff who were available, attentive and present in their play and learning.

Rotas were planned to take account of the needs of both children and staff. A positive development since previous inspections was the introduction of overlapping shifts and additional cover, which meant that staff were now able to take regular breaks. This was managed in a way that maintained a good standard of care for children. Staff spoke positively about this change, describing the service as a happy and supportive place to work.

Staff shared that the recent reduction in the number of children attending the setting had contributed to a quieter, calmer environment where they could focus more fully on individual children. However, as numbers increase, there will be a need for careful and ongoing planning of staffing to ensure that the current good quality of care and supervision is maintained.

Contingency arrangements were in place and used well when needed. Staff were flexible and willing to adjust shifts to support one another to meet children's needs. The manager continued to monitor deployment closely and was confident that children were not left in the care of unqualified staff. This should remain under review to support consistent standards of care and safety.

Overall, children benefitted from a stable, caring team who worked well together to provide a positive, nurturing environment.

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 ensure children experience a quality environment, the provider should ensure that well-functioning arrangements for monitoring, maintenance and repair of the setting and resources are consistently implemented. This should include the replenishing and replacing of resources and addressing maintenance and repair issues within a timely manner.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.' (HSCS 5.22).

This area for improvement was made on 26 November 2024.

Action taken since then

During this inspection, it was noted that staff had maintenance records in place for issues arising within the playroom environment. These were appropriately monitored and acted upon.

However, more complex issues requiring provider input, such as the larger garden space being unfit for use had not yet been addressed. As this garden area remained out of use at the time of the inspection, this Area for Improvement has not yet been met in full.

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?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3 - Adequate
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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