

Maidenhill Nursery Class

Day Care of Children

Maidenhill Primary School
2 Maidenhill Grove
Newton Mearns
Glasgow
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Telephone: 01415 773 288

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 November 2023

Service provided by:
East Renfrewshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003372

Service no:
CS2019374509

About the service

Maidenhill Nursery Class is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 120 children from three years of age to those not yet attending primary school. The service is provided by East Renfrewshire Council and operates from a large playroom located within the newly built Maidenhill Primary School, Newton Mearns, Glasgow. In addition, children have free-flow access to an extensive, secure, adjacent outdoor play area. The service is close to shops, schools, transport routes and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 31 October 2023. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 throughout the inspection year. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Spoke with some of the children using the service and reviewed survey responses from 32 parents whose children attend the service.
- Spoke with the senior management team, eight staff and reviewed survey responses from 16 members of staff.
- Observed practice and staff interactions with children.
- Reviewed documents

Key messages

- Children benefited from a staff team who worked well together and had created a welcoming, inclusive environment.
- Children experienced sensitive and respectful caregiving from staff who were responsive to children's changeable interests.
- Children were spoken and listened to in ways that encouraged them to feel valued and included.
- Staff had high aspirations to enable children to be successful.
- Strong leadership of the service supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children and families to reach their full potential.
- Adaptations to staffing arrangements and practices during children's playroom routines were identified and advised.
- Regular planned outdoor play opportunities within park and woodland spaces beyond the nursery setting would further increase opportunities for children to experience fresh air and enjoy challenging play.
- Indoor and outdoor play areas required to be monitored to ensure play materials were attractive, captured children's sustained interest and suitable for children's stage of development.

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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

We made an evaluation of good for this quality indicator as we found performance where there was a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement. The strengths had a significant positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes.

We looked at how the nursery's planning approaches for children's care, learning and development ensured they experienced positive outcomes. Throughout the various play sessions we observed it was clear that children experienced sensitive and respectful caregiving. We observed staff being responsive to children's changeable interests and demands. Children were spoken and listened to in ways that encouraged them to feel valued and included. One parent told us: "I truly find that the staff in the service always go above and beyond for my child. My child struggled to settle during her first few weeks and the staff were incredibly patient, kind and accommodating to her needs - not just her key workers, but wider staff too." Another parent commented: "Genuinely the best staff team. So nurturing, friendly and put the children first daily!"

Staff told us how they worked with parents to ensure children's personal plans included the key information needed to provide appropriate care, meet any medical needs and support the individual styles of learning and play interests. Personal plans and learning journals using the SHANARRI (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included) wellbeing indicators and the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence were regularly reviewed and included targets for achievement and next steps. We found that these plans were regularly reviewed and produced a clear picture of children's individual needs. These were supported by well-being assessment plans which set out support strategies for children with additional learning needs. We found that more work needed to be done to ensure parents and carers played a more central role in the personal planning process. Approximately a quarter of the parents who completed our survey indicated that staff needed to ensure they were more fully involved in developing plans for their children's personal care and better informed about their child's ongoing learning and development. More than a third of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were provided with good quality information about their child's day. One parent told us: "My child attends nursery every day. I worry that she spends so much time there but I don't really know what she is doing, how she is doing or what I can do to help." Another stated: "Communication to parents is infrequent and mostly lacking any real depth. Most information I get is a summary of how the day has gone but without any real evaluation of my child's progress." A third parent commented: "Not given a lot of info about my child's day. I depend on the twitter photos to tell me what they were up to. More info would be nice." We highlighted to the senior management team the importance of building on recent parent meeting initiatives to improve parental communication and engagement (see Area for improvement 1). We discussed with the management team strategies for ensuring the personal planning system supported staff to fully involve all parents in decisions about their child's care and development. This can help parents to be more fully aware of actions that were being used in practice to help individual children achieve their goals.

Quality indicator 1:3: Play and learning

We made an evaluation of adequate for this key question as we found performance where there was some strengths, but these just outweighed weaknesses. The strengths had a positive impact but the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for children was reduced because key areas of performance needed to improve

We found that staff worked hard to provide a variety of learning experiences by continuously promoting choice and reflecting on children's interests and individual achievements. Staff took time to extend conversations with children about their play and used open ended questioning to further extend and challenge thinking and learning. Staff told us how they used observations of children's significant play interests to adapt their support for and resourcing of play experiences. Staff had high aspirations to enable children to be successful.

Parental feedback on the quality of play and learning was mixed. One parent commented: "Activities during the day are engaging and promote growth and development. I can see the difference since my daughter has started." Another parent told us: "There are regular activities provided that are new to the children and provide excellent learning experiences for the children, this can be themed and are sometimes displayed through social media for parents." A third parent commented: "The nursery area is far too big and far too many children so staff aren't able to spend quality time with the children." A fourth parent told us: "There is too much free play and lack of structure in children's day for them to benefit from any educational aspects." A fifth parent commented: "I have never been told what my child is good at or what they need to do to in order to develop and grow." Most parents who responded to our survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "My child has opportunities to be involved in meaningful, interesting and fun play activities."

The quality and range of play experiences for children was mixed. Some play areas and resources were not set up or presented in a way that sustained children's interest or captured their curiosity and imagination. We found this impacted on children's levels of involvement, perseverance and engagement in play. It meant that children were not consistently supported to reach their potential through play.

We found that children had too few opportunities to be actively involved in leading their collaborative play projects (see Area for improvement 2). We discussed planning tools with staff that focussed on observations of children's most engaging and involving play experiences. All the staff we spoke with agreed that these had the potential to improve existing opportunities for children to shape their play environments. We highlighted strategies that will help staff follow child-centred planning and documentation approaches that provide greater autonomy and choice as to how children will take their learning forward. This can help to ensure all staff are working effectively together to plan and track progression and continuity in older children's collaborative learning across the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence.

We found that not all younger children consistently experienced learning that was relevant, personalised, or sufficiently engaging for their stage of development. Some children were not experiencing appropriate opportunities to support and consolidate their own learning through play or not were sufficiently challenged at an appropriate level. We identified a need for staff planning approaches for play and learning to be consistently monitored and ensure children get the right balance of adult directed structured experiences and free flow play across the day. This can help to do more to ensure that younger children engage in experiences appropriate for their stage of development

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's care, learning and development the manager and staff should develop consistent communication and monitoring approaches that ensure individualised personal plans are created and shared with parents. This should include but not be limited to the following areas:

- The recording of meaningful and specific next steps for individual children covering key aspects of their care, support, learning and development.
- Plans should be created and regularly reviewed in partnership with parents and carers as a minimum every six months.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: "My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices." (HSCS 1.15)

2. To support children to achieve their full potential through play staff should;

(a) Implement planning and observation strategies that develop children's sense of ownership of leading change related to their self chosen collaborations in play.

(b) Review the indoor and outdoor play spaces and the quality of available resources to ensure all areas are presented in a way that capture children's curiosity and imagination and sustain their interest and engagement.

(c) Ensure children get the right balance of adult directed structured experiences and free flow play across the day

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards My support, my life. "As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity." (HSCS 2.27)

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question as we found performance where identified strengths had a significant positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

We looked at the nursery environment and resources within it in terms of how they were managed to support positive outcomes for children. The nursery play spaces included the provision of open-ended and natural resources. Spaces were set up in ways that were adaptable and had potential to encourage children's creativity. One parent commented: "Amazing setting. I love all the zones and free play - both inside and out. We love hearing about the things our son has been involved in during that day. Great facilities with lots of variety," Another parent told us: "The building and learning environment and garden is great for the kids". A third parent stated: "It's a beautiful nursery with lots of facilities, it's bright and lots of natural light coming through with a lovely big outdoor play area." Staff told us that they regularly evaluated and reflected on the quality of children's play spaces.

We identified a need for these shared reflections to focus more closely on how setting up and monitoring of each play area can lead to challenging and engaging play opportunities for children. In addition, we highlighted potential adaptations to the outdoor area that would increase opportunities for children to independently access a wider range of stored play materials and resources and use these for taking forward their plans and ideas for play.

We found that forest kindergarten training had enhanced the capacity of the team to provide more challenging outdoor play experiences for children. We highlighted the value to the senior management team of widening this play initiative within woodland spaces beyond the setting. The management team agreed that staff would benefit from further professional development opportunities including visits to other East Renfrewshire early years settings to observe and learn from their approach to supporting children's outdoor play. The senior management team agreed to make this a continued focus of future improvement and professional development planning.

We discussed strategies with the senior management team that had the potential to better manage the acoustics within main playroom. These strategies included potential adaptations to the children's daily routines, improvements to the monitoring and scaffolding of the flow of children's play and maximising children's use of the secure outdoor space. The staff we spoke to agreed that these had the potential to provide a sound environment that produced less intrusive noise for children's play indoors as well as quieter internal spaces for children's rest and relaxation.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question as we found performance that demonstrated a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We found that staff were motivated, well led and passionate about improving outcomes for all children. Staff told us how the senior management team provided a clear focus for their shared team work including setting out clear responsibilities and expectations. We found that the team worked together effectively to evaluate and reflect on their practice. They were keen to take forward current ideas, develop and implement best practice guidance. We highlighted how future staff training in observation, planning approaches, outdoor play and children's play based learning could help the team to meet their ongoing improvement priorities. This can support children to continue to experience quality interactions and play experiences centred around their emerging interests.

The senior management team told us how nationally recognised self-evaluation tools were used to reflect on staff practice and support them to collaborate on improvement planning. Individual quality focussed conversations between the depute head teacher and individual members of staff helped inform this process. The head teacher told us how they dedicated time to analysing children's, staff and parents' contributions to any consultations and extracting the key messages or themes. Feedback from some parents had been used to support the development of an improvement plan that clearly set out the service priorities and targets for change. The headteacher told us that staff were continuing to focus on these priorities and embedding planned developments within the nursery's future improvement planning.

Feedback from parents on the quality of leadership and management within the setting was mixed. A large majority of parents we surveyed told us they were confident in how the service was being managed. Almost a third of parents responded, "strongly disagree", "disagree" or "do not know" to the survey statement: "My child and I are involved in a meaningful way to help develop this setting and our ideas and suggestions are used to influence change." We discussed our survey findings with the senior management team. They told us that they were actively engaged in building relationships with families as there had been a number of staffing changes to the senior management team as well as curriculum leadership posts within the nursery over the past year. The current and ongoing focus of their improvement work was on widening family engagement and involvement as well as strengthening communication with parents and carers about children's play and learning. We noted that parents' meetings had already taken place and that a series of "Stay and Play" sessions were also being implemented. We highlighted additional practical consultation strategies for widening parental and children's engagement in the improvement planning process. The staff agreed these would help strengthen the capacity of service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children's and families' particular needs and choices.

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of adequate for this key question as we found performance where there was some strengths, but these just outweighed weaknesses. The strengths had a positive impact but the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for children was reduced because key areas of performance needed to improve.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

A robust induction process supported newly appointed staff to meet children's needs. The induction programme helped new staff to settle into their role and become part of the staff team. The staff routinely engaged in a range of professional learning activities that built on and sustained their practice. We found staff were confident in discussing how they had improved their practice as a result of their own professional learning activities. Staff told us how their professional learning was linked to a wide variety of leadership roles within the team including: forest schools, musicality, literacy, physical play and wellbeing. We found that this learning had a positive impact on the quality of experiences for children, their progress and wider improvements in the setting.

We found that at times across the nursery day there were gaps in the way staff were deployed and this limited opportunities for effective scaffolding, facilitation and extension of some play experiences. At times it limited opportunities for extended conversations and dialogue with children about their emerging play interests. We found that during periods of free flow play, teaching staff did not consistently offer enough playroom leadership, role modelling or guidance to the wider staff team in terms of managing the flow of children's play between indoor and outdoor environments or sustaining children's shared interest in individual play areas. This led to a lack of children's focus and sustained engagement with resources in some play areas. In addition, we observed that children's self organised, unfocused, runaround play contributed to intrusive noise levels that at times disrupted the learning of others. We highlighted to the senior management team how pedagogical leadership with the playroom could be potentially improved and strengthened. This included additional specialist professional training and development opportunities in early years play and curriculum approaches. This can enhance the capacity of the staff team to provide opportunities for children to reach their full potential through the play.

Arrangements in place for planned absence of staff did not always lead to supply staff cover being appointed. This at times impacted on the scaffolding of some children's learning. For example, we observed one group time experience where a member staff had responsibility for supporting 13 children's learning resulting in missed opportunities to sustain children's individual engagement and focus on learning.

We identified a number of potential adaptations to staff deployment during lunchtime routines which would maximise opportunities for children to communicate with and experience consistency and continuity in their care from key workers who knew them well. This will help to ensure that key workers have time to sit with children and engage in meaningful personalised conversations about their daily experiences and strengthen existing relationships. The senior management team agreed that these changes would support the nursery's commitment to providing a more relaxed and nurturing environment for children during lunchtimes. It will increase opportunities for staff to be responsive to individual needs and support children to develop positive attachments with key adults. We signposted the manager to our practice note "Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC)" to support continued professional reflection on mealtime improvements within the staff team.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that children receive care that is right for them, the manager should ensure that staff are deployed in a way that meets children's needs. This should support high quality staff engagement and interaction with children at meal times. It should support staff to be deployed in sufficient numbers to scaffold and facilitate children's engagement and sustained interest in play experiences throughout each day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "My care and support meets my needs and is right for me" (HSCS 1.19), and "My needs are met by the right number of people". (HSCS 3.15)

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

The provider should ensure that notifications to the Care Inspectorate are completed and submitted in line with the document "Records that all registered care services (except childminding) must keep and guidance on notification reporting 2012".

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard 4.23: "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed."

This area for improvement was made on 7 September 2023.

Action taken since then

The staff team have been reminded of the Care Inspectorate notification procedures and a new copy of the document had been placed in the nursery office. All staff had been guided by senior managers through the document regarding notifiable incidents. A new format of registers had been introduced at the start of this session so that staff could monitor children's different attendance patterns. Staff recorded numbers at the entrance and updated these throughout the day (late entry/early exit/3pm/extended hours 3-6pm). A monitoring system had been established to ensure that children were ticked present on arrival and parents signed children out.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The provider should ensure that children have access to a sleep and rest environment that is in line with best practice.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard 1.19: "My care and support meets my needs and is right for me."

This area for improvement was made on 7 September 2023.

Action taken since then

The senior management team had formed stakeholder short-life working group to review sleep policy and practice in line with guidance from Space to Grow, NHS, Out to Play. Staff discussions had taken place regarding the changes required for a designated sleep area, separated from the main play bays. New resources had been purchased. Sleep records were kept and monitored by staff so that the child's sleeping position was checked and recorded at regular intervals. This information was recorded in child's personal plan. During the course of the inspection the senior management team agreed to continue to review the rest and sleep arrangements for children and take on board the suggestions we made regarding further improvements to the designated sleep area. This included changes to lay outs that help to ensure the environment is homely, comfortable, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and equipped with sufficient soft furnishings to support children's relaxation.

This area for improvement is continued.

Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website (www.careinspectorate.com) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	3 - Adequate
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?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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