

Hamilton School For The Deaf Nursery Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 February 2023

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

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CS2006124158

About the service

Hamilton School for the Deaf Nursery is a daycare of children service situated in Burnbank, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire. It is on a shared campus with Glenlee Primary School and Nursery Class. The service provides care for up to six children aged from two to those not yet attending primary school.

There is a designated nursery playroom and shared use of Glenlee Nursery Class indoor and outdoor areas which are accessed directly from the playroom. This enables children to have a balance of play and learning experiences in their designated playroom and within a busier mainstream service. Children also access the school playground, sensory room and spaces within Hamilton School for the Deaf and Glenlee Primary schools. This creates an inclusive setting.

The service is close to public transport links, shops and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 30 January 2023 between the hours of 09:15 and 16:30. The remainder of the inspection was carried out remotely with feedback to the service on 7 February 2023. 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 one child using the service
- spoke with two members of staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with three visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Staff knew children and their families very well. They were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with children throughout the day.
- Tailored systems were in place to support individual children and families with communication.
- Staff were experienced, trained, skilled and knowledgeable in working with children with deafness and hearing loss.
- Children had access to a designated playroom for more structured activities and a mainstream playroom and outdoor area within the shared campus. This offered children a balance of play and learning experiences with their peers.
- The service should continue to review and update their quality assurance systems, self-evaluation and improvement plans. This is to ensure there are clear records of the input and outcomes for children, families and staff of Hamilton School for the Deaf Nursery Class.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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.

1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, caring and nurturing interactions from all staff. Children were happy, smiling and having fun as they played, ate and relaxed throughout the day.

Clear systems were in place to meet individual children and families needs. Examples included home visits before children started at the service with information on transport and staff accompanying children and families on visits to the local deaf club. This reassured parents, offered support and built open, trusting relationships. There were varied communication methods in place to suit individual needs. This contributed to children and families feeling safe, respected, included and informed.

Personal plans were in place with each child's core information. We advised where children's achievements and 'star moments' could be expanded to include more personal achievements. Additionally, online learning journals offered a two-way link to share play, learning and special moments from nursery and home. Staff supported parents to fully access and interact with this technology.

Close, positive working relationships with external professionals supported children's additional care and support needs. Strategies and next steps were discussed and agreed with families and staff. This provided consistency and continuity for children and supported their development in specific areas. One visiting professional told us, 'Staff are excellent with the children. They have attended speech and language sessions to learn how to take individual children's learning forward and demonstrate this learning during our observations. Staff interactions and signing skills are fantastic, promoting speech as well as signing. I cannot emphasise enough, the care and support which is in place to ensure children reach their full potential. Everything I wish to share is highly positive.'

A rolling snack system was in place within the mainstream nursery. This meant children could choose when to have snack alongside their peers. There was a variety of healthy options to choose from. Children had contributed to the wall display using photographs with signing to inform and welcome all children to this area. This added to the inclusive environment.

Lunch took place within the school dining hall. Children sat alongside staff, siblings and children from Hamilton School for the Deaf. This was observed to be a relaxed, sociable experience for children. Positive mealtime experiences support child development and provide opportunities for children to develop key social skills as well as healthy eating habits.

Staff were clear about their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. Child protection training was undertaken and procedures followed to support children and families, if required. Medication and associated documentation was in line with current guidance. A 'wellbeing check-in' offered children an opportunity to state how they were feeling each day using a visual board with photographs, the written word and the relevant signs. This all contributed towards children's overall safety, health and wellbeing.

1.3: Play and learning

There was a balance of structured and free play opportunities for children over the course of the day. This fully supported children's identified needs and offered opportunities for them to make choices and lead their own play. Examples included playing football and celebrating their own success when scoring a goal at the outdoor pitch and displaying much excitement and laughter during a one-to-one active numeracy game. Children developed their skills in physical play, number recognition and number order while using signs and verbal communication. Effective questioning by staff consolidated and extended children's learning using active, fun approaches.

Access to a wide variety of play areas and resources ensured children could lead their own play while mixing with their friends and staff within the busier, mainstream nursery. We observed children making playdough ice-cream to share in imaginative play, balancing using loose parts play materials outdoors and participating in a table top matching game. This balance of play and learning experiences was monitored to meet and challenge individual children's needs, interests and preferences.

There were books and resources in place to represent children who were deaf, who used British Sign Language (BSL) or who had English as an additional language. Plans were in place to review and extend resources and materials to ensure there was more diversity and to share ideas for play and learning at home. This included the introduction of home/nursery links such as story sacks and number packs. This would contribute to the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy skills using books and associated props and resources.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Secure entry systems and fob access between different areas in the building contributed to children's safety. We shared information on the Care Inspectorate's safety campaign 'Keeping Children Safe - Look, Think, Act' to display within the premises and share with staff and parents. This would raise everyone's awareness of their responsibility in safeguarding, protecting and supporting children's safety and wellbeing.

Children had access to many indoor and outdoor spaces within the nursery and school which offered a variety of experiences to meet their needs. The main shared playroom was furnished to a high standard with lots of natural light and ventilation. Areas were designed to ensure resources were stored and visible at children's level. This meant children could make choices of where to play and what to play with, accessing toys and resources independently.

Displays within the small designated playroom were planned, selected and updated to facilitate and promote communication. These displays and photographs enabled children to initiate communication and interactions with others and provided links to their own experiences and prior learning. The layout and resources within this playroom will be reviewed and adapted where necessary by the service, as numbers of children attending increase. This will ensure there is ample space for children to play and learn.

The large outdoor play area was freely accessible to children throughout most of the session. This offered a wide range of developmentally appropriate play spaces to support play, for example, a mud kitchen with resources to engage in imaginative play and spacious areas, a tyre swing and wooden materials to support more energetic play, such as running, climbing and balancing.

Following adaptations within the shared nursery premises, the designated playroom for this service was now not as quiet a space as this had been designed to be. Sound proofing had been added to the playroom but through the service monitoring and our observations, it was clear this had not resolved the issue. We agreed that the ongoing discussions with the local authority were necessary to ensure this playroom was an appropriate space to fully meet the needs of children who were deaf. One external professional explained, 'I can't praise the service highly enough for their dedication and commitment. However, the only thing that is a real concern is the room (the designated playroom). Knowing that the first five years is the crucial time for children with cochlear implants, the environment is limiting outcomes for some children.'

Infection prevention and control procedures were in place. Hand hygiene was promoted and encouraged in a fun manner at relevant times throughout the session. This ensured children washed their hands effectively. Maintenance records and risk assessments were in place. We advised where these should be expanded to reflect current issues within the service which would contribute to children's safety.

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.

3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Families views had recently been sought through an online survey, where results were highly positive. As numbers of children attending were low, staff were able to continue to ensure families were informed and included, with their views sought and respected in a way that suited individuals. The vision, values and aims for the service were currently under review with clear plans to consult fully with children, families, staff and stakeholders. This was part of the service's overall improvement plan and would result in an up-to-date shared vision for the delivery of high quality practice and positive outcomes for children.

The manager of the service was committed to building their own knowledge of early learning and childcare. The management and nursery staff teams from both schools on the campus worked closely together. They ensured the nursery was very much involved and included within each schools/nursery improvement plans. We advised that a system should be introduced to demonstrate the specific involvement, actions required and outcomes for this service, as well as the shared outcomes. This would ensure all information was clear and staff and families were well-informed. Although there were photographs and information on signing within the playrooms, more information on the service should be displayed on parental noticeboards and foyer areas. This would raise the profile of the service and ensure all children, families and staff were included, respected and informed.

Self-evaluation and monitoring systems were in place. We signposted the manager to information on 'The Hub' section of our website at www.careinspectorate.com and bitesize video sessions to assist with the development of key areas.

We provided information on notifications which must be sent to the Care Inspectorate and acknowledged information relating to the change of manager had been submitted over the course of the inspection. This updated information meant the manager had access to all relevant information and future required notifications.

Regular staff meetings ensured staff could share information on children's interests, learning and progress, as well as reporting on training events they had attended. The re-introduction of staff appraisals had identified staff strengths, training needs, areas of interest and development. Staff had delivered BSL training to colleagues in the mainstream nursery and introduced basic signs to all children and families within both settings, through play experiences. This had been very positive and added to the inclusive environment and ethos.

The importance of staff wellbeing was recognised and promoted by the manager. Staff could access weekly drop-in sessions provided by a counsellor who was based in the premises. Staff spoke very positively about the benefits of this for their own health and wellbeing.

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.

4.3: Staff deployment

Staff demonstrated a caring, nurturing manner. Keyworker staff supported children as they arrived and left the nursery with their known escorts and arranged transport. They sat alongside children over snack and lunchtime periods to engage in conversation, create a relaxed, sociable atmosphere and supervise children's safety when eating. This provided continuity and consistency of care and ensured children felt loved, safe and secure. They were responsive to children's requests and interests, supporting them to play alongside and with others.

Staff were highly experienced, skilled and knowledgeable about children who were deaf and were confident in using BSL and communication aids to support children. They used this expertise to work closely and effectively with families, the mainstream nursery staff team and other professionals, building strong, trusting relationships. Staff regularly attended the deaf club for children aged under five, with children and their families. This provided support, advice, role modelling and built relationships, which resulted in good quality outcomes for children. Attendance at this club also informed and supported other families in the local community who may attend the service in the future.

As both services shared play spaces, both staff groups knew children very well. They worked closely together and communicated well across the session to support the care and support needs of all children. This ensured children's interactions and experiences across the day remained positive, while ensuring staff had their required breaks, rest and time to refresh.

Staff spoke passionately about their current role and responsibilities. They supported children with transitions into from home to nursery and then to primary school and worked closely with school staff to identify children's targets and next steps.

One teacher told us, 'I work in partnership with (staff) to plan and assess (children's) development and next steps for learning.....I work both in class and in the Outreach service. In my role in the Outreach service I visit children across South Lanarkshire ranging from 3-18 years old and support them, and the staff, in their educational setting.'

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 service should make best use of all space available to them, this includes indoors and outdoor space. To achieve this they need to further develop the outdoor space to be as much of a learning environment as the indoors and for children to have more opportunity to choose when they want to play outside. As a result the service would be providing children with the opportunity and benefits of being outdoors.

National care standards for early education and childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 3 Health and Wellbeing, Standard 5 Quality of Experience

This area for improvement was made on 13 March 2018.

Action taken since then

The children had free flow access to the nursery outdoor play areas over the course of the day. The area had been developed further to provide a wide variety of outdoor play and learning experiences. Children also had regular access to the outdoor playground and pitch in the school grounds.

This recommendation/area for improvement has been addressed.

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?	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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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