

Calderwood Nursery Class Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 April 2023

Service provided by:
West Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002601

Service no:
CS2021000255

About the service

Calderwood Nursery Class is a day care of children service situated within the building of Calderwood Primary School in the residential area of Calderwood, East Calder. The service provider for Calderwood Nursery Class is West Lothian Council. The setting is managed by the headteacher of Calderwood Primary School and was registered on 15 September 2021.

The nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 128 children from age 3 years to not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is close to local amenities, such as, a park and café.

The children are cared for in the dedicated, large playroom. Children also have access to an enclosed garden which is easily accessible from the indoor playroom. They also have access to a quiet sensory room. There are three sets of toilets and three cloakrooms. There is also a dedicated parents' room.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 05 April 2023 and 06 April 2023 between the hours of 09:00 and 16:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. A team manager from the Care Inspectorate was also present to carry out quality assurance on the inspection activities. This was the first inspection of the service. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with seven people using the service and seven of their family members
- spoke with 14 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

We provided virtual feedback to the service on 13 April 2023 between the hours of 10:30 and 12:00. Attendees were the registered manager and headteacher, two senior practitioners, area manager and a representative from West Lothian's central early year's team.

Key messages

Staff effectively attended to children's individual needs using a range of support strategies and resources.

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted through regular access to outdoors.

Children benefitted from relaxed, sociable mealtimes.

Child centred planning should be developed, with greater emphasis on how activities stem from the child's voice and ideas.

Quality assurance systems need strengthened to clearly demonstrate the impact of any actions taken on outcomes 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?	5 - Very 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 and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Generally, interactions between staff and children were nurturing, warm and caring. Practitioners extended compassion by sensitively acknowledging children's emotions. Staff skilfully empowered children to resolve situations with their peers; for example, asking "What does gentle hands look like?"

Staff sat alongside children, engaged with them at play and were present and available. One parent shared; "My child is very happy at nursery and his confidence has improved since starting. He is proud of his nursery and is always keen to show us around". This all contributed to children feeling loved, secure and confident to explore independently knowing that a trusted adult was there to help them. Children learned to assert their needs, develop good values and build social skills.

The staff team were invested in strengthening relationships by getting to know the children and their families well. Children's personal plans reflected the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators and were completed before the child's start date. This holistic assessment contributed to creating a smooth transition for children into the setting and valued the knowledge that parents and carers had into their child's needs. Personal plans were updated regularly, and progress celebrated.

Effective systems were in place to share appropriate information about children amongst the team. Most parents strongly agreed with our statement: "Staff know my child well, including what they like and what is important for their care". As a result, children experienced consistent care from the staff team that reflected their individual needs and preferences.

Children's additional needs were very well supported. The setting worked closely alongside the school's support for learning teacher, making best use of their expertise and supporting an effective transition for children into primary one.

Detailed support plans were created and frequently reviewed for individual children. These demonstrated staff's effective use of assessment, observations and sound knowledge of child development. Staff's high levels of skill and experience were reflected in creating tailored support strategies. We saw how these strategies were embedded in practice and staff reflected in the moment to ensure these strategies had an even greater impact on children's development.

Whilst we acknowledge that the service spends considerable time speaking with parents and carers regularly on an informal basis during each session, we encouraged the setting to better incorporate the parent's voice into children's support plans. This would help demonstrate the setting's strong parent partnership.

Mealtimes were very organised, with emphasis on this being an enjoyable, social occasion within a relaxed atmosphere. Children confidently described and engaged with the established routine, including taking responsibility for helping clear away their dishes. Staff listened to children and acted upon their wishes; for example, having "fancy cups" to drink from.

This meant that eating became a valuable opportunity for children to develop independence skills through first hand experiences. In addition, children's self-esteem increased as they recognised that their views mattered.

The staff team demonstrated a sound knowledge in the steps to take if they had a concern about a child's safety or wellbeing. Information had been shared with the appropriate services. Valuable partnerships were formed with external agencies to consider how to further support children and families. The service should develop systems to record and review concerns and significant information about children. This will support the staff team in their assessment and decision-making skills to get it right for children.

1.3 Play and learning

Children engaged in a mix of spontaneous and planned experiences.

The team had reflected on the fact that it is a large setting and wanted to ensure that key workers knew their children well. With this in mind, the setting had introduced 'clan time' where key workers facilitate an activity with a group of children. Children can choose whether to take part. The setting should consider how it promotes a quality experience for all children within this and minimises opportunities for distraction from other 'clans' so children can fully focus.

Floor books were used to consult with children to share their interests and knowledge. For example, the children's voice was captured to reflect what they knew about Autumn. There were missed opportunities for this to have developed into a conversation on what the children wanted to learn about Autumn and for staff to have acted on this. Having these conversations would help the service demonstrate and capture how children led the planning approaches through their voice.

Planning approaches showed how practitioners had carefully listened to children, then used their enthusiasm and creativity to introduce learning experiences for children that linked up with the Curriculum for Excellence. The setting should develop practice to reduce the risk of these experiences becoming more about the adult's agenda. Instead focus should be on how to extend children's learning in a way that is most meaningful to the child and promote creativity and learning through trial and error.

The staff team should consider how it makes better use of provocations (the use of resources to spark children's curiosity) so children are empowered to steer their learning more independently. This would enable children's play to flow more and for adults to value the use of skilful comments and wondering aloud.

These approaches would support children to become more meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play.

The service should develop its recording of quality observations of children's learning and development. Observations of children were recorded within an online learning journal. These were monitored by members of the management and leadership team to assess how they reflected good practice. This approach was yet to be embedded to see how any suggestions for improvement had been actioned along with their impact on children's development.

Observations highlighted learning the child had achieved and the adult's role in extending this. The service should develop its practice to consider the significance of the observation so any learning highlighted clearly reflects the actual observation. This would help to ensure that next steps are meaningful and specific.

For children with additional support needs, the setting should enhance practice to ensure the observations reflect support strategies.

We would encourage the setting to re-consider the frequency of observations, particularly for children where the observations contribute to a wider assessment of the child's needs. Parent feedback supported this; "Perhaps more engagement on the online Learning Journals would be great, it isn't updated often".

We had confidence in the service's capacity to develop high quality observations of children that would help demonstrate children's learning journey and its commitment to child centred planning (see area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's care, learning and development, the provider should ensure quality observations of children are recorded and that these reflect children's individual needs and support strategies.

This should include but is not limited to highlighting learning and next steps that are meaningful to the actual observation. It should be evident how observations are used to promote child centred planning so any learning experiences offered closely reflect the child's voice and ideas.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

How good is our setting?

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.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The indoor environment benefited from a huge amount of natural light. High quality, wooden furnishings and careful attention to the amount of information displayed, contributed to the environment in itself supporting children to effectively regulate their emotions. There was a sense of calm. Ample space was available for children to move freely both indoors and outdoors. Children had free-flow access to the outdoor environment, encouraging independence and choice. Handwashing facilities were well situated as children returned indoors, promoting infection prevention and control. The spread of infection was further reduced through the setting's effective measures to remove certain resources temporarily i.e. playdough and sand following an outbreak of illness. This meant that children's health and wellbeing increased and they developed a strong sense of self-worth.

Areas were well-defined and reflected children's needs and interests. A child was keen to show us 'people who help us' figures. We heard how staff had invited parents into the setting to share their job roles. Another child who was particularly interested in animals had various opportunities to explore this in a way that broadened their learning; for instance, an animal song game and animal matching cards.

This demonstrated how the environment had been skilfully designed to provide a wide range of learning experiences for all whilst being tailored to reflect children's individuality and celebrate each child's uniqueness.

Through distributive leadership, staff had taken ownership for developing certain parts of the environment. For example, the 'numeracy' area showed how staff had carefully considered the types of resources available so these reflected children's different stages of development and also provided children with a sense of challenge to learn new skills. The nursery team had worked closely with the cluster numeracy and maths pedagogy officer and embraced their suggestions to add loose parts to the environment. This empowered children to develop numeracy skills using open ended resources. The team had also considered how they could weave numeracy into other areas of the nursery, for instance, the construction area. As a result, children progressed in key areas of the curriculum in a natural way whilst following their own agenda. This good practice should be extended throughout the environment, so literacy and numeracy are evident in all areas.

Children were actively engaged in play for sustained periods of time and this was observed throughout the day. There was a range of activities to choose from. For example, some children enjoyed following a mindfulness activity using the smart board, whilst others explored craft materials.

Generally, children appeared happy and comfortable in the setting. The nursery was well-organised with clear roles and responsibilities, providing staff with a strong sense of purpose. This contributed to the smooth running of the setting and provided children with a sense of security that adults were effectively 'holding' the space.

We highlighted the low height of the fence as a possible risk to children leaving the garden. The service had identified this and were working on ways to ensure children stayed safely in the garden. For example, proactive plans were in place to plant trees as a deterrent for climbing on the fence outside. Staff were assigned to supervise particular areas of garden and a 'magic number' was introduced for regular head counting. This contributed to children's safety, whilst creating an environment that encouraged children to take healthy risks through play.

To complement the spacious indoor environment, a small room was used to provide children with a sense of quiet and wellbeing. It was encouraging to see this room being used with the door open so it still became part of the larger space. There were plans to develop this wellbeing space to further promote children's sensory development. Fundraising opportunities involving parents were being considered. We noticed that this quiet space was used frequently in response to children's more upset and distressed behaviours. We encouraged the setting to reflect on this to explore how staff could be better equipped to respond to children's emotional needs in the moment. As a result, children would be empowered to regulate their emotions and build their resilience in a variety of environments and contexts.

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

The service was in the process of reviewing its values involving children, parents and staff.

We saw how the service gave high regard to children's voice, using creative methods to consult with children as to what the values should be. We encouraged the setting to develop systems to assess how these values are reflected in practice consistently. This would benefit children in experiencing continuity of care and support from all staff.

Staff were committed to developing areas of the nursery, for example, through distributive leadership roles. To enhance this further, the management and leadership team should ensure staff have regular, protected time to carry out this work. To help demonstrate the impact of this for children's learning and development, we would encourage the management and leadership team to dedicate more time to coaching staff. This would support staff to be able to discuss, reflect and demonstrate the positive impact they have had on creating better outcomes for children. We suggested that the service uses the PDSA cycle (Plan, Do, Study, Act) to support this process.

We acknowledged the staff team's enthusiasm to make improvements. However, at times by focusing on so many improvements, this risked affecting the quality. Staff had little to no awareness of the contents of the nursery's improvement plan. We suggested that the service prioritises tasks and better demonstrates how children's needs have influenced actions and the impact of these (see area for improvement).

Staff were able to reflect on how they had taken steps to make positive changes for children's benefit. For example, we heard that the timings of stay and play sessions had changed to the end of the session as the staff noticed children finding it difficult to leave their parents and carers. One child was invited to take part in a stay and play experience with his parent on a day that he doesn't normally attend nursery as he valued routines. This demonstrated the setting's responsiveness to adapt plans to better meet children's collective and individual needs. It also further demonstrated the staff team's sound knowledge of child development, their investment in building secure attachments and creating effective, sensitive transitions.

The staff team had used learning from incidents involving children to improve practice. For example, arrangements were in place to more effectively deploy staff to reduce the risk of children leaving the setting. The service had developed systems to improve mealtimes, one of these being the use of a red dot on the child's name card to help prompt staff to be more vigilant to children's special dietary needs. We encouraged the leadership and management team to enhance their quality assurance systems by taking more observations of staff practice and asking staff questions in the moment. This would help embed safe practice with all staff taking a shared responsibility for ensuring children's needs are met.

We saw and heard how passionate the staff team were to get it right for children and uphold their best interests.

The service's commitment to promote staff wellbeing was also evident; for example, highlighting inspiring things the staff had achieved within their role in the staff room. This positive culture meant that children were supported by motivated staff who, in turn, praised children and instilled self-belief. We encouraged the setting to develop more formal systems for staff to receive feedback on their practice.

Systems were in place to record accidents for children and these were signed by parents and carers. Some information was missing, such as the child's details and whether the child's parent had been contacted following a head injury. Improvements were needed to ensure there was consistency in recording and to identify any learning that could influence how risks were assessed and managed. This would help promote children's safety and reduce the likelihood of another child getting injured.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's care, learning and development, the provider should ensure quality assurance systems clearly demonstrate the impact of any improvements made on outcomes for children.

This should include but is not limited to carrying out observations of staff practice to assess how well improvements are embedded in practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

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.

4.3 Staff deployment

The passion and commitment of team members to get it right for children was evident. An example of this was around transition planning for a new child to the service. One member of staff talked with a child's parents, whilst other staff supported the child to build their confidence to explore the nursery environment independently. Although the child had a special person in the form of a key worker, two additional staff were assigned to build a secure attachment with the child. This meant that if staff took any absence, the child was supported by familiar adults so care and routines became predictable for the child. This would help increase the child's sense of safety and security. The staff demonstrated empathy by considering how the child would view the nursery and took action to make this as comfortable as possible. Staff expressed pride in the child's progress in such a short space of time, highlighting their successful support strategies.

Children's safety and wellbeing was prioritised. Staff recognised when children needed more one to one support to meet their needs. Staff effectively worked alongside external practitioners to closely observe and assess children's development to secure funding to employ an additional member of staff. This meant that children received responsive care from adults who could devote their undivided time and attention. We encouraged the service to consider their arrangements for when this member of staff is absent. This would help to ensure children consistently receive high levels of supervision to ensure their safety along with extensive support to progress their development.

During busier times of day, for example meals times, staffing was well organised to ensure children's needs were met and quality interactions took place. As a result, this became a happy, social occasion where children appeared relaxed.

Additional staff were present in the setting on a Friday which enabled staff to take time out of ratio to carry out other tasks. These included reflecting on children's learning. The service should focus on promoting their curriculum planning so this emphasises the child's voice and views along with the impact of any actions on children's development.

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	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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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