

# Kingsford School Nursery Day Care of Children

Kingsford School  
Kingsford Road  
Aberdeen  
AB16 6PQ

Telephone: 01224 693 554

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
15 June 2023

**Service provided by:**  
Aberdeen City Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000349

**Service no:**  
CS2003014455

## About the service

Kingsford School Nursery is a day care of children service situated in the residential area of Sheddocksley in Aberdeen, close to local shops and community services. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 64 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time.

Kingsford School Nursery operates from a dedicated building within the primary school grounds. The premises consist of an entrance area and a large open-plan playroom which can be divided into two classes. Each side has toilets for children, nappy changing areas and kitchen facilities. An office area and family room provide private spaces for meetings, group events and quiet spaces for individual children. The service has free flow access from the playrooms to an enclosed outdoor area.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 12 June 2023 and 13 June 2023 between the hours of 09:15 and 17:30. 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 since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children during their play
- spoke with parents as they collected their children
- received six parent/carer online questionnaires
- received six staff online questionnaires
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals

## Key messages

- Children benefited from improved practice since the last inspection. As a result, there was more focus on children's overall wellbeing
- Staff used caring approaches with children. As a result most children were nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience.
- Some parents commented that communication between themselves and nursery could be improved.
- Meal times were often unorganised and on a few occasions were not safe for children.
- Learning and next steps were not consistently identified in observations for all children across the group.
- Free flow between indoors and outdoors was in place for most of the day and was working well.
- Staff were often too task orientated and this left little time for them to be with, and get involved in the play of children to extend their learning.
- We acknowledge the challenges the sector is facing with staff recruitment and retention, and the influence this has had on this service.

## 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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate

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

## How good is our care, play and learning?

## 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

### 1.1 Nurture care and support

Children benefited from improved practice since the last inspection. Staff had worked well together to create, and implement a nurturing approach to children's care. As a result, there was more focus on children's overall wellbeing. This included understanding a child's home and family life and exploring ways in which to support children and families together. Staff used caring approaches with children, such as cuddles and speaking with children at eye level. This improved way of working meant that most children were nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience.

Children's self-registration boards and 'emotions check in' supported them to think about how they felt and understand their emotions. Staff used this information throughout the day to influence conversations with children about how they were feeling. This supported children to feel nurtured and respected.

Staff worked with individual families and other agencies to provide them with support. A close relationship had been built with a designated health visitor with regular meetings and contact. Staff were mindful of the support a few children required to settle in and bespoke session times and settling in schedules were created. 'Families connect' groups gave further opportunities to support parents and children's learning through exploring games and fun activities.

A recent wellbeing week had focused on a range of activities for children to participate in. Some of these included yoga, relaxation and breathing techniques. The week-long event finished with a 'welly waddle' that included parents, families and children taking part in exercise and to raise money. These planned activities supported children to be healthy and active.

Some parents commented that communication between themselves and nursery could be improved. One parent told us, 'I feel there is not enough communication between staff and parents regarding how a child's day has went at nursery. The information about a child's progress developmentally and socially is not made aware to parents'. Another told us, 'We are given no feedback on my child's day or achievements'. Staff had begun to work on this by introducing stay and play sessions. Parents we spoke to attending these sessions told us they were positive and it was great to see the children playing.

Staff were aware of the importance of sun safety on what were sunny, hot days. As children arrived at nursery, parents were asked to ensure their child had sunscreen applied using the sun screen station provided. Throughout the day, sun screen was reapplied to children to keep them safe. Staff considered the safety of being outdoors between the hours of 12:00 and 15:00. Water stations were available to children, however, they were not well used. We spoke to staff to ensure that children were encouraged to drink more water and keep hydrated during hot weather.

Meal times were often unorganised and on a few occasions were not safe for children. Staff were often task orientated and, as a result, did not spend quality time sitting with children at the tables. This meant that children were, at times, left unsupervised and some left the area with food still in their mouths. Staff were not there to promote conversation and the social aspects of eating meals together. The noise level was

often high, and staff had not cleaned the floor properly before meals. This did not create a supportive ,relaxing environment for children. **(see area for improvement 1)**

Improvements had been made to children's personal plans. Parents and staff now completed them together and staff took the time to get to know the child and their family. One parent told us, 'The staff are very nice to my child and my child really does enjoy going there. They are interested in my child's achievements outside of nursery'. Important information and strategies to support most children were in place for staff to follow. At times however personal plans were recorded and organised in away that made them difficult to use, update and find important information. As part of ongoing development and reviews we asked that this be looked at by the management and staff team.

Staff were aware of children's personal routines and when children may like to have a rest or a sleep time. Staff organised this as part of the child's day. We asked however that the organisation of beds and blankets follow up to date safe hygiene practices.

### 1.3 Play and learning

Children had some opportunities for self-directed play and learning, with some forming pairs or small groups around the garden and playroom. One child told us they like "seeing all my friends". At times staff interacted well during play experiences and gave opportunities for children to extend or engage with learning. However, staff often became focused on tasks to be completed, rather than interacting with children in their play and learning. This meant that there were missed opportunities for children's creativity and choices to be supported and extended. **(see area for improvement 2)**

Children had been consulted on the recent wellbeing week and had been able to share what they liked and what they wanted to do next. This enabled them to have an input to the experiences planned for them. Staff should now develop the involvement of children and parents in planning, across all learning experiences. Not all children were experiencing learning that is personalised or sufficiently challenging for their stage of development. The leadership team explained that a tool for identifying which aspects of learning need to be planned for was due to be developed.

Observations were not consistently benefitting children's learning and development. Some children's online profiles contained observations linked to literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. In some profiles, progress in life skills had been shared, and parents had commented positively about this. However learning and next steps were not consistently identified in observations for all children across the group. Identifying these more regularly would help staff to plan experiences to respond to children's current learning needs and interests.

Staff had been developing ways to include literacy and numeracy skills in children's play and learning. For example, the role play area had been developed into a café with real life resources. The area contained menus and packaging providing opportunities for literacy as well as opportunities to count and use money. Other areas of the room, such as the reading area, would benefit from being developed to be more homely and cosy. Other opportunities to extend vocabulary were missed. For example, when children were using pallets to make a jump, the supporting adults focussed solely on safety aspects and could have also led conversations on height, higher/ lower and counting.

Most staff showed an understanding of child development and learning. They spoke about training they had had on schemas and from speech and language. This now needs to become more embedded in everyday practice on the floor.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children are nurtured and supported through their daily experiences, the manager and staff should ensure that mealtimes are a safe, relaxing experience that meets the individual needs of children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me.' (HSCS 1.19) and 'I can enjoy an unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

2. To provide high quality care and learning the provider, manager and staff should ensure children receive consistent levels of play experiences that support their learning and development.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if that is right for me' (1.27).

## How good is our setting?

### 4 - Good

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

Children benefitted from a welcoming environment which was warm, well-furnished and comfortable. There was plenty of natural light and ventilation to support children's wellbeing. Children's safety was supported by a secure entry system to the building, which had been improved since the last inspection, and the garden was fully enclosed.

The indoor play rooms were laid out to provide defined areas such as role play, craft, construction, sand and water play. This helped to support children's stages of development and sensory needs. However, the areas intended for quiet reading or rest were often used as a thoroughfare and would benefit from being made more cosy and homely. Some areas were no longer being visited for any sustained time by the children and could be repurposed to better reflect their current interests.

Free flow between indoors and outdoors was in place for most of the day and was working well. The outdoors environment had a good range of appropriate resources including natural and open-ended materials, including pipes, guttering, pallets and crates. This supported children's creativity and choices in their play experiences. One child told us they liked 'just only making mud pies'. A gazebo was erected on one of the very warm days and this provided a shady place for children and adults to rest and share books. Some of the loose parts were worn or broken and had often been disposed of over the fence into a wild area not accessed by children. This made the area feel untidy and unloved. This had been identified as an area in need for improvement, and work to install new raised beds and a sandpit had begun in the days following our visit.

We saw that staff were mindful of keeping children safe outdoors. Checking security around the outdoors space was part of their daily checks. Adding checks of the loose parts and outdoor toys to the daily security checklists would ensure that this area remains safe and fun to play in, and we suggested that children could be more involved in these risk assessments too.

The nappy changing facilities were clean, well-organised and maintained regularly. Children were able to

access hand wash basins independently, however handwashing was not consistently being monitored before and after mealtimes. Packed lunch bags were sometimes placed on food preparation surfaces and the children's tables, and this could present an infection risk. We discussed the need to ensure that food safety guidelines are followed, and procedures reviewed where necessary.

All children's personal information was securely stored online, and staff were knowledgeable about keeping this information safe and confidential.

### How good is our leadership?

### 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

A planned review of the settings vision, values, and aims was due to take place in the coming months. This was to align with the appointment of new senior staff and a more settled and consistent staff team being in place. Leaders had aspirations to involve children and families in this review as well as staff to help create a shared goal.

Some parents told us they do not feel involved in the improvement of the nursery or in making suggestions. The staff team were in the early stages of addressing this. For example, stay and play sessions were in place to invite parents into nursery, this opportunity was also used to ask parents about what went well during this and what they would like to see in the future. As a result of parent feedback a 'meet the team' board with photographs was displayed in the entrance hall. This showed parents who the staff team were and who was on duty that day. Some parents told us they did not know who the staff were. One commented, 'There are so many staff I don't know them all. I don't actually know who the manager is or who is in charge. We discussed ways in which staff may be able to further their 'meet the team' ideas. **(see area for improvement 1)**

Work had continued on an eBook to capture ongoing improvements within the nursery. This showed a journey of development in a number of areas that staff have been working on. The eBook recorded comments from staff, children and parents to show what had been successful and what continued changes could be made. Staff were able to suggest and put forward activities and comments to be included in the eBook via senior staff. However staff did not yet view this method as their own. To be fully included and feel responsible, staff and children should have more ownership over how they record and interact with their improvement journey.

A quality assurance calendar continued to provide planned time for senior staff to carry out assurance and support activities relating to key areas of development throughout the year. However this has not always been able to be followed through due to nursery and school staffing restrictions. As a result the current improvement and quality assurance areas identified will continue into next year.

Staff were using daily discussion opportunities to self-reflect on their work and the experiences they created for children. A new planning format had recently been introduced, along with changes to the furniture and room layout to support improved supervision of children. More formal opportunities for self-reflection were used during inset (training) days and monthly staff meetings. Some staff were beginning to become familiar with self-evaluation documents such as 'A framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare (2022)', however this should continue to be a focus area of improvement.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure high quality care and experiences for children quality assurance and self-evaluation should be embedded into practice. This should mean that:

(a) Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence changes within the setting.

(b) Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans lead to high quality care and support.

This is in to ensure 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 systems' (HSCS 4.19).

## How good is our staff team?

### 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impacted on outcomes for children, key areas need to improve.

We acknowledge that there has been a period of difficulties in maintaining continuity and progress within the staff team. The effects of staff wellbeing, absence rates and changes to service delivery through expansion was discussed by staff as having created ongoing challenges to providing a consistent staff team, to embed changes and develop at a faster pace. We noted that the staff team had worked well together to build trusting and meaningful relationships over this time. They were helpful and supportive of each other and showed a sense of belonging and drive. Many key improvements had been made and were underway and staff showed a commitment to continue to build on these to embed improvements that benefit the children and families they care for.

Daily rotas gave clear duties and responsibilities for staff to carry out such as snack time, cleaning checks and children's personal care routines. However, staff were often too task orientated and this left little time for them to be with, and get involved in the play of children to extend their learning. Staff were often interrupted during these times. **(see area for improvement 1)**

Arrangements for planned absences were in place to provide some consistency and familiar relief staff members. Whenever possible, the same members of relief staff were appointed to cover unplanned and longer-term absence such as sick and annual leave. However, on a few occasions the setting had to change their opening hours and availability at short notice. This created uncertainty for families and children. Some parents felt there was not enough staff. One told us 'The staff themselves do have the knowledge but as a whole can't do their job because they are under staffed'. Another told us 'we see new faces everyday'.

Relief staff were not always well supported or mentored within their role. Some of the relief staff did not know some key information about children and others were not skilled in carrying out their role. The service and provider should work together to ensure relief staff have the appropriate skills to carry out the role expected of them.

The core staff team had continued to improve how they work and communicate together. They were supported by senior staff who had experience and were working on the floor with them to provide immediate guidance and support. Regular online meetings helped support staff to discuss areas of their work and feel included as a team

Staff were aware of the numbers of children present and were active in updating the registration board , the



white board and each other with their 'magic number' of children present. Staff were aware of the numbers of children in play areas and communicated with each other for assistance if they felt they had too many children. This helps support the safety of children.

Staff had been participating in professional development opportunities throughout the year. This helped to ensure that they have, or gain, the right skills and experience to carry out their role. Staff spoke to us about the benefits of some of the training including 'circle' training, schematic play and promoting speech and language with children. Staff were focused on how their learning was benefiting their work with children, and supported their continued work towards improved outcomes and experiences for those they cared for.

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children receive high quality care and support the provider, manager and senior staff should ensure that staff are directed and supported to provide children with the right care at the right time.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported and cared for sensitively by people who anticipate issues and are aware of and planned for any known vulnerability or frailty' (HSCS 3.18).

## 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 provide high quality care and learning the provider, manager and staff should ensure children receive consistent levels of play experiences that support their learning and development.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if that is right for me' (1.27).

**This area for improvement was made on 9 September 2022.**

#### Action taken since then

At times staff interacted well during play experiences and gave opportunities for children to extend or engage with learning. However, staff often became focused on tasks to be completed, rather than interacting with children in their play and learning. This meant that there were missed opportunities for children's creativity and choices to be supported and extended.

The development and monitoring of this to ensure further progress should continue. This is an ongoing area of improvement and will be carried forward to the next inspection.

## Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure high quality care and experiences for children quality assurance and self-evaluation should be embedded into practice. This should mean that:

- (a) Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence changes within the setting.
- (b) Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans lead to high quality care and support.

This is in to ensure 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 systems' (HSCS 4.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 9 September 2022.**

### Action taken since then

Staff were using daily discussion opportunities to self-reflect on their work and the experiences they created for children. A new planning format had recently been introduced, along with changes to the furniture and room layout to support improved supervision of children. More formal opportunities for self-reflection were used during inset (training) days and monthly staff meetings. Some staff were beginning to become familiar with self evaluation documents such as 'A framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare (2022)', however this should continue to be a focus area of improvement.

Some parents told us they do not feel involved in the improvement of the nursery or in making suggestions. The staff team were in the early stages of addressing this. For example, stay and play sessions were in place to invite parents into nursery, this opportunity was also used to ask parents about what went well during this and what they would like to see in the future.

The development and monitoring of this to ensure further progress should continue. This is an ongoing area of improvement and will be carried forward to the next inspection.

## Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure children receive high quality care and support the provider, manager and senior staff should ensure that staff are directed and supported to provide children with the right care at the right time.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported and cared for sensitively by people who anticipate issues and are aware of and planned for any known vulnerability or frailty' (HSCS 3.18).

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### Action taken since then

Daily rotas gave clear duties and responsibilities for staff to carry out such as snack time, cleaning checks and children's personal care routines. However, staff were often too task orientated and this left little time for them to be with, and get involved in the play of children to extend their learning. Staff were often interrupted during these times.

The development and monitoring of this to ensure further progress should continue. This is an ongoing area of improvement and will be carried forward to the next inspection.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## 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?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
4.3 Staff deployment	3 - Adequate

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