

# Penicuik Family Learning Centre Day Care of Children

Cuickenburn Old Nursery School  
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Penicuik  
EH26 0HE

Telephone: 01968 679 215

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
10 October 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Midlothian Sure Start

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003175

**Service no:**  
CS2003013336

## About the service

Midlothian Sure Start, is the provider of Penicuik Family Learning Centre. The service is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children up to end of primary school age at any one time. No more than 12 are aged under 2 years.

Penicuik Family Learning Centre is situated in a standalone building in the town of Penicuik, Midlothian. The premises consists of two playrooms, a multiuse sleep/quiet room, meeting room, kitchen, toilets, nappy changing facilities and office space. Both playrooms have direct access to outdoor play areas.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 6 October 2025 between 09:15 and 17:00. We returned on 7 October 2025 between 09:00 and 14:45. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. We provided feedback to the manager and a representative from the local authority on 10 October 2025.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included, previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning.

This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service and their family members
- spoke with staff and the leadership team
- considered feedback from 11 families through an online questionnaire
- considered feedback from six staff members through an online questionnaire
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children were supported to feel happy, confident, safe and secure.
- Staff were beginning to build positive relationships and connections with children and families.
- Children benefitted from an inviting play environment, where they had access to interesting resources and activities.
- The service should strengthen induction, mentoring and support processes for staff.

## 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

Leadership	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

## Leadership 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

### Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service's vision and values had begun to shape daily practice, fostering a kind, respectful culture. Sure Start's inclusive ethos supports strong family relationships and learning through groups such as, Dad and Me and People Learning Together programme. Penicuik's summer programme included mindfulness camp and gardening club. One family told us, "It's great they offer other things like open kindergarten, baby groups and parent support/training." These groups provided families with relaxed opportunities to connect and support children's development. This contributed to the overall vision of Sure Start. Encouraging staff to reflect on how the service's values influence daily practice could strengthen relationships and promote a shared understanding of the vision, values and aims.

Self-evaluation was at an early stage following a period of change, including a new manager and staff team. Initial improvements, such as opening a new playroom and reviewing outdoor safety, supported service development and keeping children safe. Staff reflected positively on sessions they attended to support partnership with parents and exploring the staff wellbeing toolkit. Families agreed they were involved in meaningful feedback, one family commented, "We are asked for feedback regularly." The service had begun gathering family views through tools such as, a feedback tree and quick response (QR) code. To strengthen self-evaluation, the service could more actively involve children, families and staff in the process. Providing feedback on children and families suggestions would help them feel valued and included. This approach could strengthen the impact and evaluation of improvements and promote shared ownership of outcomes for children and families.

Quality assurance had taken place and had begun to positively impact on outcomes for children. Policies and risk benefit assessments had been updated. A folder had been developed, this held audit evidence and the manager had started sharing auditing responsibilities with room leaders. For instance, recent audits of accidents and incidents. This supported a more collaborative and reflective approach to improvement. However, some gaps were identified, for example, inconsistency in entries onto the digital app for families and in the staff induction process. Developing these methods could help ensure a more robust and consistent approach to quality assurance and providing high quality service.

Staff had been recruited in line with safer recruitment practices, including volunteers. The service was using the national induction resource to support new staff. However, support was varied and a few staff had incomplete or no induction records. As a result, some staff, including bank staff, had limited understanding of their roles. While some staff told us they received mentoring, evidence gathered showed this was not always well considered and planned for. While actions to support staff build on staff strengths and identify areas for development were unclear. The service should strengthen induction, mentoring, support and supervision processes to help staff reflect, build skills and develop consistently. This would contribute to all staff gaining the confidence and knowledge needed to meet individual children's needs and deliver high-quality care. (See Area for improvement 1)

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure high-quality outcomes for children, the service should strengthen induction, mentoring, support and supervision processes in line with best practice. This would help new and existing staff build the knowledge and confidence needed to meet individual children's needs and provide consistent, high-quality care.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

3.14 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.'

## Children play and learn 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

### Playing, learning and developing

Children were happy, confident, and engaged in good quality play that supported their development, wellbeing, and skills. One family commented, "We like the free space for kids to run and play, lots of activities and staff available." The inviting environment encouraged child-led play through varied spaces and real life, open ended resources. For example, some children played with large boxes pretending it was their home. Others had fun role playing in the home pretending to make soup with flower petals, feeding their babies and taking them for a walk into the garden. Staff understood their role in promoting children's right to play and supported their choices and interests. Children's engagement was not always fully supported; there were missed opportunities to deepen children's engagement and extend their play. By observing children and playing alongside them to solve problems, clarify ideas, and develop thinking, staff could make learning more meaningful and appropriately challenging.

Overall staff interactions were warm and positive, with some effectively extending children's play, learning and development. Staff responded well to younger children's cues for interaction and extended these through songs, movement and interaction games. Outdoors at times children were encouraged to problem-solve and think critically. However, some interactions were not of high-quality or sustained, and staff often moved on quickly. For instance, children chose stories and listened to them but these opportunities were not extended to build on children's sense of wonder through effective commenting and appropriate questioning. This limited children's opportunities to build on positive social interactions and vocabulary.

Outdoor play enriched children's curiosity, physical development, and wellbeing. All families were very positive about their children's outdoor experiences. One commented, "The thing I love about this nursery they are always outside." Another told us, "My child enjoys playing with water, they love the swings! They learned how to do it at nursery, which is incredible as I tried to teach them for months." Children experimented with sand, water, and mud kitchen play. They mixed, poured, and transported water. Some staff commented and used questions to encourage children's thinking. Children were supported to negotiate spaces; they used equipment such as the swing and climbing frame with staff supporting when needed. These experiences supported children's social skills, physical coordination, and confidence, while also enhancing their wellbeing and sense of wonder.

Planning for children's play, learning, and development was individual and responsive. Focused observations through 'Planning in the Moment' supported progress at each child's pace and were recorded in personal plans. Staff had worked hard to implement this new way of planning; this was beginning to positively impact on children's play and learning experiences. A termly plan focused on key areas of learning such as literacy, numeracy, routines, outdoor play, and settling in. Staff described the planning process as flexible and collaborative, helping ensure learning experiences were intentional and relevant. Children's experiences were documented in well-presented floor books, capturing their voices. We encouraged the service to include children in developing the floor book. This would give them a sense of ownership and support them to reflect on their past experiences. A digital platform was used to share learning, successes and achievements with families, though feedback was mixed. Some families wanted 'more regular updates.' We found entries varied in consistency across children. The service could review its use of the platform to ensure all families are equally informed and engaged.

## Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

### Nurturing care and support

Overall, staff delivered care with kindness and compassion, creating a nurturing environment for children. Most staff knew the children well and had built positive relationships with them. Kind and warm interactions were mainly observed with children this created a caring ethos. Children received cuddles and caring responses from staff when needed. One family told us, "Our child is happy, likes and trusts the team." As a result, most children received warm and responsive care that supported their wellbeing. The use of keyworker groups strengthened these relationships and enabled staff to meet children's individual needs more effectively. This approach contributed to children's emotional security and personalised care.

Transitions into the service and between playrooms were well planned and child centred. Staff considered individual needs and worked collaboratively with families and professionals to tailor support. This helped children feel safe and confident. One family commented, "Usually my children are always happy to go to nursery and when they aren't the staff help to ensure they settle quickly." Daily routines and experiences were mostly well supported, particularly around personal care and sleep. Staff responded calmly to children needing emotional reassurance. Some routines such as, before story time and lunch were rushed and task focused. A few children appeared unsure of what was happening. The service could reflect on the pace of routines to adopt a slower, more attuned approach that supports emotional wellbeing and respects each children's individual needs.

Mealtimes were calm, unhurried and provided opportunities for social interaction and independence. Tablecloths and flowers added a warm, homely feel. One family commented, "Since my child started, their eating habits have improved so much." Children were supported to collect their own crockery and cutlery and self-serve from a choice of healthy, nutritious meals and snacks. As a result, children developed independence and enjoyed a positive healthy dining experience.

Children's wellbeing was supported well through personal plans based on Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework. Overall plans reflected each child's strengths, needs, and interests, and were regularly reviewed with families. Staff used pastoral logs to record updates and create actions, helping tailor support for children.

While some strategies to support children were in place, some were unclear, and not all staff used these. As a result, not all children received consistency and support that was right for them. (See Area for Improvement 1).

Children's healthcare needs were met as effective systems were in place. Medication was stored safely, with robust documentation including emergency procedures and risk assessments. Staff had received training to support individual children's medical needs. These measures ensured safe and consistent management of children's healthcare.

Families were warmly welcomed into the service, helping build positive relationships. Almost all felt welcomed, with one describing staff as "kind, caring, and supportive." Daily conversations and phone calls supported developing trust and connection. Despite staffing changes, the service had taken steps to strengthen connections, including developing the entrance area to create a space to chat. While a stay and play session and a summer celebration had been successful. Staff told us about planning to offer more flexible engagement such as drop ins. A regular coffee morning or coffee to 'take away' had been planned to enhance opportunities to engage with families. Involving families in shaping future events would contribute to supporting stronger relationships and reduce barriers to involvement.

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children receive care and support that meets their individual needs, the provider should review personal plans to include clear strategies where needed to support children and evaluate the impact of these. These should be understood by all staff and used consistently. This would help ensure they remain relevant and effective, leading to consistent and appropriate support for all children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state 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).

## 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 risk assessments are undertaken, which appropriately reflect children's care and support needs. Risk assessments should clearly reflect the risks to individual children and the strategies that will be put in place to minimise any harm.

This is to ensure 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).

**This area for improvement was made on 16 April 2025.**

## Action taken since then

Risk assessments were included in children's personal plans. These reflected children's individual care and support needs. These identified specific risks and outlined strategies to minimise harm, showing a proactive approach to keeping children safe.

Environmental risk-benefit assessments and daily checks further supported children's safety within the environment. For instance, the service had developed an assessment for children under two using the 'big room.'

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

## Previous area for improvement 2

The provider should ensure that all children's personal plans are completed either before or during the first initial introduction to the service. The provider should ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibility for ensuring that parents have opportunities to complete these before leaving a child in their care

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.' (HSCS 3.14)

**This area for improvement was made on 15 April 2025.**

## Action taken since then

The service has taken steps to improve the creche provision of the service following a complaint upheld in February 2025. The complaint highlighted gaps in how children's information was gathered before attending the creche.

The service had taken steps to improve how they gather key information about children before they start. The service had reviewed and strengthened its procedures to ensure children's needs are better understood and met before they access the creche. For instance they have introduced a 'This is Me' form that must be completed before children begin the service. Although the creche has yet to be reinstated these measures should help staff better prepare and support children during their time in the creche. The changes show a clear effort to address the issue, continued monitoring will be important to ensure the procedures are consistently followed and remain effective.

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

## Complaints

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



## Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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