

St. Mark's Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

177 Oxbgangs Road North
Edinburgh
EH13 9ED

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 October 2025

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002576

Service no:
CS2003015873

About the service

St. Mark's Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a service to a maximum of 110 children aged between 2 years and primary school entry at any one time. No more than 30 are aged 2 years to under 3 years.

The nursery is located in a detached building within the grounds of St. Mark's Primary School in the south of Edinburgh. It is close to local shops, parks and travel links. The premises consists of four playrooms, all with direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 29 October and 30 October 2025. 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 using the service
- spoke with staff and management
- reviewed online feedback from 12 families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

During this inspection we 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.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care that supported their wellbeing.
- Staff had a positive outlook on continuous improvement and there was a strong commitment to provide a quality service.
- Children had fun and were engaged in planned and spontaneous experiences that were responsive to their interests.
- Strong partnerships with families enhanced children's experiences.
- Connections with families positively impacted the quality of children's experiences.
- The lunchtime experience should be further developed, to ensure a safe, calm, relaxing and positive experience for all 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

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 had clearly defined vision, values, and aims. These were currently being reviewed in collaboration with staff, children, and families to ensure they reflected the nursery's ethos and uniqueness. Staff participated and shared their views through team meetings, while families shared feedback through questionnaires and informal discussions, such as, 'cuppa chat' sessions. Staff told us they felt well supported by the management team and were confident in sharing their ideas and views. All parents who completed our online survey agreed they were meaningfully involved in developing the service.

Quality assurance systems were in place to drive forward positive changes and improve outcomes for children. For example, processes ensured that various aspects of the service were monitored, and changes made to improve practice. A quality assurance calendar supported ongoing monitoring and auditing of personal plans, medication, and accident records. We asked the staff to continue to monitor these to ensure consistency in the approach. We suggested some improvements including developing how accidents are recorded to identify any relevant patterns that may occur. This would support the development of the service.

The service had developed an improvement plan, identifying key priorities to support improvement. Progress was being made in key areas of literacy and numeracy, inclusion and equity, securing children's progress, including outdoor learning. Moving forward, consideration should be given to identifying clear measures of success, to ensure that development supports progress.

Leadership recognised the importance of maintaining a stable and skilled team to support the wellbeing of children and staff. Although the service had faced challenging times of staff absence, the current team demonstrated strong alignment with the service's values and ethos. Structured induction processes supported new staff and students, with mentors assigned to help them settle into their roles and routines. Staff and students told us they felt confident in their roles and support they had received.

Children benefitted from a passionate and competent staff team committed to delivering high-quality care, play, and learning. Staff engaged in ongoing training and applied evidence-based practices to ensure the best outcomes for children and families.

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 had fun and participated in a variety of play experiences which stimulated their natural curiosity, learning and creativity. As a result, most engaged in play for sustained periods of time. This increased their

confidence and supported their wellbeing and involvement. For example, children enjoyed spending time at the tool bench, block play and being creative with art and crafts. Parents shared, "My child is involved in a wide range of activities and fun experiences" and "It's great to see how much they enjoy exploring new things and learning through play".

Staff enabled children to play and learn at their own pace having fun as they explored the world around them. Staff used effective questioning to extend and develop children's individual learning. For example, staff listened to children's ideas and encouraged them to play games and take turns. However, there were a few missed opportunities to extend children's thinking. Staff at times were disturbed from extending play in a meaningful way because their focus was on meeting the immediate needs of other children, at busier times of the day and the end of day session. Staff should continue to develop questioning to extend learning and enable all children to widen their skills through play.

Outdoor play enriched children's curiosity, physical development, and wellbeing. Children developed skills in climbing and balance supported by staff who encouraged them to build skills in assessing risk for themselves. Children enjoyed the freedom of the outdoors and playing in the mud kitchen and the 'secret garden'. Children keenly told us of their achievements in growing pumpkins and peas and how they looked after them. Children shared, "I water the peas and they grow big" and "I can eat the peas, I love them". These opportunities encouraged healthy eating, an interest in science and boosted self-esteem.

Children could deepen their learning through more access and opportunities to digital technology. The service had identified the need to improve digital play and learning in their most recent improvement plan. We discussed, for example, the use of scales, torches and cameras.

Children were motivated and engaged through a balance of intentional and responsive planning. Experiences reflected children's ideas and curiosities and current interests included bats, planets and pumpkins. Floorbooks were used to capture children's interests, including what they had learned. The service were working to improve on next steps and should continue to develop the link from responsive and intentional planning and observations to identified next steps. This would show how they are supporting individuals to progress.

Staff encouraged children to talk about their learning and what they wanted to know more about. This ensured that targets were meaningful to children and that they were motivated to achieve. We asked the service to consider how to reduce the interruptions to children's play, for example, through planned group activities. This would support children to engage in deeper, meaningful play.

An online digital platform shared observation of children's achievements. This provided an opportunity for families to get an insight into their child's play and learning and allowed them to share home learning and experiences with the setting. These should be further developed to improve the quality and regularity of observations to capture learning. Parents gave positive responses to the use of the learning journals, however, some parents told us they would like to see more regular updates of children's experiences.

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

Children experienced warm, responsive care that supported their emotional wellbeing and development. Interactions between staff and children were consistently kind and compassionate. Staff responded sensitively to children's emotions, offering calm reassurance and support. At times there were missed opportunities to interact with children due to staff responding to other children's needs. Parents told us, "Staff are kind and friendly and go above and beyond when helping your child" and "I really like how friendly and welcoming the staff are. They create a warm and supportive environment for both children and adults".

Transitions 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. For example, strategies were in place to support children when they started attending the service or when they moved on to primary school. As a result, staff minimised disruption to children during these times by making transitions as smooth as possible. We asked staff to be mindful of transitions during the day. For example, when bringing children together at the beginning and end of the day, to ensure they continued to be engaged and have meaningful experiences.

Children's wellbeing was supported through the use of personal plans. These reflected each child's strengths, needs, and interests, and were regularly reviewed with families. The service should continue to develop how they record pastoral information. Chronologies were used to record concerns; however, the service could further develop how they record less formal information to support them to identify patterns and support wellbeing. Staff worked in partnership with external health professionals to ensure holistic support for children and families. The multi-agency approach strengthened outcomes and built confidence amongst staff and families alike.

Medication was stored appropriately and staff were aware of all children's needs. Documentation including emergency procedures and risk assessments were in place and staff had received training to support individual children's medical needs. We found some inconsistencies in the location of medical forms and the information of medication dosage. The service should ensure these are regularly monitored to ensure safe and consistent management of children's healthcare.

Mealtimes were valuable opportunities to promote children's involvement independence and enhance their experiences. Children had opportunities to be independent, for example, self-serving, and pouring their own drinks, which supported them to build their confidence. Staff sat with children which promoted positive relationships; however, this was not always consistent, and often staff were taken up with other activities. This meant supervision was inconsistent. The lunchtime experience should be reviewed to ensure a safe calm and relaxing experience for all children. For example, reducing staff movement, and providing a smoother flow to the self-serving experience. This would increase the opportunities to develop children's independence (see area of improvement 1).

Connections with families increased their engagement in the service, positively impacting the quality of children's experiences. Staff sensitively responded to individual needs and circumstances of families. This

approach enabled them to learn from families, support children's growing sense of self, and ensure the setting remained responsive to their unique needs. Staff created a warm and welcoming environment where children and families felt valued and supported. For example, cuppa chats, stay and play sessions and special occasion events. These impacted positively on the quality of children's care and support.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children experience a safe, calm and relaxing mealtime that supports their independence, the provider should review mealtime routines.

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

'I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 30 April 2024 to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, the provider must ensure the Premises are safe. The outdoor environment should be free from hazards, and the required repair on the drain cover should be addressed.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24).

This requirement was made on 18 June 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

The premises were safe and the outdoor space free from hazards. At the previous inspection a small open hole had been identified as a hazard for children and staff. This had now been rectified and a drain cover attached and secured and did not pose a risk to children.

Met - within timescales

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 ensure children are supported to achieve, staff should develop the way they record and plan for children's learning. This should recognise significant learning and development as well as identifying how children can be supported in future. This should be responsive to children's needs and choices.

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).

This area for improvement was made on 18 June 2025.

Action taken since then

Children's learning was recorded and planning was carried out regularly as a staff team. Play experiences were recorded in a floorbook which identified activities and experiences and recorded children's voices. The service were currently further developing the use of next steps to extend children's learning and the recording of individual children's progress.

This area of improvement has been met.

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

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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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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