

Parkhead Primary School Nursery Day Care of Children

Harburn Road
West Calder
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 December 2025

Service provided by:
West Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002601

Service no:
CS2003016170

About the service

Parkhead Primary School Nursery is registered to provide an early learning and childcare service to 74 children aged two years to not yet attending primary school. Of those no more than 10 should be aged two years to under three years.

The service is provided from Parkhead Primary School in the West Calder area of West Lothian, and offers funded childcare to eligible children. Children have access to a large open plan playroom, a smaller room for quieter experiences, and free-flow access to an enclosed outdoor area. The children benefit from regular trips to the library and other amenities in the local area.

The service is situated close to public transport routes, shops, and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 2 December 2025 between the hours of 09:00 and 16:30. We returned on 3 December 2025 to complete the inspection. 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 and two of their families
- reviewed feedback from an online form from 15 families
- observed practice and daily life
- spoke with staff and management
- reviewed documents relating to children's care and development, and the management of the service.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure that 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.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. 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

- An embedded, reflective culture of self-evaluation was improving outcomes for children.
- Experiences, spaces and interactions were high quality, resulting in good levels of engagement for most children.
- Planning and assessment approaches were capturing meaningful learning. Staff should now focus on evaluations of learning and next steps to continue to drive progress.
- Children experienced warm, responsive care that supported their emotional wellbeing and development.
- Some quality assurance activities needed strengthened to ensure that robust systems were consistently in place.

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

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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.

The service had a clear, shared vision, "growing, caring, learning together," which was understood by all staff and embedded in practice. Children's outcomes remained central, because this vision guided the improvement plan and self-evaluation activities. For example, key priorities, such as tracking progress, and observing learning were aimed at promoting children's achievement and development over time. Children's experiences were enriched because staff worked in an environment where they felt valued and confident to lead change.

Leadership responsibilities were shared across the team, giving staff ownership of specific areas for driving improvement. Regular check-ins and the use of audit tools supported reflective practice, and empowered staff to influence developments. This approach strengthened staff wellbeing, and created a culture of continuous improvement, which directly benefited children's learning and development.

Despite staffing pressures and time constraints, meetings were well planned and focused on improvement priorities. Communication was managed effectively through a range of methods, including team meetings, huddles, emails, and visual prompts. This ensured that staff remained informed and able to deliver consistent practice. Clear routines and guidance supported continuity for children, and helped maintain a stable environment.

Values-based practice was consistently evident. Staff interactions with children were warm, respectful, and attentive, promoting emotional security and positive relationships. The environment reflected values of nurture and achievement, remaining inviting and well maintained throughout the day. These approaches ensured that children felt safe, valued, and ready to engage in learning.

Leaders and staff used evidence from self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for development in the service, resulting in some meaningful improvements. For example, evaluation of the lunchtime experience had led to changes that enhanced children's enjoyment resulting in a calm, sociable experience. This enabled children to develop their independence. Ongoing work on personal plans and observations had been strengthened through staff training and team reflection, helping to identify gaps and shape next steps.

Review dates were set to monitor progress and maintain a sustainable pace for improvement. These actions were beginning to show positive impact, with further development planned to enhance the quality and consistency of observations. The team remains committed to building on these improvements together.

Some evaluation of play spaces had taken place, but not all next steps were actioned, which meant there remained missed opportunities for richer imaginative play. Ensuring any next steps are implemented and evaluated, would continue to spark creativity, enhance experiences, and inspire children's play.

To ensure quality assurance systems were consistently robust, improvements could be made in areas such as the monitoring of medication, to align with best practice, and ensure children's safety. Leaders responded promptly during the inspection to address these concerns. While accidents and incidents were monitored, there was limited evidence that follow up measures were effective. Leaders and staff should ensure any measures proposed in audits are evaluated to determine their impact, and reduce the likelihood of repeated accidents. Moving forward, staff and leaders should maintain consistent, clear communication, act quickly on concerns, and keep accurate records to ensure that children always remain safe and well supported.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

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.

Staff's understanding of child development meant they had created a stimulating, well-planned environment that supported play and learning. Most children showed high levels of engagement during play, and showed confidence, motivation, and imagination. The atmosphere within the service was calm yet purposeful, with children absorbed in a wide range of rich experiences. Sensory play was well considered, offering variety beyond sand and water, including natural materials such as herbs and oranges to encourage exploration. Thoughtful use of lighting created a softer, calming space, and the development of a sensory room promised further opportunities for children who needed quieter experiences. Most children were independent and able to lead their own play, which supported deeper engagement and learning.

While many children thrived, some opportunities were missed to use spaces, experiences, and interactions more effectively to keep every child engaged throughout the session. Looking at ways to further develop an inclusive, communication-rich environment would be of benefit moving forward. For example, visual supports were very enabling for children at snack time, but were not consistently available across the playroom. Extending labelling and adding visuals, such as timetables or social stories could help to enhance engagement for all children, and make transitions across the day smoother. Other strategies recommended by visiting professionals such as speech and language therapists could also be of benefit, to enable all children to participate in ways that suit them.

Although outdoor spaces were thoughtfully designed with sensory experiences and a well-equipped mud kitchen, children engaged less outdoors than indoors. This meant there were some missed opportunities for physical activity and exploration unique to the outdoor environment. On the second day, staff introduced insect-hunting resources and actively supported this interest, which significantly increased children's excitement and curiosity. This responsive approach created meaningful outdoor learning that promoted exploration and progress. Further reflection on reorganising outdoor areas could enhance opportunities for active play, physical development, and learning about the natural world.

Children enjoyed strong links with the local community, which enriched their learning. Regular visits to places such as the library and local parks helped children develop confidence, engage with their community, and understand how to keep themselves safe on roads.

Interactions were consistently warm, kind, and respectful, with staff often at children's level to support language development and problem-solving. Some opportunities were missed for staff to use alternative communication methods to support children who needed them. For example, the use of 'Sign Along' and careful pacing helped some children stay focused and communicate effectively during play.

These approaches promoted confidence and extended learning. To build on this success, strategies should now be embedded across the whole team, to enhance outcomes for all children.

Planning and assessment were child-centred, with floor books and responsive planning sheets, capturing children's voices and interests. While these approaches supported meaningful learning, some plans lacked clear evaluation, and next steps and observations were not always linked to significant learning or progress. Strengthening these processes would help staff track development more effectively, and plan experiences that build on prior learning.

Overall, children experienced a rich and varied play environment that supported independence, creativity, and curiosity. Where staff interactions were responsive and well-timed, children's learning and wellbeing were enhanced. Continued work on outdoor engagement, consistent use of communication supports, and more focused assessment will further improve outcomes for all children.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

Children experienced warm, responsive care that supported their emotional wellbeing and development. Staff interactions were consistently kind and sensitive, offering calm reassurance and helping children feel safe and secure. This nurturing approach promoted confidence and positive relationships. Transitions were well managed overall. Strategies were in place to support children starting at the service, with flexibility for individual needs, including multiple visits before settling. Transition into primary school was a clear strength, helping children feel prepared and confident. Some children would benefit from additional support, with smaller transitions during the day to help them move smoothly between experiences, and maintain engagement.

Mealtimes were calm, sociable, and well organised, providing valuable opportunities for children to develop independence and life skills. Children were actively involved in setting tables, preparing fruit, and clearing dishes, which promoted responsibility and confidence. Some practical adjustments, such as smaller utensils for self-service and a child-led sign-in system, would further enhance independence and literacy skills. We discussed ways with the service to fully involve all children in choosing snack options. This would further promote inclusion for all children, and support their sense of belonging.

Privacy and dignity were generally maintained, but improvements were required in toilet areas off the playroom to ensure consistency. Supervision of handwashing after eating, using the toilet, and playing outdoors should be strengthened to reduce infection risks.

Personal plans supported children's needs, and were reviewed regularly. Most plans were detailed and included strategies to promote achievement and comfort, but some lacked clarity on how actions would be implemented. Strategies from other professional agencies, such as visual timetables, and other smaller interventions, were noted, but not consistently evident in practice. Strengthening the link between plans and daily routines would improve outcomes for children. Ensuring that all information required to support children is accessible to all staff, would also further promote effective practice.

Families felt involved in planning, and spoke positively about the support they received. One told us, "Someone is always happy to help, always happy to answer questions, offer advice, and spend time listening. I fully believe that my child has come along so much in so many areas, thanks to their ongoing support." Families valued opportunities to discuss their child's progress, though there was scope to improve this further. One told us they would like, "A little more notice about parent events, and more opportunities to be involved, or find out what the children have been up to." Another asked for clearer communication about staff changes. Overall, relationships with families were strong, flexible, and staff were approachable and supportive. This helped children feel secure and included.

Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website (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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