

Thrive Childcare and Education Corner House Nurseries Gillsland Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 January 2026

Service provided by:
Thrive Childcare and Education
Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003002955

Service no:
CS2015336532

About the service

Thrive Childcare and Education Corner House Nurseries Gillsland, is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 58 children aged three months, to those not yet attending primary school, with a maximum of 18 children under two years.

The service operates from a large detached villa in the Merchiston area of Edinburgh. The premises consist of three floors with children accommodated on all levels. There is a large outdoor space, which is separated into three garden areas for each age group of children. The service is close to local transport links and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 and 28 January 2026 between 09:15 and 18:15. 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 gathered feedback from 13 of their families who responded to our online survey.
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

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 the inspection we did not identify any new areas for improvement relating to the core assurances.

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 all children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

Key messages

- The pre-school garden had been developed to give children a variety of outdoor play experiences in all weather.
- Children had positive relationships with the staff team, who were responding to their needs and supporting children to have fun.
- The playrooms had been developed to include cosy calm spaces which children enjoyed accessing.
- Clear aims and objectives were reviewed and shared with families helping them to be involved in the service and how it develops.
- Quality assurance systems had been developed which were supporting improved experiences for children.
- The service should continue to develop how they deploy staff responsively to ensure that all children's needs are consistently met.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	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 heading as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

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.

Service aims and objectives were well developed to reflect the individual views of staff and families using the service. This was an ongoing process where consultation was planned to engage families and the outcomes were displayed in the reception areas. The displays shared pictures to show how areas were embedded into practice, this helped families see the impact of sharing their views.

Quality assurance had been developed which included the monitoring of practice, environment, documentation and experiences. This helped the service to improve children's experiences, for example, the development of experiences in the pre-school garden. In the review of records we saw that the audits had highlighted clear actions for staff to ensure that these were reviewed with families in line with legislative requirements. To support further development, the audits should now focus on the quality of information being recorded to ensure that this is consistent across the nursery. We shared resources which would support the leadership team to further develop their quality assurance approaches to ensure that they can measure if changes have been successful in improving experiences for children.

Accidents on the whole were well recorded and where appropriate notified to us. The manager shared how they had identified some patterns and taken action to reduce risks. However, one accident we sampled had no investigation and no record of actions taken. The service should ensure a consistent approach to investigating and actioning any changes to practice to allow them to evaluate effectiveness and reduce risks.

Regular meetings supported staff to be involved in evaluating the service. Some staff had taken on leadership roles, for example, sharing their learning with the wider team and leading on specific areas of practice. For example, staff supported the development of the pre-school garden.

Staff were identifying and recording appropriate concerns about children. Most had been shared with lead services in line with national guidance. All staff should be confident in progressing these where an allegation of harm has been made. The provider shared that their policies have now been updated to support staff to seek advice from a lead agency where appropriate.

Initial recruitment processes were managed by a central team who recorded decisions and actions taken. We discussed the change in policy to only seek references from registered business email addresses which may mean they are not getting the most recent information about a candidate to inform their decisions. Further work should be done to ensure that all information is dated and shares how recruitment decisions are made to support managers to provide staff with inductions which will meet their needs.

Staff skills, knowledge and values and deployment

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 generally were kind, caring and nurturing in their practice. Displays in the nursery celebrated staff achievements helping them to feel valued.

All staff said induction supported them to learn and build skills and confidence. Staff shared that team meetings and regular one to one meetings were supporting their professional development and building confidence. For example, delegated leadership was being developed, with staff who had attended training, sharing new practice with their peers. They reflected on current best practice at meetings and used this to develop their rooms. For example, developing the cosy quiet spaces in rooms.

Staff were given feedback on their practice through peer reviews. These were identifying areas for development in the rooms and linked to individual learning plans for staff. These could be further developed to ensure that improvements and strategies are specific to ensure that progress can be measured.

Children felt comfortable in the rooms as staff generally knew the children well, however, this was not consistent among practitioners. For some children, experiences during the inspection were not supportive of their wellbeing. Consideration needs to be given to how additional needs are planned for, how staff are supported when room leads are absent and in building staff confidence in asking for support when additional help is required. The area for improvement made at the last inspection had not been fully addressed and is continued (see area for improvement 4 in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

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 playrooms had been developed to allow for more flexible lighting helping to create calmer spaces for children. Children accessed the small cosy spaces to self-regulate and rest at points throughout the day.

Safety measures were in place helping to monitor and take action to ensure safety. Frequent environment checks and recent maintenance actions helped to keep the environment warm addressing an area for improvement made at the last inspection.

The reception spaces were well planned and decorated to create a welcoming space. Children had space to store personal belongings and had enough room to develop independence skills in getting ready to go outside. Playrooms were well-resourced which helped to make the space interesting for children and keep them busy and engaged.

The entrance was secured and visitors gained access by ringing a doorbell and being admitted by staff. This ensured that only people who were meant to access the service came in. Gates in outdoor play spaces and staff head counting and keeping accurate registers helped to keep children safe when accessing the outdoors.

Some outdoor spaces were well planned, and most children had regular access to these. Freedom in the outdoor space supported children to lead their own learning and experiences. More should be done to develop younger children's gardens to make them as interesting as the pre-school garden. The service should continue to monitor children's access to the outdoors to ensure equity of experiences as none of the playrooms have direct access to outdoors. The service should consider creating opportunities for the children to make choices about where they play.

Risk assessments and checklists were used by staff to ensure that spaces and activities were safe. Staff should consider reviewing these to ensure that resources are clean throughout activities. Any actions taken as a result of accidents or incidents should be clearly documented to ensure that these can be reviewed to ensure that they are effective.

In pre-school staff told us about how children were consulted in the redesign of spaces, this helped them to meet children's needs well. Throughout the inspection, children transported resources to play in the spaces where they wanted them freely. This meant that they were not restricted in developing their play.

Children's confidence was supported by appropriately sized furniture. For example the low units in the baby room gave them opportunities to pull them selves to stand and move around the room independently.

Several books in different languages and multi ethnic dolls, kitchen equipment and small world items helped to support inclusion, however more could be done for children at mealtimes to support familiarity.

Paper records were stored confidentially in the service and individual staff logins for learning journals kept information confidential. The services policies and practice demonstrated an understanding of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

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 planned a variety of experiences to support children to reach their milestones as a group. This meant that there were experiences to choose from in the indoor and outdoor environments which would support children's development. Indoor spaces were well planned and core provision along with responsive plans meant that children were generally engaged, busy and occupied across the nursery. Resources were updated responsively and developed to provide curiosity and challenge.

Children in pre-school were leading and developing their learning in and outdoors. For example, making mud cakes, developing their own obstacle courses and playing unicorns and fairies. The experiences were varied and interesting and offered children challenge. Outdoor spaces for younger children could be further developed to reflect the range of experiences offered in the pre-school garden. This would help the younger children to have more experiences with natural resources and develop new skills.

Generally babies enjoyed a range of experiences and that they explored at a pace that was right for them, supported sensitively by staff. Staff singing was used to develop routines, learn new words, distract and redirect babies. This helped to keep the space calm and purposeful. Staff role modelling how resources could be played with helped create interest and curiosity. As a result, babies were engaged for a longer period of time in play.

Toddlers were engaged with the core provision available to them. For example, a group of children were supported by staff when playing in the water tray helping to develop pouring skills, children remained sustained in the play once staff withdrew exploring further.

Staff had a sense of fun and were often invited into play with children. Some staff were skilled at having deeper conversations to add depth of learning to experiences. Generally there was dialogue and narration of activities, supporting children's vocabulary development. The service should continue to build on staff confidence in developing learning through discussions with children. For example, supporting children to develop problem solving and offer challenge to children who are needing it.

At times there were missed opportunities to engage with children in the way they wanted. For example, when staff were too task focussed and missed opportunities for babies to be read to. Considerations should be given to how the routines of the day support children who attend on a part time basis to be purposefully engaged in the same way as their peers.

Cycles for planning for play had been developed. In some rooms this was well established and links were clear between individual personal planning, development plans and planned room experiences. Some cycles showed children's interests being explored and informing their individual learning. As a result, helping to provide children with opportunities to develop. Responsive planning was well established and records showed how this was supporting children to have a variety of experiences. Some aspects of intentional planning were activity and adult led, and as a result, not relevant for all children. Further work is need to support staff's confidence with planning approaches to fully reflect children's interests.

Observation's in learning journals were helping to share children's experiences and achievements with families. As a result, this helped them be involved in children's learning at the service. The service planned to further develop staff practice in this area at a focussed training event. This will support staff to becoming more skilled in making evaluative observations of children's play and learning.

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 generally experienced warm, kind and caring support from staff. At times of the day and in some rooms this was not always consistent for example, due to the high level of need in the room at the time. At times there were missed opportunities to engage with children who were quieter and would benefit from support. The service should continue to develop their monitoring to ensure that practice becomes more consistent across the day and the service.

Personal care was respectful of home routines and staff consulted with children before nappy changing and wiping noses and used their names throughout. This helped children to feel respected and supported their developing identity.

Over mealtimes children were offered opportunities to be involved in helping with preparation for snacks and mealtimes. Floor books and consultations showed how children's views had been used to develop the menus. This helped children to enjoy the healthy meals and snacks provided. Staff sat with children at mealtimes helping them to be sociable experiences. The service should continue to monitor the size of foods to ensure that these are consistently safe for the age and stage of the children to reduce the risk of choking. Staff sat with children and supported them, helping to supervise and encourage eating. Consideration should be given to the length of time babies wait for foods to be served to make this as positive an experience as possible. Systems were in place to keep children safe from known allergens and staff were familiar with children's individual needs. Children helped themselves to their water bottles and these moved outside with children, helping to keep them hydrated.

Medication was well organised and documented. Reviews took place regularly helping to keep children safe.

Children had personal plans which were generally reviewed with families. For some children however, it was not clear what had been shared with families. More could be done to ensure that the gaps identified by monitoring were actioned promptly so that staff can be confident that personal plans always have accurate up to date information in them. Where learning reviews had taken place these highlighted children's progress and achievements at the service.

For some newer children who were settling, plans were not yet established. Our expectation would be that information is gathered recorded and used to effectively support children while they are transitioning into the service. The manager shared that this will be addressed with 'all about me' sections of plans going out to parents before children start with a section to record the child's progress settling in. The service should continue to develop and action monitoring of personal planning to support consistency across the nursery.

Visual timetables were available in some areas but not always used consistently to support children. Staff spoke about lanyards with symbols which had been used to support specific children. However, overall there was a lack of planning for children who had English as a second language or to support early communication. The manager shared that 'Signalong' training had been planned for lead practitioners who will then share this with the wider staff team. This will support the service to further develop their strategies for communication.

Generally parents told us that they were happy with the care and support provided. The majority of families feel that they have been involved in a meaningful way in developing the service. Most families felt involved in personal planning. Some were not aware that their child had a personal plan. The service should continue to build on this practice to support all families to be meaningfully involved in developing their child's personal plan.

Many parents highlighted that they would appreciate more information about their child's day and more updates in the digital platform. This would help them to feel more involved in their child's experiences at the service.

Open days were planned to share updates and give families time in the service with their child at the weekend. A recently set up parent's forum was helping some families to engage more in the service. Some families shared that more flexibility in times and ways to attend for example, using digital methods would reduce barrier to them participating. One family commented: "We have the opportunity to attend a parents forum but it's difficult to attend due to work. Perhaps if there were more survey type engagements I'd be able to share my views more often".

Staff consulted with families to celebrate festivals and events inclusively. One family commented "they embrace different cultures and my child always comes home happy".

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 service should ensure that all appropriate infection control measures are in place to prevent the spread of infection and keep children safe in line with 'Health protection in children and young people settings, including education' (gov.uk 2024). This should include, but is not limited to:

- identifying infection control risks and taking action to address them
- encouraging good handwashing practice
- storing cleaning equipment out of reach of children
- providing meals with infection control practice.

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 area for improvement was made on 22 November 2024.

Action taken since then

Nappy changing units and toilets were clean and clear of debris and cleaning materials. Nappies, wipes and spare clothing were stored in sealed boxes.

Mealtimes were supported by good infection prevention and control and allergy management practice helping to keep children safe. Staff should continue to monitor handwashing to ensure that this is consistent and effective.

This area for improvement is met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children experience a consistently positive and respectful environment, the provider should ensure ongoing maintenance needs are identified and actioned through effective quality assurance. This would include but not be limited to ensuring children are cared for in a comfortable and warm environment.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22) and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous

improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS, 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 7 December 2023.

Action taken since then

Maintenance actions and regular monitoring of the environment meant that the environment was consistently warm and comfortable for the children.

This area for improvement is met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To improve upon outcomes for children, quality assurance systems should be developed further to assess and improve the quality of the provision in line with best practice. The team should take responsibility for positively contributing to improvement and be accountable for the quality of their work.

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).

This area for improvement was made on 17 November 2022.

Action taken since then

Approaches to quality assurance, including self-evaluation, audits and monitoring, consultation with children, families and staff had been developed since the last inspection. This had led to improvements in record keeping, the environment and children's experiences. Further work should be done to ensure that improvements are always specific and measurable to support the service to ensure progress them.

This area for improvement is met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To promote consistently positive experiences for all children, the provider should support the management team effectively review the deployment of staff responsively across the day and when forward planning. Staffing arrangements should be well-planned to ensure there is the correct mix of skills, knowledge and experience available within each playroom.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state: '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) and 'If I am supported and cared for by a team or more than one organisation, this is well coordinated so that I experience consistency and continuity' (HSCS, 4.17).

This area for improvement was made on 17 November 2022.

Action taken since then

In some rooms the deployment and mix of staff skills was supporting positive experiences. In some rooms there were inconsistent experiences. For example supply staff know the children but need more direction. Staff need confidence built to ensure that they ask for support when needed. Planning for individual needs with clear strategies would also support staff to provide support to children and support their wellbeing consistently. Planning for staff absences would support staff to be able to offer support more effectively.

The use of walkie talkies was helping staff to support children to lead their learning more through access to the outdoor spaces. However more work is needed to ensure that children know they can access the outdoors throughout their time at nursery.

The service shared that they have training planned to support them to reduce barrier to outdoor play caused by the physical layout of the building.

This area for improvement is not met and is continues in this report.

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
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	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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