

# Mulberry Bush Montessori Day Care of Children

12 Balfron Road  
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Glasgow  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
10 March 2026

**Service provided by:**  
Mairi Clark and Patrick Clark a  
Partnership trading as Mulberry Bush  
Montessori

**Service provider number:**  
SP2013012023

**Service no:**  
CS2013315796

## About the service

Mulberry Bush Montessori is situated on the main street within the village of Killearn in Stirling. Children were cared for in designated playrooms and have access to a large outdoor area. Older children have access to forest learning within local woods for two days throughout the week.

The service is in partnership with Stirling Council and is registered to provide care to a maximum of children 71 children not yet attending primary school.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 09 and 10 March 2026. 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:

- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the children using the service
- spoke with staff and the management team
- spoke with three family members during the inspection
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment.

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.

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 interactions and responsive care which supported them to feel happy, confident, safe and secure.
- Staff worked very well together they were compassionate, friendly, and motivated. It was evident they had children's best interests and wellbeing at the heart of their work.
- Children benefitted from a Montessori approach to play and learning which was inspiring, engaged children in their experiences and laid strong foundations for lifelong skills.
- We encouraged the management team to continue to embed systems in practice to ensure their self-evaluation and quality assurance was robust and effective in continuing to improve outcomes.

**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	5 - Very 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.

Leaders were visible, committed, and approachable and demonstrated high aspirations for children and families. This ethos was embedded in shared values and a positive culture, which provided children and families with positive outcomes. The vision, values and aims of the service had not been reviewed for some time, however, the services Montessori approach remained unchanged. Leaders shared they would engage with current families and children to ensure the vision and values continued to reflect what mattered most to them.

Improvement plans were realistic, achievable, and aligned with the needs of the service which promoted steady progress. Leaders demonstrated a good understanding of self-evaluation processes, and with support from the local authority had started using systems for data collection. Action plans provided clarity on intended improvements. These systems were in the early stages, and we encouraged leaders to maintain clearer records of quality assurance processes and how improvements identified are monitored. For example, while environments were aesthetically pleasing with natural furniture and décor, there was scope to make them more homely, welcoming, and inviting. The manager shared they would further develop quality assurance systems to evaluate the impact of future changes on children's outcomes.

Regular questionnaires and verbal discussions with families meant their views and opinions mattered. Further work was needed to demonstrate how consultation influenced positive change. A parent we spoke with told us, 'There have been some family questionnaires however, I am not sure how that information is used.' Strengthening this aspect of practice would support families to be confident their contributions shaped ongoing developments and improvements.

Staff had a good mix of knowledge, skills, and experience to support children and families. They were receptive to feedback and demonstrated a willingness to reflect on and improve their practice. All staff had undertaken core training and had attended some additional training or self-directed reading and research. To support staff further they would benefit from regular support meetings and a training plan linked to improvement priorities, and their own professional development. Additionally, it would support staff to become more familiar with current best practice and national guidance.

We sampled recruitment files. The relevant checks had not always been received before staff were employed. While there was a risk assessment in place, exceptional situations should be discussed with the Care Inspectorate prior to the staff member starting in their role. The provider shared they would follow best practice guidance 'Safer Recruitment Through Better Recruitment' to ensure staff are safely recruited.

Staff members new to the team spoke positively about leaders and colleagues, whom they found approachable and supportive. They were mentored by senior staff and received an induction that covered key policies and nursery procedures. Strengthening the induction programme to include opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice over time would provide assurance that expectations of roles and responsibilities were understood. We signposted the 'National Induction Resource' to assist with this.

**Children play and learn** 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing learning and developing.

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children benefitted from a Montessori approach to play and learning which was inspiring and laid strong foundations for lifelong skills. Children experienced a range of responsive and planned high quality learning experiences which engaged them very well in their play. Children were actively involved in leading their own play and learning as staff provided specially designed Montessori materials that built on their natural abilities and interests, enabling them to acquire and develop skills in meaningful ways.

Experiences which supported the development of older children's early numeracy skills were naturally woven into their play. For example, children created snake patterns using coloured beads, staff encouraged them to problem-solve by replacing ten individual-coloured beads with a single strip of ten golden beads. A child proudly showed us their achievements and told us, 'That was tricky but look I have a golden snake now, I did it.' Older children confidently used 'work mats' to organise their activities, showing independence and respect for their play space. We observed two children build a tower using different sized blocks. To complete their construction, they used a small step ladder to place the final block at the top. They told us, 'Look at that and it didn't fall, wow.'

Younger children played happily and confidently and were supported very well by staff to join in, play together and have fun. Most resources for younger children were interesting and engaged their curiosities. Staff skilfully scaffolded learning, which meant younger children were encouraged, challenged, and supported to make progress in their development.

Children's voices were clearly valued, as floor and planning books evidenced their involvement through comments, drawings, and reflections that shaped the planning process. While this demonstrated strong participation, there were some missed opportunities to explore children's learning and interests in greater depth. We suggested younger children's, planning be developed further to detail learning outcomes and be centred around sensory and schematic play to better reflect their developmental needs. We encouraged staff to continue developing their use of floor and planning books to clearly evidence children's learning over time. Leaders shared they would reflect with the staff team on how this may be developed.

Observations of learning and next steps in development were individualised and clearly focused, which supported children to make meaningful progress. Children's successes and achievements were captured very well in 'My Learning Chapter Books' and shared regularly with families. This resulted in positive relationships and families feeling included in their child's play and learning. A parent we spoke with told us, 'I am happy with the play and learning, I feel staff are responsive to children needs and look at ways to do this considering their interests.'

The rural setting provided a natural, calm outdoor space with an interesting and stimulating garden area. Children played on tyre swings, larger loose parts and climbing apparatus which engaged them in physical play and kept them active and healthy. Older children visited the forest two full days a week for forest school learning. This extended their opportunities for exploration, risk taking and connection with their natural environment.

**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.

Staff were positive role models, they consistently provided children with interactions that were friendly, fun, and nurturing. Their calm, kind and caring approach supported children effectively and demonstrated high aspirations for their wellbeing. Warm and responsive interactions promoted an inclusive and nurturing ethos. Most staff knew children very well, and it was evident that building resilience was important to them and central to children's development. These positive attachments and relationships supported children's emotional wellbeing very well. Families told us, 'Very supportive nurturing team who wanted to get to know my child,' 'Know the children well, they are responsive and have a good learning approach' and 'My child is happy and that is all that matters.'

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning in partnership with families. Information gathered was used meaningfully to help staff provide individualised care. Staff were knowledgeable about each child's needs and any strategies in place to support them. This meant children were happy and fully engaged in their nursery experiences.

Families were invited to attend stay and play and singalong sessions with their children, and staff warmly welcomed families into the service each day at drop off and collection times. However, families did not routinely enter the playrooms on a daily basis. We asked leaders to consider how they could reintroduce families into playrooms more regularly. This would further promote the welcoming ethos and partnership working with families.

Mealtimes were unhurried and provided children with opportunities for choice and independence. For example, they self-served and once finished they decanted food and crockery into basins and washed their dishes. Snack choices were healthy and fresh water was available for children throughout the day. Staff's knowledge of allergies and dietary requirements kept children safe. At lunchtime, in the older children's playroom some children benefited from rich conversations and support from staff. We suggested, leaders undertake some quality assurance in this area of practice to ensure all children experience high quality engagement from staff during their mealtime experiences.

Staff followed infection control procedures and engaged warmly with children during personal care. However, children's privacy and dignity were not fully respected due to toilet and change room doors being open, including when meals were being served. We acknowledged that doors were heavy and provided alternatives that would protect children's privacy, dignity and wellbeing.

Staff had a good understanding of their role in keeping children safe from harm and the child protection officer was confident within their role. In the event of their absence children would benefit from another staff member with advanced child protection training. Staff understood children's medical needs, and medication was regularly reviewed. We asked staff to ensure they gather clear and detailed information from families about the specific symptoms that indicate when medication should be administered. This would further support staff to administer medication safely. We signposted guidance 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' to assist with this.

## 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

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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