

Pennywell Early Learning and Childcare Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 March 2026

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
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About the service

Pennywell Early Learning and Childcare is a new purpose-built service located in the North of the City of Edinburgh. It is housed within the MacMillan Hub, which also houses Muirhouse library and North Edinburgh Arts.

Pennywell Early Learning and Childcare is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 166 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of which no more than nine are aged under 2 years; no more than 45 are aged 2 years to under 3 years; and no more than 112 are aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school full time. No more than 15 children aged 2 years will be cared for in any of the playrooms.

There are two playrooms downstairs; the Elder room for children aged three to five years and the Oak for children aged two years to school age. Upstairs there are three playrooms, one of which is currently open, for children aged two and three years olds.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced follow-up inspection which took place on Tuesday 17 March 2026 between 09:30 and 17:30. The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. An announced visit was made by two inspectors on Wednesday 18 March 2026 between 09:30 and 16:30.

The inspection focused on the requirements and areas for improvement made during the previous inspection which took place between 16 and 17 September 2025.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with children
- spoke with staff
- spoke with the manager and local authority representatives
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

During this follow-up inspection we assessed that children's outcomes and experiences had improved under the following headings and quality indicators:

- Leadership: Leadership and management of staff and resources
- Leadership: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment
- Children are supported to achieve: Nurturing care and support
- Children are supported to achieve: Safeguarding and child protection.

In recognition of this improvement, we have changed the evaluations for these quality indicators. More information can be found under each heading in this report. We will continue to provide improvement support and monitor standards of care to ensure children's health, welfare and safety needs are met.

Key messages

- Two requirements in relation to children's safety and medical needs had been met. As a result, risks to children's health and safety had been reduced.
- Four areas for improvement from the previous inspection had been met. As a result, the environment and opportunities for children's play and learning had improved. Staff deployment and knowledge of child protection had improved, contributing to children's improved safety and wellbeing.
- A requirement about children's personal plans had not been met. Further improvements was required to ensure that children's needs were known and recorded to enable staff to meet them.
- A requirement about strategies of support for children being recorded, monitored and evaluated had not been met. Further work was required to develop the recording of strategies to ensure that children's needs were met.
- A requirement about leadership structure and quality assurance had not been met. Further work was required to ensure that improvements made were sustained and embedded in practice.

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

We evaluated different parts of this heading as adequate and good, with an overall evaluation of adequate.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of resources

We previously evaluated practice for this quality indicator under "A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare": Key Question 3, 'How good is our leadership? Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well' when we evaluated this quality indicator as weak.

Two requirements and four areas for improvement made at the last inspection had been met, which had reduced some of the risks we identified. There was more effective leadership across the setting and staff were being supported to provide better quality experiences for children. There were plans in place to continue making changes that promoted positive outcomes for children and families. As a result of the actions staff and leaders had taken to improve, we assessed that children's health, safety and welfare were better protected.

At the last inspection, a requirement was made about a leadership team structure and a quality assurance process to monitor and sustain improvements. Although we acknowledged the work that has taken place, this had not yet been embedded in practice. A requirement made at the previous inspection had not been met and has been carried forward. See requirement 5 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection'.

As a result of these findings, we have re-evaluated this quality indicator as adequate.

Quality indicator: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

We previously evaluated practice for this quality indicator under "A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare": Key Question 4, 'How good is our staff team? Quality indicator 4.3 : Staff deployment' when we had evaluated this quality indicator as adequate.

At the last inspection, an area for improvement was made about staff being effectively deployed throughout the day. Practice had improved to ensure that deployment of staff impacted positively on outcomes for children. This included a consistent staff team in the play rooms to provide consistency for children. This area for improvement had been met. See area for improvement 4 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

At the last inspection, an area for improvement had been made about staff knowledge of and confidence to follow child protection procedures. Staff had completed relevant learning to improve their knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities in relation to child protection. All staff had received level two child protection training and child protection procedures were discussed at team meetings. The manager said that child protection would be an ongoing topic at team meetings. Staff spoken with were confident about the signs of abuse and their role should a child disclose to them. This area for improvement had been met. See area for improvement 3 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

As a result of these findings, we have re-evaluated this quality indicator as good.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Quality indicator : Children experience high quality spaces

We previously evaluated practice for this quality indicator under "A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare": Key Question 2, 'Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities', when this quality indicator was evaluated as adequate.

At the last inspection, a requirement was made about children's safety. Practice had improved to ensure that children were supervised and kept safe. We assessed that immediate risks to children's health, safety and wellbeing had been minimised. Staff were vigilant in their supervision, especially when children were using the upstairs outdoor play space. They took account of the potential risks and took action to minimise them. The manager said that going forward a daily digital risk assessment would be completed by staff to support them to remain vigilant.

The nursery doors had been made secure so that children could not leave independently. Staff were vigilant in ensuring that the doors were securely closed to ensure the safety and security of children. Going forward staff must remain vigilant to risks posed to children's safety. This requirement had been met. See requirement 4 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection'.

At the last inspection, an area for improvement was made about the environment and resources. Practice had improved, playrooms were well set up and resourced to support children's engagement. Resources were well organised, allowing children to choose. Staff reset the room throughout the day. This demonstrated to children that they should look after the resources and environment. Staff and children took pride in their environment and it felt like a loved and cared for space. This area for improvement had been met. See area for improvement 2 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

To reflect the progress that had been made in terms of children's safety and the environment, we have re-evaluated this quality indicator as good.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We previously evaluated practice for this quality indicator under "A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare": Key Question 1, 'How good is our care, play and learning? Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning' when we evaluated this quality indicator as adequate.

An area for improvement was made about children being provided with high quality play, learning and development opportunities. Work had taken place within the service to ensure that children had access to purposeful enabling environments. Most children confidently moved around spaces and were experiencing quality play, learning and development opportunities. This was supported by the modelling and teaching from senior staff. Staff told us that they had learnt so much and felt very supported.

As a result, the area for improvement we made at the last inspection had been met. See area for improvement 1 under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

To reflect the progress that had been made in terms of opportunities for children's play learning and development, we have re-evaluated this quality indicator as good.

Children are supported to achieve 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We previously evaluated practice for this quality indicator under "A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare": Key Question 1, 'How good is our care, play and learning? Quality indicator 1:1 Nurturing care and support', when this quality indicator was evaluated as weak.

A requirement made about medication procedures had been met. Action taken had reduced risks to children's health and wellbeing. See requirement 1 under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection'.

To reflect the progress that had been made in terms of nurturing care and support, we have re-evaluated this quality indicator as adequate.

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By the 01 December 2025, the provider must, to support children's health, welfare and safety, ensure that children's medical information is up to date, clearly documented and effectively managed.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services Regulations 2011 (SS1 2011/210)).

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 requirement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

Medication was safely stored, with clear records reflecting each child's needs. Staff completed forms with parents, discussed individual requirements, and accurately recorded signs, symptoms, and emergency actions.

This supported children's health and wellbeing.

Met - within timescales

Requirement 2

By the 01 December 2025, the provider must, to ensure children's health, welfare and safety, ensure that every child has a comprehensive and up to date personal plan in place.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum, ensure that:

- a) Staff meet with parents/carers to ensure that they have an appropriate understanding of each child's current needs and use this knowledge to fully meet them.
- b) Personal plans outline how staff will meet the children's health, welfare, and safety needs.
- c) Chronologies and communication about children is clearly recorded to ensure that all staff have access to relevant and current information.

This is to comply with Regulations 4(1)(a) and 5(1) & (2) 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: '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 requirement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

a) Personal plans for all children had been developed in partnership with parents and carers. However, there was still information recorded which was unclear.

b) Plans did not clearly outline how staff would meet children's health, welfare, and safety needs.

c) Staff were not recording clear chronologies. Staff knew children in their care well, however all information was not recorded. This meant that all staff did not have access to relevant and current information.

This requirement had not been met and we have agreed an extension until 1 September 2026.

Not met

Requirement 3

By 01 December 2025, the provider must ensure that staff create a more inclusive, supportive, and emotionally secure environment for all children.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum ensure:

a) All children receive consistent and timely interactions.

b) Established strategies are consistently followed, monitored and evaluated to support children in self-regulating their emotions, ensuring that these practices are integrated into daily routines.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of Users), Regulation 4(2)(b) (Privacy and dignity of service users) and Regulation 5(1)(2) 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: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This requirement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

a) Most children received consistent and timely interactions, staff were attentive to their needs and watchful so that they were aware of when to interact to support them.

b) Current strategies were not always recorded. Strategies were not adequately monitored and evaluated to support children's wellbeing.

This requirement had not been met and we have agreed an extension until 1 September 2026.

Not met

Requirement 4

By 01 December 2025, the provider must ensure that the environment ensures children's safety.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum ensure:

- a) That children are supervised at all times when outside upstairs and that staff are aware of the risks posed by the balustrade.
- b) Playroom doors are made safe to ensure that children are unable to leave independently.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services Regulations 2011 (SS1 2011/210). This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.17).

This requirement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

- a) Staff were vigilant in their supervision, especially when children were outside upstairs. They took account of the potential risks of the balustrade and took action to minimise them.
- b) Nursery doors had been made secure so that they opened with a keypad. This meant that children could not leave independently. Staff were vigilant in ensuring that the doors were securely closed to ensure the safety and security of children.

Met - within timescales

Requirement 5

By the 01 December 2025, to ensure children's health, welfare and safety, the provider must ensure that:

- a) There is a clear leadership team structure in place which details the overall responsibilities of individuals responsible for managing aspects of the service.
- b) A quality assurance process is identified to enable the improvements identified in this report, to be monitored, sustained and built upon.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI2011/210).

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 requirement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

- a) Since the last inspection, a new manager had been appointed. Leadership roles were being introduced, with staff being given clear responsibilities and support from the senior leadership team. A defined leadership structure was being developed, outlining individuals responsibilities.
- b) The senior leadership team had begun work to address the improvements identified in this report. A quality assurance process now needs to be implemented to ensure these improvements are sustained and built upon.

This requirement had not been met and we have agreed an extension until 1 September 2026.

Not met

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 support children to achieve their full potential, the provider should ensure children experience high quality play, learning and development opportunities. This should include a well resourced environment both indoors and outdoors to allow children to lead their own play and learning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken since then

Children had begun to experience high-quality play, learning, and development, supported by effective modelling and teaching from senior staff and the teachers. Staff felt well supported and were gaining confidence. Improvements to the indoor and outdoor environments enabled children to lead their own play, supported by calm, well-resourced spaces.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The playrooms should be enhanced to engage and inspire children and be reset throughout the day. Staff should model to children how to care for the environment and resources.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity" (HSCS 2.27)

This area for improvement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken since then

The environment showed significant improvement, with calm, organised spaces and clean, well-maintained resources. Toys had designated storage, rooms were reset throughout the day, and children were supported to return resources to the correct place.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure that children are safe and protected from harm, the provider should ensure that staff are aware of and confident to follow child protection procedures.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "I am protected from harm because people are alert and respond to signs of significant deterioration in my health and wellbeing, that I may be unhappy or may be at risk of harm" (HSCS 3.21).

This area for improvement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken since then

All staff had completed Level 2 child protection training and demonstrated increased confidence in recognising concerns and asking questions. Child protection procedures were revisited at staff meetings, with a focus on managing disclosures. Staff felt confident in their roles, wore lanyards outlining disclosure procedures, and were able to clearly explain child protection processes. A rolling programme was in place for senior staff to complete Level 4 training.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To ensure safety and high-quality outcomes for children, the provider should ensure that staff are effectively deployed throughout the day.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "My needs are met by the right number of people" (HSCS 3.15).

This area for improvement was made on 19 September 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff were effectively deployed, with sufficient staffing to support children's learning and development throughout the day. Improved communication methods reduced unnecessary movement between rooms, contributing to calmer playrooms and showing increased staff awareness of the impact of their actions.

This area for 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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Nurturing care and support	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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