

Ivy Kindergarten @ The Meadows Day Care of Children

1 Wharton Square
Edinburgh
EH3 9FG

Telephone: 01315631340

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
9 April 2026

Service provided by:
Dornal Childcare Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2020013601

Service no:
CS2024000206

About the service

Ivy Kindergarten @ The Meadows is a day care of children service in the centre of Edinburgh.

The service can accommodate a maximum of 48 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of those 48 no more than nine are aged under two years. At the time of our inspection there were a total of 24 children present on the first day and 22 children on the second day.

The accommodation consists of three playrooms and an open plan area used for mealtimes and children's play and learning. All playrooms have direct access to an outdoor play area for physical play and outdoor learning. There are changing and toilet facilities for children and office, catering and staff facilities. The service is close to schools, transport routes, shops and community services.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection, which took place on 8 and 9 April 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 registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since registration of the service.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with one parent
- reviewed feedback from nine parents and carers whose children attend the service
- reviewed feedback from eight staff members employed in the service
- spoke with senior management, management and staff
- observed practice and staff interactions with children
- 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.

Key messages

- Leaders had developed a shared vision for the service focused on improving outcomes for children.
- Quality assurance processes were in place, with some areas identified for further strengthening.
- Continued development of outdoor play, including improved access, shelter and resources, would further enhance children's experiences.
- Children were happy, settled and confident.
- Children's views influenced play experiences and planning, supporting engagement, independence and enjoyment in learning.
- Strong, respectful relationships between staff, children and families created a positive, inclusive environment.
- Families felt valued and well informed, with strong partnerships supporting children's care, learning and transitions.

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	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 4 - Good

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 reviewed their vision, values and aims in consultation with children, their families and staff. We noted their suggestions had been taken forward. This demonstrated that their thoughts and opinions were valued and respected. We observed that the values of kindness, respect and curiosity were reflected in practice, contributing to a positive, inclusive and nurturing environment for children.

The manager was committed to initiate change by involving and recognising the contributions of families and staff. Parents told us, "The nursery are always asking for feedback and are always open to ideas. It feels like when we do express something it is 100% listened to and actioned if need be" and "We are also regularly asked for feedback and our opinions and see these things enacted quickly such as when they asked for suggestions to expand the snack offering."

Staff were actively supported and engaged in the settings improvement journey and self-evaluation exercises. This fostered a collaborative approach to development, where staff views and contributions were listened to and valued. As a result, the service was able to identify both strengths and areas for development, leading to agreed and targeted improvement actions. Discussions with management confirmed a shared view that distributed leadership across the service could be further strengthened by increasing staff collaboration and involvement in decision-making, particularly in relation to day-to-day operations and practice.

The self-evaluation undertaken had a positive impact on outcomes for children. For example, the service had improved providing regular opportunities for meaningful discussions with parents about children's play and learning.

Children were consulted and their views were considered in relation to play experiences and resources. This was evident in curricular planning, where children helped shape play based on their interests. We discussed with management opportunities to further embed children's voices across the service. For example, by involving them more in decisions about changes to playroom environments, supporting their rights to shape and develop their spaces.

Management carried out monitoring and audits across a range of areas to include medication, accidents and incidents and personal plans. This enabled the service to identify strengths and areas for improvement, supporting ongoing development and improved outcomes for children. We discussed with management regular monitoring of staff practice would further support the identification of staff skills and knowledge, helping to inform targeted training and development to improve outcomes for children.

Policies and procedures were in place and regularly reviewed to support and guide staff in their practice. During our discussions, we suggested enhancements to some policies to further strengthen practice. The manager was receptive to this feedback and agreed to make the policy developments. We were confident these would be taken forward.

Child protection procedures were in place, and all staff had completed child protection training. Staff

understood their safeguarding responsibilities and could recognise when children and families required support. While information was recorded within children's files to include next steps and actions, the chronology record could be strengthened. This would ensure information is captured in a more streamlined and easily accessible format.

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.

Children were cared for in an environment that was bright, welcoming and clean. The playrooms were furnished to a high standard and included natural resources which helped create calm and relaxing environments that promoted children's wellbeing. Indoor environments were safe and secure for children and the service was well maintained to protect children from harm.

There was ample space for children to engage in play independently or in groups. There were cosy spaces for children to rest and relax. Children were able to participate in experiences that reflected their preferences.

Children had opportunities to play and learn outdoors to support their health and wellbeing. All rooms had direct access to an outdoor space. Staff provided free flow opportunities that reflected children's choices and preferences for play. However, there were some restrictions, with access to the outdoor play space limited for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. This was to allow parents access to the area to store and collect buggies. We discussed with management reviewing procedures and risk assessments to support consistent free flow access throughout the day, while continuing to ensure the safety, security and accountability for children.

Children had opportunities to participate in a range of experiences, including the use of wheeled toys and physical apparatus, which supported their physical development and movement. Children and staff were involved in growing their own vegetables, helping children to develop a deeper understanding of where food comes from and promoting positive attitudes towards healthy eating. The service had plans to continue developing their outdoor play space. We discussed that children would benefit from the provision of shelter to support their health and wellbeing in a range of weathers. The addition of loose parts materials would further enhance children's curiosity and exploration, while extending opportunities for positive risk taking and challenging play.

Children had opportunities to be part of and become familiar with the local community. Children's play and learning was extended through visits within the local community. This included, going to the shops, museum, library and nearby meadows. These experiences help children to gain confidence and to develop a sense of belonging within their local community. Parents told us, "My child enjoys a wide range of outdoor activities, including playing in the garden, visiting the playground and nearby meadows, and taking regular local walks to places such as shops, the library, and museums" and "the nursery space is wonderful and peaceful, they provide good experiences for my [child]."

Children and staff washed their hands before and after mealtimes and on returning from outdoor play, reducing the potential spread of infection. We observed that some infection prevention and control practices could be improved to better support children's health and wellbeing. For example, items were being stored

and on display in toilet areas. These meant that children were at risk of pathogens spreading and the risk of infection. These items were removed during our visit to support children's health and wellbeing.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Play, 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.

Children were happy and engaged in a variety of experiences. They demonstrated confidence and independence by leading their own play and learning, supporting their overall development and wellbeing. Children told us, "I like the cars, they are my favourite toys," "I love coming to nursery" and "I like seeing my friends, getting messy and playing outside."

Younger children were supported to develop their fine motor skills, sensory exploration and natural curiosity through engaging experiences such as exploring a sensory tuft tray. This activity was observed to bring enjoyment and positive engagement for children. Children also accessed books independently, pointing to and naming animals, which supported the development of their communication, language and early literacy skills. Children's gross motor development was well supported through opportunities for babies to walk and older babies' exploration of wheeled toys.

Older children were developing their understanding of nature and the environment through caring for the vegetables they were growing. Opportunities to develop language, numeracy and social skills were provided through experiences of making playdough. Children were observed having fun and actively participating in energetic activities including throwing, catching and kicking balls. This supported the development of their gross motor skills and overall physical wellbeing.

Whilst children's choices were respected, we observed occasions where the accessibility of additional resources would have further enhanced children's play and learning. We discussed with management to consider the purposeful use of provocations, for example within the outdoor mud kitchen. Improving access to a wider range of resources has the potential to spark children's curiosity, enhance play and learning experiences, including opportunities to further develop children's schematic play.

Staff were engaged in play with children, with many interactions demonstrating responsiveness and a genuine connection. Some staff responded well to play cues in the moment and used interactions to extend children's learning, however this was not consistent across the team. Younger children were supported to transition from the lunch table when they had finished eating and to move onto play. This was a positive step to reduce children's waiting times. However, at times some staff became task focused, which resulted in missed opportunities for interaction and engagement with children as they played. Targeted professional development opportunities could further enhance the quality of interactions, enriching children's learning experiences and fostering deeper engagement.

Staff were responsible for planning experiences for children. Children were consulted in the planning, ensuring experiences were tailored to their interests. This contributed to engagement in experiences with children exploring and developing their ideas through play. Staff were using curriculum frameworks and development trackers were in place to monitor and record children's development and progress.

A digital platform was used to support communication and to share information about children's play, learning and development. This supported families to remain informed, encouraged parental feedback and

promoted continuity in children's learning by enabling parents to build on their child's experiences at home. Regular observations clearly evidenced children's skills, learning and progress. Clear next steps were recorded to support children's learning and progression.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Nurturing, care and support

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 were happy, settled, and confident in their environments and had developed friendships which enhanced their wellbeing. Staff knew their children and families well and had created a warm and welcoming environment supporting children and their families to feel valued.

Staff were nurturing and caring in their interactions, responding to children with warmth and attentiveness. These positive engagements supported children to feel safe, secure and contributed to the positive relationships they had with staff. Parents agreed and told us, "I have a good relationship with the staff caring for my child. They are approachable, friendly, loving and supportive, and I feel comfortable discussing my child's needs with them" and "The staff are well trained, dedicated and very caring. They make the nursery the nurturing and happy place that it is."

Staff worked collaboratively with parents and carers to plan for children's transitions. Communication systems ensured that key information was shared with relevant staff in advance, supporting continuity in children's care, play and learning. Transitions were tailored to meet the individual needs of children and their families, which promoted children's emotional security and well-being. One parent told us, "The nursery managed the transition to the Maple room really well, providing ample time to settle and to develop bond with the new staff. Our [child] is again very happy in the new room and has bonded well with the new staff."

Lunch was a relaxed, sociable and unhurried experience with staff supervising children, contributing to a safe and supportive mealtime experience. Children had opportunities to make choices and develop independence through self serving food and clearing away their lunch items. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of children's individual dietary requirements, ensuring meals were appropriate and safe, which supported children's health, safety and wellbeing.

Children's medication was clearly labelled, administered and stored safely. Health care plans were in place for children to support children's health and well-being.

Personal plans were in place for children and were developed in partnership with families. These were reviewed regularly and reflected children's current needs. Individual goals clearly detailed the support required to meet children's needs. To further enhance personal plans, records could more consistently include information on children's achievements. Through monitoring personal plans, management had identified children who would benefit from a more detailed individual support plan, including strategies, targeted support and clear next steps to support children's learning and development. We were confident this would be taken forward.

Parents and children were warmly welcomed into the service by management and staff. This supported children and their families to feel valued. Families had regular opportunities to discuss their child's care and development, both formally and informally. Regular stay and play sessions took place, supporting the

development of positive relationships and enhancing family's sense of belonging and involvement within the service.

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

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Children experience high quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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