

Liberton Nursery School Day Care of Children

Mount Vernon Road
Edinburgh
EH16 6JQ

Telephone: 01316 643 155

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 February 2026

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002576

Service no:
CS2003017038

About the service

Liberton Nursery School is registered to provide a daycare of children service to a maximum of 72 children aged between 3 years and primary school entry at any one time. The service comprises of a large two story building with playrooms on each floor. The building was recently refurbished with children and staff using a nearby primary school during this time.

Each playroom has a kitchen and snack preparation area. The ground floor also has a resource room, staff room, toilets and large cloakroom area. There is a large secure garden at the front of the building.

The service is located near local shops, parks and good public transport links.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 24 February 2026 between 09:35 and 16:15. We returned to the service on Wednesday 25 February 2026 between 08:15 and 16:15. The inspection was carried out by one inspector 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 and four parents onsite
- received written feedback from five families via an online survey
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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.

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 well children's needs are being met.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing interactions from staff, which supported their wellbeing and development.
- Play and learning experiences were interesting, enabling and challenging, which supported children to enjoy sustained periods of meaningful play.
- Staff and leaders valued daily outdoor play. Natural materials and loose parts encouraged curiosity and imagination.
- The service's vision, values and aims were embedded in everyday practice.
- To ensure children's safety, improvements should be made to practice to ensure effective supervision when children use the internal stairs.

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.

The service's vision, values and aims were embedded in everyday practice. Leaders modelled and supported these principles, contributing to a positive experience for children, families and staff. Staff and leaders demonstrated nurturing, empathetic and supportive interactions, demonstrating the values in their practice. Events such as home visits and stay and play sessions further reflected the service's values and vision of inclusion. As a result, children and families experienced a welcoming, fun, friendly, nurturing service.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning approaches were developing well. Leaders created a supportive culture, where staff felt comfortable reflecting on their work and discussing improvements. Feedback from children and families was sought in a variety of ways and used to assess the quality of the service and develop opportunities for improvements. This practice supported steady improvements and enabled effective change management.

The improvement plan reflected the needs of the service and the staff team. It focused on the return to the newly refurbished building, which helped children, parents and staff settle back in. The plan also focused on developing the spaces and experiences offered. This supported children to have positive play and learning experiences. Moving forward, improvement planning should be further developed so that it effectively evaluates progress made and highlights any gaps in improvement plans. For example, some observations and practice records lacked detail or did not identify where further improvement could be made. To further support improvement planning, the quality of reflections and monitoring could be consistently benchmarked against good practice.

Leaders were developing a shared responsibility for improvement across the staff team. Staff held 'champion roles' in relation to areas of practice. This positively impacted on outcomes for children. For example, a champion role in relation to a staff member supporting emerging numeracy had offered some children greater levels of support and challenge. Staff took pride in these roles and were supported to access training that helped them develop further.

Several quality assurance processes were in place, including daily environment checks, practice observations and the use of environmental toolkits. Overall, these processes supported positive outcomes and ongoing development. Moving forward, the service should continue to develop quality assurance processes to ensure practice and procedures highlight issues and aid ongoing improvements. For example, further work was needed to develop quality assurance and monitoring of the safety and supervision of children on the stairs. The service risk assessment highlighted staff would be present and supervising in this area, however, this was not always the case. This should be addressed through effective monitoring of staff practice and improved deployment decisions. Also, personal plans should be further monitored to ensure meaningful strategies of support and development observations are consistently recorded and reflected upon.

Within the last few years, there had been several additions to the staff team, which had developed the range of skills and experience. A supportive induction process helped new staff understand the service and gave them clear guidance on their roles and responsibilities. Staff said they felt welcomed and well supported during induction. Leaders and staff were committed to ongoing professional development and the service actively encouraged staff to engage in training and learning linked to their own needs and the needs of the service. This supported children and families to experience a positive service, with skilled and competent staff. One parent described staff as, "experienced, kind and professional."

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 were happy and engaged as they explored a range of well planned activities. Refurbished playrooms gave them clear, purposeful spaces where they could make choices and follow their interests. Quality resources and positive interactions with staff helped children engage in and enjoy extended periods of sustained play. As a result, children developed their ideas, imagination and problem solving skills. Leaders and staff recognised that the downstairs playrooms still needed further improvement to offer richer experiences and support daily routines. This showed they understood the importance of having well resourced and stimulating spaces and were keen to make improvements to support children's play and learning.

Children's literacy and numeracy skills were well supported through meaningful play, both indoors and outdoors. They enjoyed early writing in diverse ways, such as making marks in sand or using large movements on the smart board. Staff spent time with children to encourage emerging literacy and communication skills. Sensitive interactions provided the right level of challenge for most children. One parent commented, "My child has learned so many lovely songs and stories at nursery and has the opportunity to do what activities suit them best."

Staff and leaders valued opportunities for daily outdoor play. Outdoors, natural materials and loose parts encouraged curiosity and imagination. Children confidently led their own play and had lots of opportunities to develop their physical skills. For example, they used the newly fitted climbing frame with growing confidence.

Staff used caring and warm interactions as they responded positively to children's interests and supported their play choices throughout the day. Most staff used a good mix of comments, questions and gentle narration to support children as they played. This helped children to think creatively and remain engaged in their learning. While some staff were more skilled in supporting learning and challenge, ongoing training, mentoring and teamwork contributed to increased staff knowledge and confidence.

Children were supported to achieve as staff planned learning using observations, parent feedback and children's own ideas. This helped them to offer experiences and learning that suited children's needs, interests and stages of development. One parent said, "It's not just the same things set out every day, there seems to be real thought into keeping available activities new and rotating things round so that there's new themes and interests all the time."

Children's learning was recorded and shared through online journals and floorbooks. This supported children to reflect on their learning and enabled parents to be included in their child's experiences. Staff were developing their skills in recording meaningful observations and work was underway to enhance the approach to assessing children's learning over time. Leaders were aware that ongoing development would further enhance the tailored support children need.

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, nurturing interactions from staff, which supported their wellbeing and development. Most children had developed positive attachments with staff, helping them to feel loved and secure. Staff were empathetic and consistent in their responses, creating a sense of emotional security for children. Staff had completed various learning opportunities that enabled them to understand child development and positive engagement. Overall, staff practice promoted children's rights and a sense of nurture.

Children's independence and skills were promoted through social, unhurried mealtimes. They enjoyed collecting their own food and pouring drinks. Staff sat with children creating positive connections and social interactions. For example, they chatted about plans for the day and children's home experiences. Most routines of the day suited children's needs, however, towards the end of the day staff gathered children together while rooms were tidied. This practice interrupted children's play and the planned gather times did not always reflect children's needs. As a result, some children became disengaged and the quality of the experience varied. To support consistently meaningful opportunities, the service should review the end of the day routine to ensure it meets the needs of all children.

While overall, children's safety was promoted there were issues around the supervision of the internal staircase. Children often accessed the staircase unsupervised and on one occasion a child climbed on the wall mounted safety handrail and an inspector had to alert a staff member who was attending to another child. To ensure children's safety, improvements should be made to practice to ensure effective supervision when children use the stairs.

Personal plans gathered important information about each child and reflected any changes in their circumstances. This helped staff provide support that was tailored to children and their families. Staff collaborated well with parents and external agencies, such as health visiting services, to strengthen the support families received. One parent commented, "Staff know our children very well, but they also know our family, and have shown genuine compassion and support towards us without even being asked." Overall, staff used approaches that supported most children's needs, enabling them to feel listened to and engage in their play experiences. However, there were opportunities to improve how support strategies were recorded, shared, and reviewed. Some strategies were missing from personal plans and for some children there were delays in sharing and using identified strategies. Stronger and more consistent planning could have helped all staff, including those covering in the service to stay fully aware of each child's needs, especially where additional support was required. Moving forward, the service should continue to build on its positive approach to personal planning so that all children experience high quality, consistent care.

Staff and leaders created a warm, welcoming environment where children and families felt valued. Parents had formal and informal opportunities to discuss their child's care and development. Connections were further strengthened through events such as stay and play sessions. However, one parent in response to our online survey shared they would like more opportunities during pick up and drop off to see their child at play. Particularly in the downstairs space, parents were not encouraged to go into the playroom and instead dropped off and collected their children from staff based in the cloakroom area. However, the service did tell us that parents were welcome to collect their children from the room at the end of the nursery session if they wished. During the inspection, we discussed further opportunities to develop the routines of the day to enable all parents to see their children's playroom and play experiences.

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
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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.