

Mile End Nursery Day Care of Children

Mile End Primary School
Midstocket Road
Aberdeen
AB15 5LT

Telephone: 01224 636 457

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 March 2026

Service provided by:
Aberdeen City Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000349

Service no:
CS2003014445

About the service

Mile End Nursery provides a day care of children service to a maximum of maximum of 40 children aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The nursery is situated within Mile End Primary School. An entrance area has a secure door and welcome area. The playroom provides a spacious area with direct access to an enclosed outdoor play space. The nursery is located in Aberdeen and has access to local amenities such as shops and parks.

Up to 30 children were present during the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 March 2026 between 08:10 and 18:05 and 24 March 2026 between 07:45 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with four of their parents/carers
- received 15 responses to our request for feedback from parents and staff
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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.

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

- Staff knew the children very well and supported their individual needs.
- Staff were very kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children.
- Staff had developed very good relationships with families who felt welcomed into the setting.
- Staff used their skills and knowledge to ensure high quality outcomes for children.
- The staff team worked very well together and with other professionals to meet children's needs.
- Robust quality assurance processes involved everyone and led to continuous improvement. The setting should now consider how this is shared with children and families.

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	5 - Very 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 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

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**.

The school's vision, values and aims were clearly shared across the whole school, including the nursery. These had been developed through meaningful collaboration with children, families and staff. The vision was visible within the nursery environment and featured regularly in day to day communication with families. Staff spoke confidently about how strongly the vision and values underpinned the nursery's ethos, which was reflected in the nurturing, positive interactions consistently observed in practice. During discussion, it was noted that children could benefit from further opportunities to understand and engage with the vision and values in ways that align with their stage of development. The nursery demonstrated a strong commitment to embedding its shared vision, with scope to enhance children's active involvement.

Families' views were consistently sought and valued, with online questionnaires used regularly to gather meaningful feedback. Staff carefully considered responses and implemented changes aimed at improving outcomes for children and strengthening family partnerships. For example, following a recent settling in questionnaire, staff recognised that families were unclear about lunch time routines, prompting them to update and share a revised handbook. The team had identified the benefit of adopting a "You said... We did..." approach to more clearly show families how their contributions had influenced change. Most parents reported feeling genuinely involved in shaping and developing the service. The nursery showed strong commitment to parental involvement, with further potential to deepen engagement and communication.

The nursery improvement plan aligned closely with the wider school plan, and the nursery's priorities were accessible and clearly displayed. Planning, assessing and tracking had been a major focus, with all staff contributing to the development of these processes. Although increasingly embedded, the leadership team remained committed to refining these approaches. For instance, tracking discussions revealed gaps in understanding around environmental print, leading to a literacy focus during a recent in-service day. Staff were already demonstrating improved awareness within the environment. The leadership team had begun using the new quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare to guide self-evaluation, with whole team involvement at monthly meetings. Reflections indicated positive impact, particularly around the planning cycle, visuals, and engagement with 'Setting the Table'. Looking ahead, the setting should consider how to share these ongoing improvements and their impact with families and children.

Staff reported feeling very well supported by both colleagues and the leadership team, highlighting regular staff meetings, wellbeing catch ups and monitoring processes as having been valuable opportunities to share ideas. They spoke positively about training and distributed leadership roles linked to their strengths. For example, one staff member led a garden project involving Duthie Park rangers which contributed to promoting effective use of all outdoor areas. Staff described how training and professional reading had strengthened their practice, particularly around neurodiversity and transitions. Their emphasis on nurture, calmness and kindness was evident in their interactions. Staff confidence and leadership were seen to be continually strengthening.

The induction process was structured and supportive, with senior staff mentoring new colleagues and an induction policy and handbook guiding initial expectations. We discussed the benefit of encouraging new staff to use the national induction resource to deepen reflection and strengthen practice. The leadership team agreed to explore including this resource as part of the induction programme.

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.

Recent in house training had strengthened staff knowledge and understanding of literacy and environmental print. This had boosted staff confidence in creating a print rich environment, with the leadership team noting that areas were now better resourced as a result. During the inspection, children were seen actively engaging with real life materials such as packaging, old phones, and measuring tapes. These examples demonstrated that staff learning was translating meaningfully into practice and supporting richer play experiences. The training had a clear and positive impact on provision.

Children were happy, confident, and engaged in their play throughout the inspection. They independently chose where to play and accessed a wide range of resources, using loose parts and small world materials to support construction and imaginative play. In the house corner, children used real food and utensils to chop, stir, and pour, replicating familiar routines. The setting made effective use of all available space, including the cloakroom, gym hall, wildlife and sensory garden, with increased use of the local community identified as the next step. Children moved freely between indoors and outdoors and demonstrated growing independence in managing jackets and wellies. Across the day, they explored curiosity, creativity, problem solving, and early language, literacy, and numeracy. For example, play dough making encouraged mathematical thinking through conversation and measuring. Overall, the quality of play experiences was good and consistently supported learning.

Some staff effectively supported and extended children's play however, there were noticeable missed opportunities where interactions did not deepen learning. For example, when children worked together with pipes and tubes, staff only briefly asked what they were building, missing the chance to explore ideas, introduce vocabulary, or model new possibilities. In contrast, other staff demonstrated strong observational skills, using open questions, modelling, and commentary to enhance learning, such as enriching a child's bubble play by naming actions and joining in pretend play. Monitoring processes had already identified such inconsistencies, leading to targeted training and the introduction of visual prompts to guide practice.

Some digital technology was in use, including iPads for transitions, games such as Top Marks, and supporting learning about transport and inventors. Staff also used iPads to capture photos, and children explored older technology like a toy phone. Children showed curiosity when experimenting with a bubble machine, exploring its sounds and mechanics. However, no other digital tools were observed in use, indicating scope to broaden experiences to strengthen lifelong digital skills.

Staff felt that Seesaw supported communication with families, sharing group and individual observations and "wow" moments. The setting planned to work with other professionals and use PEEP, a learning together programme, to further support family learning. In response to questionnaire feedback, leaders were considering curriculum events to strengthen parental understanding and communication. Family engagement strategies were developing well.

Planning had been a key area for development, with a planning wall supporting staff contribute to intentional and responsive plans. Staff used experiences and outcomes, benchmarks, and the school's three year plan to ensure meaningful coverage of literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Mind maps captured children's interests, such as transport, with children engaging in creating vehicles using loose parts while also exploring train tickets, tills, and timetables. Children's questions, such as, "What is the longest train in the world" and "Who invented the bus", clearly shaped responsive planning, and learning was recorded on Seesaw. Planning approaches were strengthening and becoming more consistent.

While Seesaw was used to share learning effectively, some inconsistencies remained in how observations and next steps were recorded. Monitoring had identified these differences, with supports put in place to improve consistency. Tracking systems were used well to identify strengths and gaps, informing planning and targeted support. Analysis, such as gaps in environmental print, had already led to training that improved practice. Overall, systems were robust but required consistent application.

Partnership working was a clear strength. Staff worked effectively with families and partner agencies to help children reach their full potential, with parents able to request informal discussions at any time. The setting worked closely with professionals such as speech and language and the community nursery nurse, with strong collaboration supporting children's progress.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: 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**.

Staff were consistently warm and nurturing in their interactions, creating a secure and caring atmosphere for children. Children appeared relaxed and confident within the setting, readily approaching adults when they needed reassurance or support. Staff were highly responsive to children's cues, for example noticing when a child required help with toileting and offering sensitive support. Children used staff names naturally and enjoyed close, positive moments such as shared stories and playful interactions, demonstrating trusting relationships. The setting also showed flexibility in meeting children's emotional needs through tailored settling approaches that supported individual children. Overall, relationships were very warm, responsive, and clearly a significant strength of the setting.

Children were familiar with routines and moved through them with confidence. They went to the hall for lunch comfortably and followed hand washing procedures before and after eating, helping them remain settled. Transitions were a key focus due to some children finding these moments challenging. Staff demonstrated strong understanding supported by training and professional input. Personalised approaches such as visuals, now/next boards, and objects of reference were embedded and clearly reflected in children's plans. These strategies helped prepare children for upcoming changes and supported smooth transitions. This thoughtful and individualised practice meant transitions were consistently well managed and supportive for all children.

Safety practices were firmly established, with names and numbers recorded and updated throughout the day to ensure accurate ratios. Staff communicated effectively when moving between indoors and outdoors to maintain appropriate supervision. They supported children's developing awareness of risk by using reflective language, such as asking whether they felt safe while climbing. Children took part in headcounts during transitions, which further promoted their understanding of safety routines. Risk assessments, accident and incident procedures, and clear child protection processes contributed to a well organised approach. Medication was stored securely, clearly labelled, and regularly audited, though reviews with parents should take place every three months. Strong and consistent safety systems effectively supported children's wellbeing.

Mealtimes were calm and unhurried, with children eating in the hall as the only group, contributing to a relaxed atmosphere. Staff sat with children in small groups, which meant they were well supervised. This also encouraged conversation about familiar topics and enabled staff to offer assistance with tasks such as cutting food. Independence was promoted through opportunities to self serve, pour drinks, and scrape plates, and children had access to water throughout the day. Snack helpers supported preparation by chopping ingredients, and children enjoyed cooking experiences such as making soup. These approaches created a nurturing social environment that effectively promoted children's independence and confidence.

Personal plans were in place for all children and provided a holistic overview using wellbeing indicators. Regular reviews with parents ensured plans reflected children's current interests and needs, supporting collaborative planning. Support plans outlined consistent strategies for children requiring additional help, though some written records could be clearer for staff. This had already identified by the leadership team. 'All about me' overviews were available to support temporary staff in the meantime. Planning systems were robust, child centred, and responsive to individual needs.

The setting celebrated cultural events such as Chinese New Year and Eid, with staff engaging warmly with families and being mindful of individual circumstances such as early morning celebrations or fasting. This thoughtful and inclusive approach ensured all children and families felt valued and respected.

Parents reported very positive relationships with staff, who greeted families warmly and encouraged relaxed conversations during drop off and pick up in the setting. Opportunities such as stay and play sessions further strengthened these partnerships. Overall, the setting fostered strong, trusting relationships that supported children's sense of security and belonging.

Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website (www.careinspectorate.com) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very 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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