Early Days Nursery
Day Care of Children

36 Palmerston Place
Edinburgh
EH12 5BJ

Telephone: 0131 226 6184

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
9 June 2026

Service provided by:
Early Days Nursery Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003002857

Service no:
CS2003011916

About the service

Early Days Nursery is a day care of children service which is situated in the west end of Edinburgh. The service is registered to provide care over two separate buildings. A maximum of 65 children at any one time aged between birth and three years may be cared for from 36 Palmerston Place, Edinburgh, EH12 5BJ. A maximum of 45 children at any one time aged between two years and 12 years may be cared for from Old Coates House, 32 Manor Place, Edinburgh, EH3 7EB.

Old Coates House is located within a churchyard and sits directly opposite the Palmerston Place building. The Palmerston Place site spans three levels: the basement accommodates babies, the street level is used for children aged approximately one to two years, and the first floor is for children aged two to three years. Old Coates House is also arranged over three floors. The ground floor includes a dining area and cloakroom, while the first and second floors each contain playrooms. At Palmerston Place, there is a small enclosed garden at the rear of the building. Children based at Old Coates House make use of the churchyard gardens.

The service is situated close to public transport links such as buses, trams and trains, as well as shops, museums and greenspaces. At the time of the inspection 73 children were in attendance on the first day and 74 on the second day.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 8 and 9 June 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:

- Spoke with staff and management
- Spoke with children using the service
- Reviewed documents
- Observed practice, daily life and interactions
- Reviewed feedback from 21 families using the service

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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within Leadership and Children experience high quality spaces.

Key messages

- Children were cared for by kind, warm and nurturing staff.
- Children were settled, confident and comfortable in their environment.
- Staff were responsive to children's individual needs and interactions were meaningful.
- Strong partnerships with families supported children's individual needs and wellbeing.
- Learning beyond the setting supported children's play, learning and development.
- Improvements to quality assurance processes would further strengthen outcomes for children.
- Improvements to resources and some environments would further enhance children's learning experiences.

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

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.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The nursery had created values, vision and aims alongside their other services. Managers shaped these to develop a shared ethos across the company. This supported staff to provide consistent care and positive experiences for children. Staff were given opportunities to reflect on the values that were created and received training to understand their role in delivering and embedding these. This helped them deliver care that promoted respect, happiness and wellbeing. Families contributed their views through questionnaires, helping shape the service's values, vision, and aims. This demonstrated a commitment to partnership working and supported positive outcomes for children. Greater involvement of children in developing and reviewing these would strengthen their sense of belonging, participation, and ownership.

An improvement plan was in place, and aspects of the plan were seen in practice. The service had identified improvements to induction processes and implemented them effectively. Staff received additional training to support individual needs and recognise achievements. For example, training in personal care routines increased staff confidence. This led to more positive experiences for children and supported their comfort and wellbeing. Evaluation of the improvement plan had resulted in the creation of the new plan for the coming year. This highlighted any priorities that were continuing as well as consultations with children, families and staff on priorities moving forward. This approach supported continuous improvement and helped ensure better outcomes for children.

Auditing and monitoring processes were in place to support some areas of quality assurance. This included monitoring of personal plans and learning journals. This led to training in observations and planned improvements to planning across the service. These actions supported more consistent practice and improved experiences for children. However, further development was needed to strengthen quality assurance. We identified the need for more robust monitoring of playroom practice and play spaces to ensure high-quality learning environments. An area for improvement was made to address this. (See Area for Improvement 1).

Although auditing of accidents and incidents was in place and used to identify patterns and make changes, further improvements were needed. This included ensuring that significant events were reported to the Care Inspectorate to meet their statutory duties. An area for improvement was made to address this. (See Area for Improvement 2).

Families actively participated in self evaluation activities and shared their views to support service improvements. They completed questionnaires for example, on improvement priorities, mealtimes and overall experiences. Parents commented, "There is plenty of opportunity to provide feedback." and "We respond to surveys and contribute to the values of the nursery and provide feedback." Staff also contributed through questionnaires and training evaluations. Managers engaged with the Quality Improvement Framework and recognised that self evaluation was a shared responsibility. We discussed continuing to involve staff, families and children in this process. This would support meaningful improvements and enhance children's experiences, wellbeing and outcomes.

Safe recruitment processes were in place and followed current guidance and legal requirements.

New staff were supported through a structured and effective induction programme. This programme built staff confidence and supported ongoing development. It also identified areas for further learning, including the keyworker role and personal care routines. These improvements helped staff provide consistent, care. This contributed to positive outcomes for children and supported their wellbeing and development.

Areas for improvement

1. To support ongoing improvement within the service, the provider and manager should continue to further develop quality assurance procedures.

This should include, but not be limited to, ensuring effective monitoring of playroom practice and environments to provide high-quality experiences that extend children's thinking and support the development of their skills within environments that enhance learning.

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).

2. To support better outcomes for children, the provider and management should ensure fulfil their statutory duties of notifying the Care Inspectorate, and any relevant authorities, of significant events.

This should include but not be limited to allegations of abuse in relation to a person using a service, accidents and outbreaks of infectious diseases.

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, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. (HSCS 3.0).

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

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.

Quality Indicator: Children experience high quality spaces.

Children were cared for in a bright welcoming environment. Children were cared for in age groups across the two buildings. The setting was decorated in neutral tones with some cosy spaces and soft furnishing to create a homely feel. This helped children feel comfortable, secure and at ease within the setting.

Buzzer entry systems were in place in both buildings. Although the main entrance at Palmerston Place had a buzzer system, we identified a need for enhanced security. This concerned first-floor playrooms accessible from a landing leading to the private apartment on the second floor. This was acted upon by management during inspection and enhanced measures were put in place. The additional keypad entry locks installed to the playroom doors would ensure the environment was controlled and safe for children.

Infection prevention and control practices were in place and staff and children showed good hand hygiene routines. Children washed their hands before and after mealtimes. Staff had also embedded good routines and were observed washing their hands during personal care routines, mealtimes and after supporting children to wipe their noses. We discussed improvements to changing areas and toilets to further reduce the risk of infection. This included the cleanliness of changing areas and toilet steps. We also discussed the storage of some items within changing areas. Some of these improvements were made during the inspection and these steps and further improvements had the potential to further support children's health and wellbeing.

The nursery valued outdoor play and recognised its importance for children's development. Children in the Old Coates House building accessed the church yard gardens. This supported physical development and outdoor learning. Although this was a public space, staff used clear risk assessments to ensure safety. Staff confidently supported children to access this space throughout the day. Younger children also used a small, secure garden at Palmerston Place for daily outdoor play. This provided safe and regular access to fresh air and physical activity, which supported children's health and wellbeing.

Procedures were in place for building maintenance, with a janitor based at the service. Repairs were reported and addressed promptly, as seen during the inspection. We discussed that, despite timely repairs, the environment at Old Coates House would benefit from refreshing. This would enhance comfort and create a more welcoming space that supports children's wellbeing and engagement.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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.

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and development.

Children were confident and engaged in their play across both settings. They independently accessed play spaces and chose where and who they wished to play with. This showed they felt secure and comfortable in the environment. It supported independence, decision making and positive social interactions.

Younger children were engaged in a variety of experiences that supported language, social and early numeracy development. They used sand and water for sensory play, and books and songs to develop language skills. They also used figures and small world toys to support imaginative play. Staff supported this through positive interactions, clear language modelling and singing. This approach helped build vocabulary, communication skills and confidence.

Older children were settled in their environment and showed confidence in early literacy and numeracy skills. Staff supported learning by extending language and engaging in meaningful conversations. For example, children created a coffee shop and staff provided resources and suggested a real visit to extend learning. This supported imagination, communication and real life understanding. Children accessed a range of resources, including playdough, books, cosy areas and arts materials. However, some areas lacked resources that encouraged curiosity, exploration and choice. We suggested reviewing resources to provide more opportunities for creativity and deeper learning.

Learning beyond the setting was a strength of the service. Children had daily opportunities for outdoor play and learning. Children across both settings benefited from experiences in their local and wider community.

Visits to parks, museums and shops supported real life learning. Older children also attended swimming, ballet and weekly forest school sessions. These experiences helped children explore the natural world, enjoy fresh air and stay active. This supported physical development, confidence and curiosity. Parental feedback supported this with parents sharing, "I am always impressed by the range of things my child gets up to". and "Great opportunities for children, from walks, day trips and extra-curricular activities".

Planning was in place and focused on children's needs and interests. Staff used observations to shape the environment and plan experiences. They offered a balance of adult led and child led activities linked to interests, seasons and festivals. Staff remained responsive and adapted experiences in the moment. For example, they added sponges to water play when a child showed interest in cleaning dinosaurs. They also supported singing during play in the home corner. This approach supported engagement and helped extend children's play and learning. Planned improvements to the planning process would further enhance children's development and progress and learning journey.

Children's learning was shared through an online platform, which helped families feel involved in their child's experiences. Observations varied across the setting and had been identified by management as an area for improvement. Younger children had more individual observations linked to their time in the setting. Observations for older children focused more on group experiences, with less emphasis on individual progress. Staff had completed training on creating meaningful observations and reported increased confidence. This supported better understanding of children's learning and development. Continued support with observations and tracking would help ensure progress was clear and learning was effectively supported.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

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.

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

Children were settled, happy and confident in the setting and were cared for by staff who were kind, gentle and responsive. Staff responded to children's cues, offered cuddles, shared laughter and joined in on experiences. This showed positive relationships and supported children's emotional wellbeing. Most staff knew the children well. Some staff who provided cover had less familiarity but communicated effectively with colleagues. This ensured children's needs were met and supported consistent care, helping them feel secure and supported. One parent shared, "The staff at Early Days Nursery are caring, professional and approachable. They create a warm and welcoming environment where children feel safe, valued and supported. They take the time to understand each child's individual needs and communicate well with parents, providing regular updates and reassurance".

Personal care needs were carried out by nurturing staff who respected children's dignity and privacy. Younger children were invited calmly and sensitively to have their care needs met. Staff gently supported handwashing, nose wiping and cleaning after meals. This approach helped children feel respected, valued and comfortable within the setting.

Children experienced relaxed and unrushed mealtimes. They enjoyed nutritious, well balanced meals that followed current guidance. Meals reflected children's preferences and met dietary and cultural needs. Staff remained with children during meals to ensure safety and provide support. They joined conversations and encouraged interaction. This supported language development, social skills and helped children feel included and confident.

Individual sleep routines were well supported, with staff creating calm and comforting environments and following safe sleep procedures. Children were invited to rest on individual sleep mats with their own bedding and comfort items. This approach supported children to feel secure, relaxed and comfortable during rest times.

Personal plans were in place for children and were created in partnership with parents to guide individual care and experiences. The service had recently moved to an online platform, which supported regular updates and reviews with families. Where children required additional support, plans included clear strategies and supports. Children's plans also included individual targets to support health, wellbeing and development. For example, targets for building relationships and identified play preferences were recorded. This ensured plans reflected each child's needs and supported consistent, personalised care.

Positive relationships with families were a key priority for the service. Staff and management worked hard to build and maintain welcoming connections. The service offered opportunities for families to be involved in nursery life and their child's learning. Parents attended coffee mornings, consultations, forest days and joined the parent committee. They were also warmly welcomed at drop off and pick up times. One parent commented, "I always feel welcomed at drop offs and pick ups to talk about my child's day". This approach helped families feel valued, informed and included, which supported children's wellbeing and sense of belonging.

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 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	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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