St. Mark's Primary School Nursery Class
Day Care of Children

Kirkriggs Avenue
Rutherglen
Glasgow
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Telephone: 01416 344 238

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 September 2023

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2003015360

About the service

St. Mark's Primary School Nursery Class is registered to provide care to 32 children. The age range of those children is from aged 3 years to not yet of an age to attend primary school.

Care is provided from the nursery within St. Mark's Primary School, Rutherglen, South Lanarkshire. The service is close to local shops, schools, transport routes and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19 and 20 September 2023 between 08:45 and 16:00. Feedback was provided on 21/09/23. 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Spoke with six people using the service and five families
- Spoke with nine staff and management
- Observed practice and daily life
- Reviewed documents
- Spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Nurturing and responsive relationships with children and families were embedded.
- Personal planning was having a positive impact on outcomes for children.
- The flow of the day supported minimal interruptions to children's play and increased access to outdoors at all times across the day.
- Monitoring and audits as part of quality assurance systems needed to be more robust to secure high quality service delivery.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning? 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

A parent told us "On the days when my child is feeling a little overwhelmed or not wanting to leave me there's always a member of staff there to reassure them and support them". Parents were involved in decisions about their child's care and development. Personal plans were created using the wellbeing indicators from Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) good practice guidance. They contained detailed information on children's interest and areas of significant need. This ongoing focus was providing a consistent approach to supporting children and was having a positive impact on improving outcomes.

Staff were committed to delivering a high standard of care through nurturing approaches and respecting the rights of children. Their success, achievements and differences were shared and celebrated. For example, moments of interest and family photos were displayed.

Staff celebrated and shared individual moments of fun and success in a meaningful way with the wider group of children and team such as when children took part in a large physical obstacle course in the school gym hall that involved balancing, climbing and jumping from height.

Staged intervention and additional support plans were in place to support children to achieve where needed. Visiting professional were involved in providing support and strategies for individual children. Strategies agreed such as visual cues and the use of quiet spaces were having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children. One parent told us "The nursery has been a fantastic setting for my child. They have been supported through a few anxieties and regressions and no issue has ever been a problem for them. They are very understanding and always ask about my day as well as my child". A visiting professional told us "The staff in St. Mark's take on board advice from all agencies and we work well together. They have attended all training we have offered. They attend our additional support need meetings.

Children were secure in their relationships with staff and respectful of each other. They were content and immersed in a supportive and nurturing community within the nursery. Staff responded sensitively to children and supported their needs. For example, one child was keen to take part in rolling and tumbling in the gym hall however was shy. The staff member recognised this and skilfully supported the child to find their confidence in their own way to take part and experience success.

Suitable plans were in place to support the management of medication. Medication was stored safely out of the reach of children. We spoke with the service about a few minor adjustments needed to medication documentation and they understood the importance of this. One parent told us "My child has a medical condition and all the staff especially their key worker is great. They notice straight away when they are not feeling too great or need their medication".

Children ate lunch in the school dining hall. This was a calm and sociable time for children. Lunch progressed at children's pace and staff used this time to build connections and support children when needed. There were opportunities for children to make choices about food and self-serve.

Snacks were offered in the playroom. Children were fully involved in the preparation of snacks such as chopping fruit, pouring drinks and clearing away when finished. Staff supported children's independence during this and encouraged them to try new foods as part of their 'Try It Tuesday' approach to healthy eating. Lunch and snack times were supporting children's health and wellbeing.

Staff had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. Systems in place ensured they were confident in recognising and responding appropriately to any concerns. Staff had recently taken part in refresher training to support keeping children safe.

1.3 Play and learning

Planning for learning was an ongoing area of focus for the staff team. It was now more responsive, led by children and based on their needs and interests. For example, one child had saw a magpie take food from a bird feeder and this had led to a journey of learning about birds and making bird feeders. We encouraged the service to continue with the focus on responsive planning to bring depth and richness to children's experiences.

Parents told us "The nursery is always welcoming and engaging when dropping off and picking up with activities that my child is drawn to" and another said, "My child always comes home happy, healthy and full of fun stories about their day". Children were having fun and enjoying opportunities available to them.

Children were engaged and active both indoors and outdoors. There were minimal interruptions to the flow of the day and children benefited from this. We observed some examples of skilled interactions that extended play and further supported children in their learning such as during a trip to a tree in the school grounds named 'the Gruffalo tree' as part of a nature trail. Staff also supported children to be imaginative and creative in their play as they pretended to care for animals in a vet surgery.

Sensory exploration with foam, paint, playdough and rice encouraged creativity and fun. Child were laughing, chatting and learning about cause and effect as they mixed their own paints and made playdough. As part of these and wider experiences during the inspection children explored across curricular areas. We encouraged the service to continue to develop the outdoor space to ensure the learning which took place outdoors was reflective of the experiences available indoors.

Staff told us that they were at the early stages of engaging with the local community. Children had visited a local park, supermarket and pet store recently. There were plans in place to enhance community links. We agreed that this would offer children opportunities to play within their community and experience new learning.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a warm and nurturing environment. It was clean and well organised with plenty of natural light and cosy spaces for children to play, relax and learn. A parent told us "The facilities are great my child loves going to nursery". We discussed the importance of providing children with a variety of spaces and staff told us about using the school library, gym hall and outdoor areas. Staff had created a mindfulness area where children could go to have time for themselves and relax. This was supporting children's emotional wellbeing.

Equipment and furniture were well maintained. Resources used by children were varied and in a good state of repair. Children had access to a wide variety of resources including open-ended materials, large blocks, sensory, creative and imaginative spaces. There were some pockets of rich learning happening indoors as children explored sensory materials and playdough. Some staff extended learning and sparked children's imagination.

Children had been involved in a plan to improve play equipment and furniture at the service. The process was captured in a floor book and recorded decisions, photos and the changes made. This helped to give children ownership of the space and a sense of belonging within the service.

Policies were up to date and available for families. These were supporting the management of the service and covered subjects such as security, complaints, students, additional support for learning and parents as partners.

A variety of appropriate safety measures were in place to keep children safe. For example, a secure entry system, clear communication between staff and regular risk assessment of the environment.

Children had access to an outdoor area directly from the playroom. They had the opportunity to flow between indoors and outdoors all day. Children enjoyed spending time outdoors running, taking part in large physical games and being creative in the mud kitchen. We encouraged the service to continue to reflect and enhance outdoor learning experiences and they agreed. This would support depth, richness and curiosity in play.

We discussed the importance of consistent hand washing at mealtimes and cleaning practices for storage areas. However, overall infection control procedures were contributing to keeping children safe such as the use of gloves and aprons at nappy changing, clean bathrooms and nappy changing areas. This was helping to ensure that children's health and wellbeing was maintained.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are well led

Staff were motivated and committed to working together to improve outcomes for children through a shared vision and a nurture-based approach. Parents were happy and told us "It's always lovely seeing management as the face of the nursery in the morning and at pick up time" and another said they were "Always greeted with a smile and a supportive ear when needed".

The manager told us they were reviewing the schedule for staff to meet with the manager and receive constructive feedback about their work. We agreed consistency in this area would support regular reflections and help staff to identify development needs. Children's needs were the focus of those improvement conversations. Further development of staff meetings would help bring about positive change and support teamwork.

The manager knew the importance of self-evaluation to support the delivery of positive care and a quality service. Reflections on staff training had led to changes in practice that improved children's experiences. For example, training relating to supporting distressed behaviours and child protection benefitted staff in refreshing knowledge to support improved outcomes for children.

Communication methods such as an online app, newsletter and daily chats in the playroom at drop off and collection times were used to share information about events and provided opportunities to comment and get involved. As part of these children and families' views were sought to support future plans and developments of the service. Parents told us "The whole team are always on hand to support when needed" and "It's good that there is an opportunity available for parents to share their thoughts about everything". The service had identified parental participation an area of ongoing focus in the 2023/23 improvement plan and we agreed this would help support the needs and aspirations of families.

Some quality assurance processes had contributed to positive outcomes for children. For example, improvements to the playroom environment and reducing interruptions to children's play. However, we discussed with the manager and they agreed that ongoing monitoring was needed across all areas such as accident and incidents, playroom monitoring, practice and medication systems to ensure these processes were robust (See area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To improve the quality of children's experiences, the manager should further develop quality assurance processes to enusre they are robust, identify strengths and areas for development.

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)

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff were well deployed across almost all of the day. They communicated well when tasks took them away from children such as when supporting children visiting the mindfulness area and when a child had an accident. Staff shifts and breaks were flexible which helped to minimise impact on children. One parent told us "I appreciate all the efforts of all staff and I am happy with all the setting and the way staff are maintaining everything with children". This supported our findings; the service was appropriately staffed and supervision ensured children had quality engagements across the day.

Staff were consistent in their approach and happy to be at work. Staff working patterns had been considered and strategies maximised effective information sharing between the staff team and with families. Parents were confident that the service was staffed with a professional and nurturing team who wanted only the best for every child. This secured continuity for children.

Careful consideration had been given to the skills, knowledge, and expertise of the team. For example, each member of staff had a leadership role that focused on providing extended opportunities across the curriculum such as literacy, diversity and promoting children's rights. This meant that staff were focused and aligned with children's current interests and needs to support progression.

The management team along with staff had worked hard to ensure new staff were well supported through a detailed induction and mentoring programme. This meant that staff were clear in their understanding of their role and confident in their knowledge about the needs of individual children.

Effective systems were in place that enabled new children, families and staff to be introduced and form positive bonds supporting high quality outcomes. Families appreciated this initial connection and felt this approach worked well. One parent told us "The staff have been very supportive since my child started nursery" and "I can talk to any staff member about my child, not just their keyworker, and they all know my child well".

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

Children's personal plans should be reviewed and updated with parents in line with legislation. Personal plans should be an accurate and current reflection of each child's care and support needs and stage of development with relevant and agreed next steps in learning. This would assist in ensuring all children were making progress across all aspects of their learning and development.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 3: Health and Wellbeing.

This area for improvement was made on 13 October 2017.

Action taken since then

Children's personal plans were being reviewed and updated with parents on a regular basis. Personal plans were a current reflection of each child's care and support needs and most contained relevant and agreed next steps in learning. This supported all children to make progress across all aspects of their learning and development.

Previous area for improvement 2

The management and nursery staff should review the structure of the day to enable the children to have longer periods of uninterrupted, child-led play, with the choice of where to play, both indoors and outdoors and less whole class or large group activities. Management and staff should take into account the national practice guidance on early learning and childcare: Building the Ambition.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 13: Improving the Service.

This area for improvement was made on 13 October 2017.

Action taken since then

Management and staff had reviewed the structure of the day which had led to minimal interruptions to children's play across the day. Play was child-led, there were choices of where to play both indoors and outdoors and of the few large group experiences offered all were optional for children. As part of this review staff had used good practice guidance to support their approach.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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