Hecklegirth Nursery
Day Care of Children

Hecklegirth Primary School
Solway Street
Annan
DG12 6HY

Telephone: 01461 202 629

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 March 2025

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003501

Service no:
CS2003015487

About the service

Hecklegirth Nursery is a daycare for children service situated in Annan, Dumfries and Galloway. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 110 children at any one time from two years of age until they start attending primary school, of whom no more than 10 children are between the ages of two and three years. At the time of the inspection, 93 children were registered with the service.

The service has two large outdoor play areas. Children were able to move freely between indoors and a secure outdoor area. The centre is within walking distance of local amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out by three inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. It took place on 24 and 25 March 2025. The inspectors attended the service between 09:00 and 15:45 hours on 24 March and from 09:00 to 16:15 hours on 25 March.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about the service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:
- observed practice and daily life
- spoke with children using the service
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the manager and staff
- received thirty-two completed questionnaires from parents/carers to gather their views and feedback.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, kind and caring interactions which supported their wellbeing.

- Children had fun and were actively involved in leading their play.

- Children had developed connections to their local community.

- Staff were passionate about delivering the best outcomes to children and families.

- Management and staff have worked on improvements to ensure positive outcomes for 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very 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? 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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support.

Children experienced warm, caring, and nurturing approaches. This supported children to be secure, happy, settled, and confident. Children approached staff for cuddles and invited staff to participate in their play and learning. Parents told us, "All the staff are friendly and helpful. They make the children feel welcome and safe."

Personal plans supported children's overall wellbeing. 'One page profile' records provided staff information about children's health, wellbeing, and safety needs. They were developed in collaboration with families. Both management and staff were knowledgeable about children's individual needs. They had developed clear strategies to support children to have a positive experience at nursery. This support helped build children's resilience and supported positive outcomes.

Children were actively involved in organising the lunchtime routine. They helped staff to set up lunch, which supported them in developing life skills. Staff sat alongside children, supporting them when needed. This helped keep children safe during mealtimes. Children were encouraged to serve their own meals and were supported to pour drinks and clear away their plates after eating. As a result, children were developing their independence. They were relaxed and enjoyed the food that was provided. Fresh water was available throughout the day, and children were encouraged to access it. This helped keep children hydrated.

Staff were confident about child protection procedures. They had attended in-house training and were confident about their responsibilities should they be required to report any concerns. Staff knew who to report any concerns to in the absence of the child protection coordinator. This helped to keep children safe.

Accidents and incidents were recorded and appropriately shared with parents. When accidents and incidents did occur, staff and management reviewed why they happened to ensure they reduced the risk of them happening again. These processes support children's overall wellbeing.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

We observed children who were happy and engaged in leading their own play and learning, with support from staff when needed. Toys and resources had been set up to support their curiosity, creativity, and imagination. For example, children were enjoying playing with cars on the path, which then led to a car wash in the water tray. Other children were enjoying making a house from a cardboard box, talking about the shape of windows and how many it should have. There was also plenty of natural and open-ended resources, as well as real life resources, which supported children to problem solve. As a result, children engaged well with each other and played cooperatively, using their imagination and curiosity.

Planning approaches were child-centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. Staff were knowledgeable about child development and used this to support them in providing quality play and learning experiences. For example, children were painting and folding the paper in half. The staff member talked to the child about symmetry, leading them to learn more about symmetry in books. Another child had

been hand painting outside, and when asked what colour her hands were, the child said, "Purple." As a result, children were progressing well.

To support their learning, staff actively listened to children's voices. Children could influence the experiences offered, and staff planned and implemented opportunities based on children's needs and interests. Children's progress and learning was recorded in planning and children's online journals to evaluate and identify next steps. The service also implemented a focus week system where parents were asked about areas of interest or needs. The keyworker feedback on the child's learning and next steps at the end of the week. This led to further learning and development. As a result, children were making progress. Parents shared with us that they received regular updates about their child's learning; commenting, "Staff have worked with us on our child's development and kept us updated on any progress or changes," and "I am frequently asked what my children's interests are in order to help them develop upon them whilst at the setting."

Children benefitted from connections to their local community through visits to their allotment, where they learnt about growing fruit and vegetables and how to look after them. Local gardens supported this, and they also visited the care home and the friendship club in the village. Children were learning about nature and the world around them.

How good is our setting? 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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

The setting was extremely comfortable and welcoming, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. Furnishings were of a high standard. Children had ample space to play and explore their surroundings. We observed children enjoying a story in the quiet area, which was furnished with comfortable sofas and cushions. This gave children a sense that they mattered.

Play spaces reflected children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate resources and materials to support learning. For example, children were enjoying messy play indoors and wanted to play outdoors, so the messy play activity was set up both indoors and outdoors. The environment was sensitively structured to take account of all children's interests and stages of development.

There were two spacious outdoor play areas available, one for each playroom, featuring a variety of resources such as large sandpits, water trays, slides, tunnels, and tyres. Children also had access to the 'trim trail' and the nature garden in the school. The 'early years' had access to an allotment, which they started developing. One parent shared their thoughts on outdoor learning, mentioning, "My child is outside every day and often prefers this. My child loves the sand, bikes, and running off their energy. My child has also been able to use the wooden timber trail, which he loves." This environment allowed children to engage in energetic play whilst also learning about living things.

Real-life resources, such as pots, pans, and empty food boxes, supported children's imagination, curiosity, and critical thinking skills. Open-ended materials and 'loose parts' were available indoors and outdoors. For example, we observed children cutting up leaves and twigs to add to the play dough. This supported children's imaginative play and learning as well as their fine motor skills. A parent shared that their child

enjoys playing with, "arts and crafts, home role play, pretend cooking in kitchen, looking after dolls." The large variety of high-quality toys and materials supported children to develop their play in a way that met their needs.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place throughout the service to minimise the spread of infection. Children were reminded and supported to wash their hands. Staff washed their hands often, role modelling for children and sharing the importance of good hygiene. This helped keep children safe and well.

Information about children was stored securely. Management was aware of their responsibilities to ensure confidential information was stored safely. This protected children's privacy.

How good is our leadership? 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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

Throughout the inspection, management and staff engaged well and responded to advice and encouragement when suggestions were made. We found good relationships within the team, and management and staff were committed to the development of the service. The team worked well together to establish a shared vision to deliver the best outcomes for children and families. As a result, they were well placed to continually develop the service.

The views of children and families were regularly sought to inform the development of the service. Daily conversations with children and regular consultation enabled children to express their interests, likes, and dislikes. This was reflected in the way that the play environment was set up to take account of children's interests. This helped children feel valued and included in the service.

Management and staff regularly communicated with parents through online learning journals, emails, and daily chats. The service encouraged parental involvement through 'Focus weeks' 'stay and play' sessions, 'PEEP' parent group sessions, and a lending library. This helped create positive relationships where children and families felt heard and respected. Parents commented, "Regular feedback forms are sent to all parents where we are able to make suggestions about the nursery," and "Staff often ask for parent input and feedback about how we feel about what has been happening in nursery and anything they can do to improve."

Staff evaluated their practices effectively by using the Care Inspectorate's 'Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding, and School-Aged Childcare'. This process allowed them to identify strengths and areas that needed improvement. The identified areas for enhancement were documented in a realistic and achievable improvement plan, which was regularly reviewed and assessed. This approach supported both the manager and staff in delivering high-quality care, play, and learning tailored to the needs of the children and families using the service.

Quality assurance processes, including regular monitoring and self-evaluation, helped to quickly identify and address any issues. The manager and staff worked together to model best practices and reflect on the environment, children's experiences, and staff practices. This collaboration led to positive outcomes for both children and families.

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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

The staff team were warm, welcoming, and caring. This promoted a positive environment for children and families. The nursery was appropriately staffed, and staff were suitably deployed throughout the day to meet children's needs. Throughout the service, there was a focus on the children as individuals; this ensured that individuals' needs were consistently met.

Staff worked well as a team, and their different skills and knowledge complemented each other. This resulted in positive interactions with the children. Parents told us about the positive aspects of children's experiences in the service; "The staff all care for my child like he is their own. The play they do is fantastic, and my child is always happy at nursery. They have helped us so much with all the struggles my child is facing," and "My child is so excited to go in. He always has a great time. All the teachers are so nice and friendly."

Staff responded to children's requests. For example, staff supported children when they needed reassured by offering a cuddle or a rub on the back. This supported the children's emotional regulation. Staff positioned themselves appropriately to ensure children were safe as they moved between areas to ensure maximum supervision. Staff communicated well with each other, transitions were planned, and children were familiar with the daily routine. This created an environment that promoted children's rights and helped keep them safe.

The management team effectively supported staff by spending regular time on the nursery floor. This helped to build positive working relationships and allowed time for staff to engage in professional discussions that enhanced the way they delivered children's care. Staff were happy, engaged, and shared tasks by working as a team. This ensured the day ran smoothly and that children were always aware of who was providing their care. A parent shared, "The nursery staff are more like family than childcare providers and nothing has ever been too much trouble. Hecklegirth have been such a big part of my child's life."

Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day. Staff breaks were well planned and supported by staff who provided lunchtime cover. This ensured minimal disruption to children's play, learning, and routine.

All staff members expressed that they felt well-supported by their management team and colleagues. One staff member shared, "We are like a big family at Hecklegirth. All staff are very supportive of each other. Management is very approachable and go by an open-door policy." This supportive environment helped staff feel valued and clarified their roles and responsibilities, leading to positive outcomes for the children.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

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

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