Stenhouse Early Years Centre
Day Care of Children

43 Fords Road
Edinburgh
EH11 3HS

Telephone: 01314 431 207

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 September 2026

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002576

Service no:
CS2003015646

About the service

Stenhouse Early Years Centre is in Stenhouse, Edinburgh and provides a service for the City of Edinburgh Council. They are registered to provide a daycare of children service to a maximum of 40 children at any one time aged from birth to not yet attending primary school.

Children have access to dedicated play spaces for their age group and a large, enclosed garden. The service is close to schools and nurseries, green spaces, local amenities and can be reached by public transport links.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 September 2026 between 09:15 and 16:30. This 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:
- spoke to and spent time with children using the service and eight families
- received ten completed questionnaires from staff and families
- spoke with the management team
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with two professionals

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.

Key messages

• Children and families experienced a welcoming, kind and inclusive service where they felt respected, listened to and valued as part of the learning community.
• Children benefitted from warm, nurturing relationships with staff, helping them feel safe and secure, supporting their wellbeing.
• Children's voices influenced their experiences, with their views, interests and ideas shaping learning.
• Children experienced high-quality play and learning in stimulating spaces that promoted curiosity, creativity and problem-solving skills.
• Children made progress at a pace that was right for them as staff used their knowledge and skills to support their continued development.
• Children and families benefitted from a committed, skilled team who worked collaboratively to improve outcomes and experiences.
• Children and families benefitted from a team that worked collaboratively with partners and other agencies to agree tailored interventions and supports to meet their individual needs.
• Children's care, learning and wellbeing needs were consistently met through responsive, individualised approaches that promoted their rights, independence and sense of belonging.

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	5 - Very 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

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: Leadership and management of staff and resources

Children and families benefitted from a committed team that promoted the service values of welcoming, curiosity and kindness through their connections and support. Children, families and staff were meaningfully involved in reviewing and developing the service values, demonstrating a genuine commitment to participation and continued improvement. Families described feeling included, respected and part of the nursery community. Staff had developed a shared vision of the values, and these were reflected in practice, spaces and relationships. Evidence of children's views linked to learning, photographs and their voice were displayed throughout the playroom. This highlighted that they mattered and their right to be heard was valued.

Positive, respectful and nurturing interactions observed throughout the inspection reflected the value of kindness and contributed to children feeling safe, secure and emotionally supported. As a result, children experienced warm relationships and a strong sense of belonging.

Stability in the leadership team had created a positive culture where staff felt valued, included and confident to contribute to improvement. Staff demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility and were committed to supporting change. For example, they participated in leadership groups linked to their interests, skills and professional development. This enabled a collective approach to ensure positive outcomes for children and families.

The service had established effective approaches to self-evaluation and quality assurance. For example, staff engaged in reflective discussions using best practice guidance to evaluate the service and families were consulted to gather their views. There were clear links between actions identified and how this had informed positive change within the setting. Change had been implemented at a pace that promoted engagement, ownership and enabled the team to deliver high-quality care and learning.

Staff engaged in continuous learning and reflected on how training had positively impacted on their skills and knowledge. This was effectively shared across the team and promoted consistency of practice and improved experiences for children. For example, training on schematic play, sensory learning and how young children learn had been used effectively to create inviting spaces and learning experiences. The team created a positive culture of collaboration, reflection and continuous improvement. As a result, children and families experienced a service where connection, high-quality learning and responsive care were consistently promoted.

High-quality play and learning were at the heart of improvement priorities that included slow pedagogy, responsive routines and the pace of the day for children. This was evident during the inspection, where children were observed to be fully engaged in play, exploring spaces at their own pace and leading their learning.

Children and families benefitted from a stable and skilled staff team, and this had a positive impact on all. Families recognised the continuity of the team and told us they had built positive, trusting relationships and this was essential for children's wellbeing. Staff described the service as being a positive place to work, felt supported and included. They recognised and valued each other's strengths. As a result, this created a supportive culture that enabled staff to provide high-quality care and learning.

The service used the Scottish Governments national induction resource for early learning and childcare effectively. They tailored induction to meet staff's individual needs to ensure they were fully supported at a pace that was right for them. New staff spoke positively about the support they received from mentors and the wider leadership team. This ensured staff were well supported to develop confidence, skills and experience to ensure practice reflected the services aspirations for children and families.

Children play and learn 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: Playing, learning and developing

Children experienced high-quality play and learning that supported their wellbeing and development. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of how children learn, including schematic play, sensory exploration and the importance of nurturing relationships. Families recognised this and commented, "Staff genuinely care, you can see it and feel it", "love the way they are with the children, it's a nice safe space for children" and "Their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment is self evident every single day I go to drop my [child] off there. The nursery is truly a special place." As a result, families had confidence in the staff team to deliver high-quality learning through play and positive connections.

Children were highly engaged in exploring and investigating for sustained periods. They confidently led their play, made choices and accessed a wide range of stimulating resources across both indoor and outdoor spaces. As a result, there was lots of fun, laughter and excitement.

Learning spaces had been carefully designed to promote curiosity, creativity and problem-solving skills. Resources were high quality and promoted children's thinking, experimenting and imagination. Children moved freely between areas of the nursery, with uninterrupted opportunities to play in engaging spaces. This supported their right to play and enabled deep levels of engagement, enjoyment and learning as they explored the world around them.

Staff used their knowledge and skills effectively to support children's communication and language development. Meaningful interactions, songs, conversations and responsive communication strategies were consistently observed. Children were encouraged to express themselves, explore their ideas and develop confidence through rich play experiences that reflected their individual interests.

Strong partnerships with families contributed positively to children's learning and development. Staff regularly shared children's progress through the learning journey books, review meetings and daily discussions. This collaborative approach enabled families to contribute to their child's learning and development and celebrate achievements. Families told us how their child's development had progressed since attending the service and they highly recommend the service to other families.

Interactions between staff and children were warm, kind, nurturing and respectful. Staff responded sensitively to children's needs and used skilled questioning, modelling and encouragement to extend learning. Children experienced sustained engagement in play which promoted curiosity, concentration and a sense of achievement. Staff understood the importance of knowing when to intervene and when to allow children time and space to explore independently. As a result, children were curious and becoming successful learners.

Children were at the centre of planning and assessment processes. Staff used a balance of observations, intentional promotion and responsive planning to meet children's needs. This information was effectively used to inform next steps in learning and development to ensure all children made progress at their own pace. Children's voices were consistently captured through planning, displays, personal plans and everyday practice, ensuring their interests and preferences led experiences. To further develop children's learning and progress, we suggested staff record more detail in next steps that include clear, measurable strategies and intended outcomes. This will support greater consistency in demonstrating children's progress over time.

Effective systems were in place to identify and support children who required additional interventions. Staff worked collaboratively with families and partner agencies to implement targeted strategies. Partners told us how well staff worked with them and used support strategies effectively. They commented on the dedication and commitment from the team in supporting children and families. Regular reviews ensured children received tailored support that helped them make progress and develop a broad range of skills for life and learning. Families recognised and valued the service's effective partnership working with other agencies, which helped ensure children's needs were met through a coordinated approach.

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 experienced nurturing, responsive and compassionate care from staff who knew them exceptionally well. Positive relationships were at the heart of the service and contributed significantly to children's wellbeing, confidence and sense of security. Staff recognised relationships underpin children's development and they consistently provided warm, respectful and responsive care. Families described staff as caring, approachable and genuinely committed to supporting both children and families.

The service demonstrated a strong understanding and commitment to improving transitions. Effective work had been undertaken to strengthen transition arrangements between nursery rooms, ensuring children's emotional wellbeing and existing relationships could be maintained. The service recognised this was also important for families as they had developed trusting connections with staff. This contributed to continuity of care and helped children feel secure during periods of change.

Children's privacy and dignity was respected throughout personal care routines. Staff were calm, used supportive approaches, including objects of reference and song signifiers, to prepare children for transitions and care routines. Personal care was supported in a respectful way, child-led and responsive to individual preferences. For example, children were given time and choice with staff sensitively adapting their approach when children indicated they wanted to continue their play. Staff respected this. As a result, children experienced care that promoted their rights, dignity and emotional wellbeing.

Mealtimes provided rich opportunities for learning, social interaction and independence skills. Staff sat with children, role modelled positive interactions and supported conversations. Children independently selected food, poured drinks and managed mealtime tasks. For example, careful consideration had been given to the size of utensils to allow children to have success pouring and selecting foods. This promoted confidence and self-help skills. Staff were knowledgeable about children's dietary needs and preferences, ensuring individual health and wellbeing needs were met safely and effectively. The service recognised that these routines would need to be re-introduced as new children settled.

Children's healthcare needs were very well supported through robust systems for the safe management of medication. Detailed healthcare plans and regular audits helped ensure children's healthcare needs would be safely and effectively met.

Staff recognised the importance of rest and relaxation and responded sensitively to individual needs and routines. Sleep arrangements were calm, nurturing and responsive, with staff identifying and responding to children's cues. For example, some children preferred to be cuddled as they relaxed, and staff consistently respected these preferences. This meant emotional needs were met, helping to provide a strong sense of safety, security and wellbeing.

Personal plans were in place for all children and clearly recorded how their individual needs would be met. For example, plans contained information about what was important to children, their routines, interests, likes and strategies to support. Information was regularly reviewed with families to ensure plans remained accurate, relevant and reflective of changing needs. To celebrate each child as a unique individual, the service displayed a 'Being Me' board, highlighting what was important to them. Children enjoyed looking at the display and talking about their information. This approach promoted and celebrated rights and diversity. Where children required additional support, targeted plans and interventions were in place and informed by effective multi-agency working. Staff worked closely with families and other professionals to identify needs, implement strategies and monitor progress. This collaborative approach helped children access timely support and achieve positive outcomes.

The inclusive ethos helped reduce barriers to engagement, ensuring families felt valued, listened to and supported. Regular opportunities for both formal and informal discussions enabled families to be fully involved in their child's care and development. Strong partnerships between home, the service and other agencies helped ensure children's individual needs were met, enhanced their wellbeing, learning and development. This meant children made progress at a pace that was right for them. Relationships with families was a significant strength of the service. Families had trust and confidence in the staff team, built through respectful relationships, open communication and a welcoming approach. Families consistently reported feeling involved, informed and supported, telling us that "staff are attentive, pay attention to my child's needs, work well with other agencies and keep me informed" and "I can trust the team, they are committed to helping parents and are supportive".

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

Detailed evaluations

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

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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