Edinburgh Steiner School
Day Care of Children

Edinburgh Steiner School,
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
8 September 2022

Service provided by:
The Edinburgh Steiner School

Service provider number:
SP2003003565

Service no:
CS2003016178

About the service

The Edinburgh Steiner School provides a daycare of children service in Edinburgh. The service is registered to provide a service to a maximum of 80 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. Of those 80 no more than 20 children are aged 2 to under 3.

The service is based in a residential area of Edinburgh and is close to other local schools, parks, and shops.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5 September 2022 between 09:30 and 16:00. Feedback was shared with the service on 8 September 2022. 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 40 children using the service and six of their family members
- spoke with five staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

• The early years staff knew the children well and were responsive to their needs.
• Play was mainly child led.
• Planned experiences took place to develop children's independence, life skills and creativity.
• Imitation was central to the Steiner approach and children naturally imitated the early years staff to develop their independence and life skills.
• A large natural outdoor environment provided opportunities for exploring, being creative, assessing risks during play and developing imaginations.

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?	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? 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

The early years team knew the children well and were responsive to their needs. Personal plans had recently been reviewed to include more detailed information relating to each child which included their interests, routines, and areas where they needed encouragement. This ensured that staff had in-depth information to fully meet the needs of each child. It was discussed with the service that they should ensure that all six-monthly reviews of personal plans are clearly signed and dated by parents.

Lunchtime was a quality social experience for the children to participate in. Some children brought lunches from home, and some were served a hot lunch by the service. Children took part in quality discussions with their teacher who sat with them and ate lunch. Children developed their independence and life skills throughout this experience.

Children took part in a period of rest and relaxation following on from lunchtime. They were encouraged and supported to rest or to sleep as a group for a short period of time prior to going back outdoors to take part in further play experiences. This was part of the children's daily routine which provided them with an opportunity to rest.

Medication was stored securely within locked cabinets. Medication consent forms were in place for all medication to be administered to children. We discussed that the medication consent forms should be reviewed at least three monthly to keep in line with the 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' guidance rather than following school policy.

Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and Learning

Children took part in a variety of quality play experiences which were mainly outdoors. There was a mix of child led play and planned experiences to develop children's independence, creativity, and life skills. Children accessed rope swings, climbed trees, made quiet areas in bushes, and explored the well-equipped outdoor environment. Children created a rest area outdoors using wooden pallets and their jackets to lie on. Another child collected carrots in a wheelbarrow which were brightly coloured leaves and pieces of bark. One child discussed the risk of going on the rope swing and how they had to keep their balance, or they would fall off. They said that the rope swing was much more fun than a normal swing. Children also took part in critical thinking to discuss how to get down from a tree when their plank fell which was placed against the lowest branch to the ground. These opportunities developed risk assessing, creativity and problem solving.

A variety of planned play experiences took place mainly indoors to develop children's creativity. These included story sharing experiences using props and puppets, baking experiences and a range of painting experiences. Children were very engaged and focused during these creative play experiences.

Staff were responsive to children's interests and planned for extending these interests over a period of time. Children were confident in making choices and asking for further resources to be brought out to support their play and learning and current interests. Staff acted as role models and regularly swept and raked leaves or washed resources using the outdoor sinks. Children imitated these roles, and one child accessed a small sweeping brush and swept up the outdoor play area, while another group of children washed some natural resources in the outdoor sink. This supported the children to develop their life skills.

Observations of children's play and learning were recorded and shared with parents. We discussed that it would be beneficial to further develop these observations to ensure they showed specific outcomes of play and learning and any possible next steps within each child's learning. Parents shared with us that they would like to see more observations of play and learning about their child which could be in the form of a learning journal.

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

All the indoor environments were welcoming and nurturing for the children to feel safe and confident in and take part in a wide range of play experiences. Quiet spaces could be created using soft mats and cushions which were both indoors and outdoors for the children to access. Wicker baskets were used within the rooms to store a variety of resources which the children had easy access to.

The seedling groups had access to a well-equipped outdoor play area which included a sandpit, loose parts, natural resources, wheeled carts, outdoor sink, and a variety of surfaces. The children made good use of all areas of this space and also accessed the kindergarten outdoor area to further develop outdoor play opportunities.

The kindergarten groups had access to a well-equipped outdoor play area which provided a natural environment with trees, bushes, bamboo, and grassy areas to explore. A variety of loose parts and open-ended resources further developed the play and learning opportunities available for the children. A large sandpit with wooden benches around it provided a lovely space for children to develop their imaginations and be creative. Staff supervised the children throughout their play and children made staff aware before they began climbing the trees.

Maintenance records were in place for the service which also included a list of tasks to be completed by the maintenance team. This list was ongoing and clearly showed which tasks had been completed. Staff took responsibility for carrying out daily checks of the outdoor area prior to children arriving and accessing this part of the environment.

Risk assessments were in place for all areas of the indoor and outdoor environments. Some of these had not been reviewed recently so required a review and update. We discussed that these should be reviewed immediately following on from any incident. The service are now in the process of reviewing all risk assessments and will update at least once a year or sooner if required.

Infection control practices were well managed within the service and handwashing was carried out by children and staff at all appropriate times throughout the day. These practices minimised the risk of any spread of infection within the service.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement and led well

The staff felt well supported by the early years management team and felt that they could raise concerns or make suggestions regarding improvements for the early years provision. The staff felt that they were listened to. This resulted in an effective team who worked well together to support positive outcomes for children and ongoing improvements within the service.

A clear vision for the service was shared with families within the early years handbook. Questionnaires were shared with families to gain their feedback, views, and suggestions regarding ongoing improvements within the service. All feedback from recent questionnaires was positive. It would be beneficial for the service to show how any feedback from families has been taken forward and actioned and then shared with families. Weekly school newsletters were shared with families which included a section relating to the early years provision. These included upcoming dates, changes within the staff team and information relating to parent teacher association meetings being reinstated within the service to support ongoing improvement. Parents shared with us that they receive the weekly newsletter that provides them with all current information. Some highlighted that further information could be shared by the early years team.

Self-evaluation had taken place within the service which had been linked to 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare' and 'How good is our early learning and childcare'. This self-evaluation had focused on several quality indicators and included developing resources both indoors and outdoors, developing new personal plan templates and a review of the curriculum for children. The self-evaluation included next steps, evaluations, and reflection which were used to begin to develop this year's improvement plan for the service.

An improvement plan was in place for the whole school which included the early years provision. The plan clearly highlighted goals, success criteria, timescales, impact, and the person responsible. A priority within the plan was to review the early years and kindergarten provisions to ensure that this vital and growing part of the community was fully integrated within the whole school.

The service had policies in place to support safe practice within the early years provision. Most policies were whole school policies and did not focus on early years guidance. It would be beneficial for the service to develop some specific policies for early years which should include the medication policy, and the missing child policy. This would ensure that all early years guidance and best practice was accurately adhered to throughout the service.

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

There was a teacher and an assistant allocated to each group within the seedlings and the kindergarten. Staff communicated well and appeared to work well together as a team supporting other groups as and when required. Staff engaged well with the children and used their skills and knowledge of each child to provide quality play experiences and positive outcomes for children.

A mentoring system was in place for assistants and staff who were undertaking qualifications. Assistants met with their mentors on a weekly basis. This provided the opportunity to discuss strengths, areas for development, training and to support was offered with aspects of their qualifications.

Staff breaks were well managed with minimal impact on the children. Management tried wherever possible to provide continuity of staff during times of absence to always ensure a familiar face for the children. Staff spoke to parents when they arrived to pick up their child to provide them with a handover about their child's session in the service. Parents confirmed that this worked well, and they received adequate information.

The minutes from team meetings highlighted that discussions had taken place regarding the continuity of staffing during afternoon sessions or absences. This had been taken forward and was currently being actioned. There was now a spare member of staff in kindergarten during afternoon sessions who supported all groups as required.

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?	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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