Sacred Heart Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Crockett Gardens
Penicuik
EH26 9BB

Telephone: 0131 392 1928

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
11 June 2026

Service provided by:
Midlothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002602

Service no:
CS2003016407

About the service

Sacred Heart Primary School Nursery is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 64 children; from age 3 to not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is located within Sacred Heart Primary School in the town of Penicuik, Midlothian. The nursery offers a welcoming environment, comprising two open-plan playrooms with direct access to two outdoor play areas, along with toilet facilities and a kitchen.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 2 June 2026 between 09:10 and 16:20, and on 3 June 2026 between 10:00 and 14:00. This 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, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluations we:

- spent time with children using the service
- reviewed 15 completed questionnaires from families and four from staff
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and children's experiences
- spoke with staff and the management team
- reviewed documents.

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 experienced warm, nurturing care from a committed nursery team, supporting them to feel safe and valued.

• Leaders fostered a collaborative culture, embedding effective self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

• Enabling indoor and outdoor environments promoted children's confidence, curiosity and engagement.

• Children experienced high-quality interactions that supported their play learning and development.

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.

Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service's vision, values and aims were clear, meaningful and well understood. Ongoing consultation ensured these remained relevant and reflective of the community, with values embedded in everyday practice. Leaders fostered a culture where staff felt confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for continuous improvement. Strong communication ensured that staff, children and families understood and contributed to these values. Values-based recognition, such as 'Ask Me How I Played My Part' stickers, enabled children to feel proud of their achievements and recognise their contributions. This supported a strong sense of belonging within the wider school and nursery community. Families strongly agreed, commenting, "We absolutely love Sacred Heart" and they highlighted the, "nurturing, inclusive ethos, where children were included, well cared for and empowered to develop independence and confidence".

Improvement planning and self-evaluation were embedded within the service. Feedback from families was gathered through questionnaires and ongoing dialogue, which informed future planning and improvement. Families spoke positively about these opportunities, commenting, "Regular opportunities to share our voice and communicate ideas" and "Ideas are all welcome". One family added, "I don't think anything they could do to make it better; we as a family are more than happy with what the nursery does". As a result, developments were meaningful and inclusive, enhancing outcomes for children.

Strong leadership fostered high aspirations and confidence among staff in their support for children and families. Regular team meetings, with a focus on the Quality Improvement Framework, supported reflection and continuous improvement. Training was aligned to service priorities, equipping staff with the skills to implement change and improve outcomes for children. For example, one staff told us how recent training had deepened their understanding of children's emotional needs and positively influenced their practice. Change was introduced at a manageable pace, enabling staff to feel supported and actively involved in self-evaluation and improvement planning. This contributed to a strong culture of continuous improvement, positively impacting on children's overall experiences.

Ongoing quality assurance processes were in place and had a positive impact on the delivery of high-quality care, play and learning for children. While systems for monitoring and evaluation were mainly effective, the transition from paper to digital approaches had created some inconsistencies. Further streamlining and integration of these systems would improve consistency and robustness, supporting continued improvement in outcomes for children.

The national induction resource supported new staff to understand their roles and feel welcomed. Staff highlighted a supportive and inclusive team, with strong peer support helping less experienced colleagues to develop. Performance reviews and support plans enabled staff to build on their strengths and develop professionally, with some receiving tailored support. Staff reported feeling well supported, highlighting ongoing mentoring, a knowledgeable team and a supportive leadership approach.

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.

Playing, learning and developing

Children were confident, engaged and motivated by a rich range of challenging indoor and outdoor play experiences. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of child development and used best practice guidance to create enabling environments that promoted curiosity, independence and engagement. Children used block play to design and construct imaginative structures, telling us, "This is my castle, these are the walls and the gate" while another child said, "I'm the princess in the castle." Others engaged in meaningful role play in the home corner and told us that it was their favourite place and that they enjoyed, "cooking the tea". As a result, children led their own learning, made informed choices and developed skills in creativity, problem-solving and imagination.

Outdoors, children demonstrated high levels of confidence and physical skill, safely managing risk through climbing, balancing and active play. Staff supported this through a rights-based approach, valuing children's choices and encouraging independence. Visits to local spaces such as, the woods, park and library further supported children's connection to their community. Families were highly positive about the play experiences provided. They described, "a wonderful, fun learning environment" with "a wealth of opportunities and experiences" and valued the strong focus on outdoor learning, including challenging play such as, climbing and obstacle courses. As a result, children experienced high-quality play opportunities that supported their confidence, physical development and connection to their wider community.

Children benefitted from warm, positive attachments with staff and peers, supporting them to feel safe and valued. Staff used responsive, caring interactions to model and develop communication, language and social skills. Developmentally appropriate questioning supported children's thinking skills and sustained shared thinking, adding breadth and depth to their play and learning. Interactions were meaningful, supporting problem-solving, early literacy and numeracy. Staff listened to children's ideas, joined play sensitively without directing it. They used reflective language and restorative approaches to support self-awareness, empathy and emotional literacy. As a result, children experienced high-quality interactions that supported their learning and development.

Literacy and numeracy were woven naturally through interactions, experiences and within the environment. Small group experiences supported children to develop confidence, attention and turn-taking. Singing and music times enriched language development, rhythm and early numeracy in engaging ways. Storytelling was a key strength, enhancing children's language, imagination and emotional understanding. 'Story of the Week' effectively supported transitions and enabled children to retell familiar stories through play, developing their vocabulary and engagement. Outdoors, children explored mark-making with chalk, with staff skilfully extending learning through discussions about size and comparison as children compared their handprints. As a result, children were developing strong early literacy, numeracy and social skills in meaningful engaging ways.

Children were empowered by staff who were responsive to their interests. Observations and floor books effectively captured children's views, informing a balance of planned, responsive and freely chosen experiences. Staff valued and responded to children's ideas, supporting them to feel respected and included. For example, a child's interest in Greek mythology was extended through the introduction of relevant books. Families confirmed this responsive approach, sharing that staff are 'approachable', 'adapt to children's interests' and 'welcome passions from home'. Planned experiences, including cultural learning, seasonal exploration, life cycles and planting, further enriched learning. Children's progress and achievements were shared effectively with families through digital platforms and regular communication. This supported strong partnerships. As a result, children experienced personalised, meaningful learning that developed their curiosity, engagement and development.

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.

Children are supported to achieve

Children experienced warm, consistent and responsive care from a dedicated staff team. Staff were kind, caring and compassionate, building strong, positive relationships with children. Nurturing approaches created a calm, secure environment where children felt emotionally safe, well cared for and confident to express themselves. A supportive ethos ensured that children and families were valued and respected. Families strongly agreed, describing staff as, "very caring" who "always go above and beyond". They highlighted their appreciation for the team's dedication and understanding of individual family circumstances.

Children experienced well-planned, child-centred transitions that supported them to manage change at a pace suited to their individual needs and those of their families. The service worked closely in partnership with families and local schools to support children moving into Primary one. Transitions were thoughtfully planned over several months and included opportunities to meet their teacher, play in the new classroom, share lunches in the dining hall and attend assemblies. Families spoke very positively about this support, sharing, "I really couldn't ask for better". Another family commented, "I have never seen my child settle anywhere so fast". This meant, children were confident, secure and well prepared for a smooth transition into primary one.

Snack and lunch routines were calm, nurturing and well planned. They provided opportunities for children to connect, develop independence and build positive relationships with food. Children were actively involved in setting up the dining area for lunch and confidently took on responsibilities. While children demonstrated some independence during lunchtime, there were opportunities to further promote choice and independence. One family told us they would like children to have more opportunities to choose their lunch. Children could choose when to go for snack and what they would like. This supported independence and choice, which families valued. Staff encouraged children to try new foods and respected their preferences, with water freely available to support good hydration. As a result, children were developing confidence and positive routines.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective, personalised planning which reflected their strengths, needs and interests. Positive relationships with families enabled open communication and timely sharing of information, ensuring children received responsive care and support. Families told us, "Staff were readily available for discussions and responsive in meeting their child's needs". Pastoral logs and individual plans were used to monitor wellbeing. As a result, children received consistent support which enabled them to feel secure and thrive. Working more closely with families during personal plan reviews and improving outcome recording could strengthen personal planning.

Systems were in place for the safe administration, monitoring and storage of medication. However, a few inconsistencies were identified. These included the need for more frequent reviews with families in line with best practice guidance and more detailed information on a couple of forms. Leaders addressed these promptly during the inspection. As a result, we were confident the service had effective systems in place to support children's healthcare needs.

Staff promoted strong, trusting relationships with families, creating a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing environment. All families commented on having positive relationships with staff, describing them as, "friendly", "approachable" and "always going above and beyond". Families valued the support provided, noting how staff were informative about their child's day and contributed to children's growth and development. Opportunities for family involvement, such as stay-and-play sessions, celebrations and shared events, strengthened partnerships and helped families feel connected and included. Staff used their knowledge of children's home lives to support continuity of care and build meaningful relationships. As a result, children experienced consistent, nurturing care, supporting their wellbeing, confidence 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.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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