Balgreen Nursery School
Day Care of Children

175 Balgreen Road
Edinburgh
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 January 2025

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002576

Service no:
CS2003017011

About the service

Balgreen Nursery School is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 64 children between three years and primary school entry. The accommodation includes two playrooms, toilets and all children have access from the playroom to outdoor spaces.

The nursery is in a residential part of Edinburgh, close to bus routes and local amenities. The service is provided by City of Edinburgh Council to provide pre-school education for children between the ages of three and school entry.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 22 January 2025 between the hours of 09:00 and 16:00. The inspection was carried out by 2 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 twelve children and two parents. We took account of the written feedback we received from five families
- spoke with all staff and management. We took account of the written feedback we received eight staff
- observed practice and daily routines
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professional.

Key messages

• Children experienced warm, nurturing care from responsive staff, which helped them feel secure, safe and loved.

• Children were leading their play due to the play spaces, resources, and supportive staff interactions.

• Staff were respectful in their interactions with each other, children and families.

• Children made progress in literacy and emotional wellbeing through creative and engaging play experiences.

• Staff engaged in regular self-evaluation for improvement to ensure they continued to provide quality learning. This contributed to everyone feeling included within the setting.

• Staff showed commitment to continuous professional development to support 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?	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 key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good

Strong relationships had been developed between staff and children. This was confirmed by parents who told us, "My child is very comfortable with the staff", "Supportive and approachable team. Feel they are tuned into the individual needs of the children and support family life" and, "I'm familiar with all the people that my child regularly engages with and my child seems to be comfortable with them". Through their warm and caring interactions, staff not only fostered a sense of security and confidence but also actively promoted the building of meaningful relationships among the children. The genuine love shown by the staff was evident by visibly happy children.

Children received praise, encouragement, cuddles, and reassurance as needed from staff, fostering a sense of love and nurture that supported their overall wellbeing. Staff viewed daily routines as learning opportunities and actively involved children in tasks such as setting up tables for meals and assisting with tidying up. This approach fostered responsibility, independence, and a sense of belonging for children.

Children appeared familiar with the rolling lunch routine in each room. Their confidence, independence and life skills were promoted through the unhurried experience. Strategies were in place to ensure children felt comfortable at mealtimes. For example, using children's baskets which contain familiar objects. Meals were not prepared on the premises and ongoing discussions were taking place to ensure quality and choice for all children. A good range of healthy snacks which children helped to prepare were on offer each day. All dietary requirements were met which meant children were kept safe and healthy.

Staff took time to listen to children. Their positive body language, tone of voice and facial expressions sent the message to children that they were being listened to, and their voice mattered. Children were praised and encouraged, children were offered kindness and reassurance when needed, this supported them to feel safe, confident, nurtured. One child told us the staff made them "feel safe".

We sampled personal plans and saw that link staff created these with parents and captured children's needs, interests, and preferences using the wellbeing indicators. The plans gave examples of partnership working with families to promote children's needs and interests. However, some of the these needed updating and staff told us they continued to encourage parents to review current information. One parent told us "I feel like I can arrange communication to update staff/be informed of any needs or changes".

Transitions into the setting were planned and documented to ensure essential information was shared, promoting children's security and wellbeing. Chronologies recorded any changes in a child's life, which supported the staff team to meet current needs and promote positive outcomes for children.

Children were able to rest and have quiet times if they wished. Sleep mats were available. As one parent wondered if the service could develop somewhere for their child to have a nap we suggested access to these map was made more easily accessible for children. This would especially benefit the less confident or non English speaking child

Children were kept safe as medication was stored securely and all records were up to date. We reminded staff to ensure audits of medicines was carried out every three months as per legislation.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

We evaluated this quality indicator as good.

Play spaces and experiences indoors and outdoors promoted learning and engagement. When asked about experiences their children had been involved in parents gave us some examples, "My child is doing forest school this term which is very key to his love of the outdoors", "My child often shares with me their day which involves things of her interests at home and new interests they have discovered at nursery. They enjoy the diversity of resources both indoors and especially outdoors", "I love the amount of outdoor time and space the children have and the freedom to learn through play" and, "Small group practical life play opportunities (wood work, sewing, baking, forest school type activities)". This meant outdoor play experiences were central to promoting children's health and wellbeing

We observed some children transporting resources around the spaces to lead their own play. As a result, children were busy and engaged in play for long periods of time as they extended interests and developed their own ideas. Staff placed the needs and interests of children at the centre of activities and experiences. For example, recognising that some children were hesitant to try new things and staff spent time with them at their level and helped support their confidence and skills. Staff listened to children and understood the positive impact open ended resources and materials had on children's imagination and creativity.
Staff were skilful in knowing when to step back from play and join in again to support children. They listened to children's needs and wishes and supported their overall wellbeing and sense of belonging. Children enjoyed real life experiences including preparing snack and planting flowers and vegetables. As a result children were able to explore and learn about the world around them.

We were encouraged to hear from staff they were planning on enhancing play experiences throughout the nursery by further developing children's skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. This work would foster deeper engagement, spark children's imagination, and enrich their play and learning.

Intentional and responsive planning was evidenced within floor books and displayed on planning sheets. Online systems and daily chats were used to update parents on their child's development, interests, and experiences within the setting. This was confirmed by a parent who told us, ' "Every day I get a update and we have regular meetings". Another parent told us they would like "More specific updates about individual child's progress or achievements on Learning Journals".

From the sample of observations we looked at, we agreed with staff there needed to be a more consistent approach to recording them. Some children had limited entries and in some there were no clear observations that supported the progress of any next steps. More work was needed to enhance the quality and timeliness of observations, supporting more informed and responsive care to meet each child's needs and interests. Staff had the capacity to take this forward.

Visits to the library, rose garden and local shops helped children develop a sense of community and the world around them. Children were excited to share their experiences of the Pongal Hindu harvest festival with staff and their peers. Parents commented positively on the way staff included different festivals, languages and religions within the setting. This led to an inclusive learning environment within the setting. This was aided by offering interpreters to parents whose English was not their first language. Sign-a-long communication, pictorial and some singing signifiers were used to develop inclusivity and children's understanding. As a result of these children and families felt included.

How good is our setting? 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 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was comfortable, furnished to a good standard and welcoming. Children had spaces for their care, play and learning needs, giving a strong message that they mattered. The natural light and ventilation created a refreshing atmosphere for children and staff. Careful consideration had been given to the layout of the playrooms to offer a range of spaces for children to make choices, develop their interests and ideas. For example, they made an ice cream shop in the tree area of the meadow. As a result, children were able to comfortably share their ideas and play together or be on their own in an environment which supported where and how they wanted to play.

Staff spoke enthusiastically about changes they had made to create play spaces which were meaningful for children. For example, spaces for dancing. They agreed to continue to involve children when auditing experiences, spaces and resources using their Toolkit for the Environment. This meant children had ownership of their environment.

Children benefited from access to the outdoors throughout the day. The outdoor environment provided a good space for children's play. However, there were areas where staff may not be in direct visual contact with children. Outdoors was highlighted by staff and management as being an area for further development and they would take this on board. Safety and safe play was promoted as children gained confidence in assessing their own risks on swings, bikes, and climbing trees. One parent commented, "My child is doing forest school this term which is very key to his love of the outdoors. He also spends time outdoors every day, climbing, building and playing on bikes". SIMOA, safe, inspect, monitor, observe and act, was shared with children and as a result children were learning skills for life.

Staff adhered to infection, prevention, and control procedures, including regular hand washing. This helped minimise the risk of spreading illness and infection among staff and children. Children were keen to show us how good they were at washing their hands. Cleaning rotas were maintained to uphold standards throughout the setting. This helped support children's health and wellbeing.

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 improvements are led well

Management and senior staff had a vision of where they wanted to be and how they were going to get there. A culture of continuous improvement was clear. The improvement plan detailed the vision, values and aims of the setting and was linked to Frobelian principles that underpin values and approach to children's experiences. Staff recognised they were on a journey and we could see the hard work both management and staff had put into self evaluating and reflecting on their practice. They had the capacity to move this forward.

Monitoring and auditing of processes and practice were evaluated to ensure they were effective. Moving forward, further monitoring of strategies such as Up Up and Away would allow staff to know if these strategies were working and how they could be further developed.

Staff training and reflective conversations had clearly had a positive impact, contributing to the improvements of the setting. Moving forward, the manager needed to ensure that in a timely manner after any future training, staff evaluate and reflect on their learning to fully integrate new knowledge and skills, enhancing the effectiveness and benefits of training. This would help further support the improvement ethos in the setting.

We saw that parents were warmly welcomed into the setting. There were opportunities for them to get involved. For example, building the mud kitchen.They told us they had enjoyed the stay and play sessions. One parent told us "I think inviting parents in for more play and stay sessions or slower drop off/pick ups to see our children in the room or having time to get to know staff and vice versa". Other parents commented "We are involved with ideas or changes to develop the setting via email regularly" and, "Sometimes there are ways to get involved but I wish there were more opportunities".

Regular whole team meetings and development of roles enabled staff to take responsibility and be accountable for the quality of the setting. Staff had worked hard to develop their self-evaluation processes, and these had contributed to bringing about positive changes in practice. We saw a number of ways in which staff used self-evaluation and reflective practice. For example, daily reflective discussions, floor books to plan and implement changes to spaces and experiences and in daily planning conversations. Children benefitted from a staff team who promoted positive outcomes for them.

How good is our staff team? 5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good. We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff recognised the importance of nurturing and warm interactions so that children experienced genuine love and care. Parents were complimentary of the staff team and the way in which they cared for their child, example comments being, "The relationships that the staff have with the children is very positive" and, "Staff are approachable, I can walk into the room/garden and collect my child and see them engaging with various things in the nursery environment". This reflected a nurturing care and support approach from staff.

Staff were proud of the work they did. This contributed to the positive atmosphere that children and families experienced. Moving forward, management should press on with their plans in continuing to support staff to develop their skills and knowledge, further promoting positive outcomes for children. This would continue to build staff confidence in their role and further enhance children's care, play and learning.

Staff communicated well across the spaces to ensure that they were all working together to best meet the needs of children, for example, staff informed each other and children as they were about to leave play areas. One staff told us "We have a great team who are committed and confident at looking after the children to ensure they have the best opportunity and experience". This supported positive relationships as children were reassured as to where key members of staff were and when they would return.

Recent changes within playrooms between the rooms was being managed well, They had stopped doing observations for the month of January to ensure children were settled. Staff were becoming familiar with each other and their strengths. As a result, children and staff were happy and engaged.

Good use was made of staff's differing skills and knowledge ensuring that children could experience positive and safe environments throughout the day. Staffing arrangements promoted continuity of care as much as possible, contributing to supportive environments for children. In our questionnaire feedback, most parents confirmed satisfaction with staffing levels, noting that their children's needs were consistently met by the right number of staff. This commitment to staffing, continuity and adequate ratios helped ensure children experienced a secure and nurturing environment, whilst enhancing peace of mind for families.

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
3.3 Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good

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

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