Tollcross Early Years Campus
Day Care of Children

Tollcross Primary School
117 Fountainbridge
Edinburgh
EH3 9QG

Telephone: 01312 297 743

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
3 December 2024

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2003017041

About the service

Tollcross Early Years Campus is registered to provide a day care service to maximum of 70 children at any one time, aged between two years and primary school entry, of whom a maximum of 15 children are aged two years.

The service operates from two buildings; one within Tollcross Primary School (the Tollcross room) and one adjacent to the school (the Lochrin room). Both buildings have enclosed outdoor areas directly accessed from the playrooms.

The service is located south west of the city centre of Edinburgh, and close to local amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 November 2024 between the hours of 09:15 and 15:45. We returned to complete the inspection on 28 November 2024 between the hours of 09:00 and 16:15. The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

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 children using the service
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- received feedback from 10 families.

Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and motivated to play and learn.
- Staff knew children very well and worked closely with families to provide quality play and learning experiences.
- Children's learning and development benefited from a stimulating environment that inspired children to explore and investigate.
- Staff were passionate about their leadership roles within the service which showed that leadership was highly valued at all levels.
- Quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement planning were meaningful and having a positive impact on the 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?	4 - 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 these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, confident and engaged in play. They experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff who knew them well. This helped them feel safe and secure. Interactions were responsive and engaging. We saw staff acknowledge and respond to cues. For example, giving praise, reassurance and physical comfort when children needed it. Mostly, all parents who completed our online survey strongly agreed with the statement, 'Overall, I am happy with the care and support my child receives in this service.' Comments we received included, "My child is safe, feels welcome and has a sense of belonging" and "I feel part of a family and community at Tollcross."

Positive and trusting relationships were observed with families during drop off and pick up times. We saw parents encouraged to be part of their child's day and join them in the playroom to carry out self-registration. Transitions were carefully managed to support children settle into the setting and were flexible to suit the needs of individual children. Staff were skilled in understanding the challenges of transitions, offering additional support when needed. One parent told us the service had been very flexible in helping their child settle, by having shorter sessions over a longer period. This helped build confidence and meaningful relationships with staff.

Children's needs were supported by effective use of personal plans. This helped to ensure that staff caring for them had a clear overview of their individual needs. For example, children's medical needs, dietary requirements, interests and preferences. Staff knew children very well and were confident in discussing their individual needs. This helped ensure they received the care that was right for them. Regular consultations and reviews with parents had taken place which enabled them to be fully involved in their child's care.

Children with specific needs had more detailed plans where relevant information about their needs was recorded. These provided clear guidance on strategies and techniques to support and promote consistent care. Visual identifiers were held by all staff and recent singalong training was helping to aid communication. This resulted in children feeling heard.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable. Children were enjoying chatting with their friends. Independence and life skills were promoted with opportunities to help prepare tables, self-select and self-serve their meals. This created a sense of responsibility and helped children to feel valued. Staff sat with children during mealtimes encouraging healthy habits and facilitating conversation. Children with dietary requirements were well catered for. Suitable alternative menus were provided and family preferences respected.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun, and benefited from a variety of play and learning experiences that impacted positively on their development and wellbeing. Resources reflected their needs and interests, and they were encouraged to explore, be curious, problem solve and use their imagination. This meant that they could lead their own play and make their own choices. For example, we saw children discussing the paint that had frozen in the outdoor water tray, and children curious and learning about the care of the nursery stick insects.

The use of digital technology was promoted by the service. Children were using technology to take photographs within the indoor and outdoor spaces, identifying their own subjects of interest. For example, other children, staff and visitors. This supported them to express themselves, build confidence and give them pride in their accomplishments.

Staff interactions were calm and encouraging. During discussions with children, they adapted their pace. This helped support children's understanding and promoted language development. Some staff were skilled in using open-ended questions to extend learning. For example, when children were building with bricks and they kept falling over, staff used questions such as, 'I wonder why it's falling?" These skilful interactions empowered children to develop critical thinking and to be creative.

Planning approaches were child-centred and followed children's interests. There was a balance of intentional promotions and spontaneous learning documented. Floor books were used to capture children's interests, including what they had learned. Next steps were identified to extend learning further. Staff encouraged children to talk about their learning and what they wanted to know more about. This ensured that targets were meaningful to children and that they were motivated to achieve. We saw examples of children's interests including 'the medical centre.' One child was reading a story to a 'sick child in bed.' This gave children the opportunity to express their feelings, process their experiences and build language and literacy skills.

Documentation of children's learning captured significant events, observations, progress and achievements. These were shared with parents through online learning journals. Parents actively contributed by sharing experiences from home which influenced and informed future planning. This demonstrated value and respect for families in achieving a shared outcome. Effective tracking of progress ensured that all children were supported on an individual basis. As well as developmental trackers, there was a focus on emotional wellbeing. This measured children's progress and behaviour levels. As a result, they progressed at a pace that was right for them.

Play experiences provided opportunities for children to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy as part of daily routines. These included mark making, singing songs and engaging with storytelling. Number cards were displayed on serving dishes at the snack area. Children told us, "You take that many." This meant they were developing counting skills, problem solving and decision making skills.

Strong connections had been established within the local community. These enhanced children's play and learning, including visits to the fire station and museum. Local professionals had recently been invited to visit the nursery to share their job roles and experiences. Staff told us that a female firefighter and a male nurse had been invited to the nursery in response to a planning topic to explore identity and equity. These helped to inspire children's thinking and promote self-belief. Further learning opportunities in the local and wider community were planned to continue to develop strong and meaningful connections.

How good is our setting? 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children and families benefited from a warm and welcoming environment. It was well-furnished, comfortable and spacious with lots of natural light and ventilation. A safe and secure door entry system ensured the safety of children at drop off and collection times. The entrance area displayed photographs and information for parents, and children had access to their own space to store their personal items. This helped promote a sense of belonging. Parents told us, "My child loves to go to the nursery, it is a healthy and safe environment to help (child) to flourish, very inclusive and staff are adorable, caring and respectful."

Staff demonstrated a very good understanding of infection prevention and control procedures. Staff facilitated reflective supervision of hand washing. Children were encouraged and supported to do this independently before mealtimes and after toileting and personal care. This supported staff and children to minimise potential risks of infection and helped create a safe environment. Toilet and nappy changing areas were clean, with personal protective equipment (PPE) stored appropriately to reduce the risk of infection spread.

The manager informed us of planned refurbishments due to be carried out in the new year. These included the toilets in the Lochrin building. At present, the toilets were accessed through the children's cloakroom and had the potential to impact on children's privacy and dignity. Staff should continue to monitor the area while children are toileting until refurbishments are carried out.

The playrooms were clean, tidy and uncluttered. Quiet spaces were available to support children's wellbeing, for example, cosy story areas, outdoor wooden tents and a sensory room. These helped children to relax and self regulate. Children had access to a range of resources that were well-organised and encouraged exploration and fun. There was ample space for children to extend their learning and interests with their chosen activities, for example, building bricks, dinosaurs, musical instruments and house play. Staff told us they continually reflected on how children used areas within the playroom and made changes to suit the changing interests and needs of children.

Free flow access to the outdoor space enabled children to be independent, direct their own play and supported them to be active and healthy. The outdoor space provided physical opportunities, including a climbing frame and a large brick area with planks and boxes. These supported children's strength and balance and stimulated their imagination. There was a range of natural and open-ended materials that supported curiosity and creativity, for example, flowers and herbs in the mud kitchen. The large sand pit and water play held the children's interest throughout the session and children enjoyed transporting the sand and water to the dough area to make 'cakes.' Parents' commented, "It's good they can play outside in all weather."

Risk assessments were in place for indoor and outdoor environments. These raised staff awareness of potential risks, benefits and measures to support a safe environment. Risk assessments were reviewed as changes occurred. This ensured they were current and meaningful.

How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

The service vision and values had recently been reviewed in consultation with staff, children and families. This ensured they were meaningful and captured the needs and wishes of those using and working in the setting, and promoted a shared vision of improvement.

The service improvement plan had priorities that were outcome focused with realistic targets. These included promoting children's literacy skills, children's rights and equity and diversity. The plan had been created in consultation with staff and was shared with parents. This helped staff and families feel involved in the development of the service. It was informed by self-evaluation and staff told us they were included in reflecting on the quality of the service and planning for improvement. Ongoing monitoring and reviewing of the priorities meant the manager and staff had a clear overview on their progress.

Children and families were meaningfully involved in the service. Their views were actively sought to inform the development of the setting. For example, through surveys, feedback at parents' consultation evenings, and for children, through discussion at gather times. Parents were invited to join children in the playrooms to share their skills and knowledge and to help with the garden development. One parent told us, "Tollcross asks me to come in and spend time with the children, read stories, and have family days where we toast marshmallows and drink hot chocolate during autumn." This demonstrated that parents' contributions were valued and they had opportunities to share in their child's experiences.

Continuous improvement and self-evaluation were embedded within the service. There was an ethos of distributed leadership, with staff having responsibility in leading their own learning and taking forward their key areas of interest. For example, children's rights, sustainability, literacy and outdoor play. Staff spoke confidently and passionately about these leadership roles and how this had positively impacted on outcomes for children. The strong leadership approach meant that staff felt confident in their capacity to support children to reach their full potential.

Quality assurance systems were well organised and supported ongoing improvement. Systems and practices were regularly monitored by the leadership team and reflected upon by the whole team. Regular meetings gave staff opportunities to talk about successes and achievements, discuss any individual children's needs and next steps, and generally reflect on practice. Children's learning environments were reviewed regularly by staff, who consulted with children to ensure play and learning areas met their needs and interests. Monitoring process and data gathering informed further improvement. A positive ethos and a culture of continuous improvement had been embraced and resulted in high quality outcomes and experiences for children.

In line with the Care Inspectorate, 'Records that all registered children and young people's care services must keep and guidance on notification reporting' the service should ensure the Care Inspectorate are informed of notifiable events, such as accidents and incidents in a timely manner. This would enable the Care Inspectorate to offer the appropriate support and guidance to the service.

How good is our staff team? 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 4.3: Staff deployment

Children benefited from a nurturing, caring and dedicated staff team who were warm and responsive in their approach. They worked well together, and they were respectful and considerate in their interactions with each other. Parents' comments were positive in support of staff and included, "They are always helpful, informative, caring and supportive" and "Staff are so nurturing. Excellent teachers with so much passion and care for my child."

The service had experienced some changes in staffing over the past year, with new staff members joining the team. This meant the team were still forming and building professional relationships with each other. While staff told us times had been challenging, they felt positive and enthusiastic about building relationships in moving forward.

The management team recognised and valued the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed at all times. Staff were well deployed to promote continuity of care and were flexible in moving across rooms as needed. The management team supported staff by spending regular time on the nursery floor, including during busier times of the day. This helped build positive working relationships and allow time for professional discussion. Staff deployment continued to be monitored to ensure children were effectively supported. For example, taking account of children's individual needs and strategies of support. This would help identify where any additional support may be needed to help children reach their full potential.

The staff team brought a mix of experience, knowledge and skills to benefit children's care and learning. These skills helped staff to observe children and appropriately identify how to enhance their development. For less experienced staff, there were opportunities for role modelling and to come together as a team to support professional dialogue and effective practice.

Communication and team working enabled consistent approaches and continuity of care for children. Daily 'huddle' updates provided opportunities for staff to reflect on the experiences and opportunities for play, and plan to extend children's interests and learning. More formal team meetings were held regularly which allowed all staff to feel informed and included in decisions and development areas. These gave staff opportunities to reflect on priorities and plan for ongoing improvements.

Most staff had completed mandatory training and were also encouraged to build further skills and knowledge in areas of individual interests. Some staff were also furthering their skills and knowledge through advanced childcare qualifications. This meant that children were supported by staff who were committed to developing their knowledge, skills and values. This in turn helped to secure positive outcomes for 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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