Balmoral Primary School Nursery
Day Care of Children

Balmoral Avenue
Galashiels
TD1 1JJ

Telephone: 01896 753 400

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 September 2024

Service provided by:
Scottish Borders Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001976

Service no:
CS2003017361

About the service

Balmoral Primary School Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children from two years not yet of an age to attend primary school at any one time. Of those no more than 10 are aged two to under three.

The primary school is situated in the town of Galashiels in the Scottish Borders. The nursery is situated within a playroom adjacent to the primary one classroom. Children from the nursery and primary one share toilet facilities and access to a small cosy multi use snug area. The nursery has direct access to an enclosed garden, giving children free flow access to outdoor play throughout the session.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 02 September 2024 between 10:15 and 16:30. We returned to the service on 03 September 2024 between 09:30 and 12:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

To prepare for this inspection we reviewed information about the 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:

- spoke with and observed children using the service
- received written feedback from seven families
- spoke with staff and received written feedback from three staff members
- spoke with the manager and the leadership team
- observed practice and children's routines and experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Through skilful sensitive engagement, opportunities were provided for children to develop their skills, lead their own play and share their ideas.
- Staff understood when to engage and when to stand back and enable children to develop their play at their pace.
- Staff were skilled at identifying when children required additional support and responded to this in a supportive way.
- Staff joined children for lunch, this created opportunities for staff and children to engage in positive interactions, build secure relationships and learn from one another.
- Staff's knowledge and understanding of how children play and learn was evident through the quality interactions.
- Staff understood the positive impact of outdoor learning and had created an indoor/outdoor ethos.
- The provider should take the appropriate steps to ensure that children access toilet facilities that are appropriate and contribute to their overall health and wellbeing.
- Leadership at all levels was now being celebrated and valued.
- The newly formed leadership team should continue to build on ways that staff wellbeing can be supported and prioritised.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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 how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff. Staff knew children and families well and responded sensitively to their individual needs. Staff understood the importance of relationships and attachment, also noted by a parent who told us, "They always meet you at the front door in the morning. They are so attentive, not only do they ask how my child is doing but how mummy is!". Individual, tailored plans were developed to support children and families as they settled into the service. For example, developing individual resource baskets, home made books and extended settling in visits. One parent told us, "Our nursery journey has been tough with my child struggling to settle but the staff in the nursery are a credit to the school. They have tried various and thoughtful ways tailored to my child's likes and needs to create a safe and fun place for them to come to. I have stayed with them on many occasions and the staff make me feel welcome and have given me some great ideas and support for my child and me. I can't thank them enough". This had supported children to feel safe, secure and comfortable within their new environment.

Personal plans were in place and in partnership with families, reviewed in line with good practice. Staff responded to individual children's needs and were able to talk through strategies of support that were in place. For example, visual timetables, sign along and visual prompts that were being used to support individual children. Children received encouragement, support, praise and recognition throughout the session. This contributed to children's confidence and wellbeing, while supporting them to build positive, strong relationships in the space.

Mealtimes were calm, relaxed and sociable. Staff joined children for lunch, this created opportunities for staff and children to engage in positive interactions, build secure relationships, learn from one another, provide emotional support, promote language and inspire learning. Children's agency and self help skills were promoted through setting tables, finding their place, sharing food, serving food and tidying away once they had finished. This contributed to children's overall health, wellbeing and happiness.

Children's individual needs were being considered and planned for in relation to the wider group across the setting. Staff were skilled at identifying when children required additional support and responded to this in a supportive way. For example, when some children were seen to be struggling to express their emotions or were distressed, staff recognised this and supported children down at their eye level, whilst using their tone of voice, body language and facial expressions to interact. This supported children to feel heard as their feelings were recognised, validated and listened to.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children benefited from a balance of planned and spontaneous learning experiences that reflected their interests within the setting and from home. Resources were introduced to promote curiosity, create new invitations for play and extend learning. Staff's knowledge and understanding of how children play and learn was evident through the quality interactions. Staff used descriptive language, higher order questioning and were skilled at pausing to allow children to think, wonder and share their thoughts. This created a positive learning environment where children were leading their own play, developing their creativity, building confidence and leadership skills as they followed their own ideas.

A child centred planning approach prioritised the 'child's voice' and their unique needs and preferences. This supported staff to be responsive and focussed on extending children's play and learning in the moment. As a result, children's voices influenced the resources and experiences they accessed. As a newly formed team, staff had plans to evaluate and further develop the recording of their planning cycle this term. This would further strengthen and embed the child centred planning approach that had been implemented. This would continue to support children to have quality care, play and learning experiences.

Flexible and reassuring routines minimised the disruption to children's play and learning. Where daily routines such as lunchtime inevitability interrupted children's play, staff sensitively prepared and supported children to leave their play and return to this. For example, staff encouraged a child to use a 'work in progress' sign to notify other staff and children that they were not finished with their block play design. This thoughtful approach enabled the child to return to their play and continue their learning. This promoted respect and recognition for the child's hard work and built positive relationships that were based on trust.

Involving families in their child's learning remained important and staff continued to look for new creative ways to engage families in the life of the service. Staff were committed to building positive relationships and taking a whole family approach to support children's care, play and learning. One staff member told us, "We have strong positive relations with parents which helps us to provide the best service we can for them and their children's learning and development". When families were asked through our online questionnaire to comment on the statement, 'I have a strong connection with the staff caring for my child', all seven families agreed. This contributed to the positive atmosphere that children and families experienced.

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

Since our last inspection there had been a number of changes to the environment, with the most significant being the closure of one of the playrooms. Staff had worked hard to develop the new learning space to meet the needs of the mixed age group of children. As a reflective team, staff had been receptive to the feedback from our last inspection and had spent time decluttering and scaling back the resources within the environment. As a result, the environment felt calm, spacious and inviting. Staff had used a number of good practice guidance and audit toolkits to inform improvements and bring about positive changes. Developing the environment and play spaces remained a priority on this year's service improvement plan. This would support staff to continue their commitment to providing quality play spaces for children.

Staff understood the positive impact of outdoor learning and had created an indoor/outdoor ethos. Children were able to choose where they spent their time and freely moved between indoors and outdoors. This meant that children were able to experience long uninterrupted outdoor learning opportunities. This promoted independence, choice and contributed to children's overall wellbeing and happiness. Outdoor clothing was provided by the service and staff encouraged children's independence as they dressed in their waterproof clothing and welly boots to go outside in the rain. One parent shared with us, "My child loves to be outdoor and the staff go out with them come rain or shine". Child height storage in the garden space allowed children to freely access a variety of resources to extend their own play and learning. Children's voices and ideas had influenced the outdoor space, with children asking for more space to "just run". Staff had begun to move larger resources to create a safe, open space to support children who wished to run and be more active outdoors. The staff had connected with the Scottish Borders Council community pay back team, this had allowed the team to build new relationships and look at opportunities to further develop the garden. This would continue to enhance children's play and learning opportunities outdoors.

Small cosy spaces were accessible across the playroom to support children's overall wellbeing. This provided the opportunity for children to relax, self-regulate and chat with peers in small groups.

Due to the recent move into one playroom, all children now shared toilet facilities with primary one. The equipment and facilities did not promote independence and a sense of security for the youngest children as they visited the toilet. For example, very young children were unable to independently access the toilet, with staff having to hold children on the toilet. The provider was aware of this and gave us reassurances during the inspection that they were taking steps to explore possible solutions. The provider should take the appropriate steps to ensure that children access toilet facilities that are appropriate and contribute to their overall 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 improvement are led well

There had been changes within the staff and leadership team since our last inspection. The manager had proceeded with staff appraisals within the nursery. The manager had plans to further improve the ongoing support for staff with the introduction of regular staff support and supervision meetings. This was in its infancy and had not been fully implemented as yet. Feedback from staff indicated that there needed to be continued focus on supporting staff wellbeing. The newly formed leadership team should act as role models for the development of positive and nurturing relationships within the team, building on ways that staff wellbeing could be supported and prioritised. This would contribute to the positive atmosphere that children and staff experienced.

Leadership and management had implemented an ongoing quality assurance system that covered key areas of practice. This was flexible and responsive to areas of practice that staff were focussing on. For example, staff requesting support with lunchtime audits or support with planning the environment as both rooms joined together. Staff and members of the leadership team had used a balance of observations, peer reviews, reflective discussions and quality audits to bring about positive changes and improve outcomes for children. One staff member told us, "Our primary one teacher is great at asking if we need anything and our early years teacher from Scottish Borders Council supports us massively". This contributed to the culture of openness and continuous improvement that had been developed.

Leadership at all levels was now being celebrated and valued. Management had facilitated discussions with individual staff supporting them to reflect on different styles of leadership and relating this to their practice and recent experiences within the service. Staff shared that they felt able to use their skills, knowledge and experience to influence change and bring about improvements. As a result, staff had driven a number of improvements since our last inspection. This contributed to positive outcomes for all.

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

Staff worked well together and had clearly built strong relationships in the short time spent as a new team. This contributed to the kind, caring and respectful environment that children experienced. Staff modelled this through their actions and their language. For example, staff members recognised when someone in the team required support when working with individual and small groups of children at different points throughout the inspection. Staff responded quickly and sensitively to this. As a result, children experienced warm, nurturing interactions.

Staff communicated well with one another, and deployed themselves across the spaces, ensuring that they communicated effectively with one another if a task was going to take them away from children. Staff understood when to engage and when to stand back and enable children to develop their play at their pace. Through skilful sensitive engagement, opportunities were provided for children to develop their skills, lead their own play and share their ideas. As a result, children were busy in their play and the environment felt calm and relaxed. However, whilst minimum ratios were always met, staff deployment, during staff breaks had an impact on the quality of children's experiences, level of interactions and the overall environment. When asked 'what could be better?', parents told us, "More staff. Different children require different needs and I don't believe the number of teachers helps this" and "Overall I don't think there is enough staff to suit all the different needs for all children". We recognised that the service was currently recruiting for an additional member of staff. The provider offered reassurances during the inspection that interim consistent support would be provided when required. The provider should ensure the approach to staffing within the service is outcome focused. Staffing levels should consider the complexity of individual children's needs in addition to the wider group and circumstances. This would contribute to positive outcomes for all.

Staff were passionate about their ongoing professional development. Staff could confidently talk about training they had accessed, along with professional reading and research that had impacted on their practice. Staff had high aspirations for the children, families and the service. Families were complimentary of staff's dedication and ongoing support, as parents told us, "They don't need to do better! Got nothing but positive reviews about Balmoral ELC team!" and "They always go that extra mile with my child. It's such a nice and comfortable environment. They've helped them so much in the short time we have been there". This contributed to the positive atmosphere that children and families experienced.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To ensure children experience an environment that reflects their needs and current interests, leadership should enable staff to use their knowledge, skills and experience to be responsive and make changes when required. This should include staff being supported to adapt and develop play spaces and introduce a variety of resources.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices' (HSCS 5.21) and 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 15 March 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff told us they felt supported and empowered to bring about positive changes to the environment. Staff had decluttered and scaled back the environment and introduced a variety of different resources that reflected the children's current interests. This had supported staff to use their knowledge, skills and experience to bring about positive changes. As a result, children were engaged in their play, using their imagination and following their own ideas.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children and families benefit from staff who are supported by leadership that is empowering and motivating, the leadership team should ensure they create conditions where all people feel confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for the process.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 15 March 2024.

Action taken since then

There had been a number of changes across the leadership and staff team. The leadership team had worked in partnership with staff to create a culture of continuous improvement, where all staff have the ability to influence practice and bring about positive changes. Staff had used good practice guidance and ongoing observations to inform their improvements and changes. As a result, staff felt empowered and confident in sharing their ideas and acting on these to bring about positive changes. This contributed to the positive atmosphere that children experienced.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure children benefit from a setting where leaders foster positive and inclusive relationships for all, the manager should ensure that the shared vision, values, aims and objectives positively informs practice. Staff should be supported to participate in regular support and supervision which enables their contributions to be recognised and helps them to feel supported, challenged and engaged. Where concerns or complaints are raised, leaders should respond promptly to ensure that improvements are made and the necessary action is taken.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19) and 'I experience a warm atmosphere because people have good working relationships' (HSCS 3.7)

This area for improvement was made on 15 March 2024.

Action taken since then

Staff appraisals had supported staff to participate in meaningful reflective discussions and their own professional development. The manager had begun to develop a new supervision procedure/structure. This would further enhance the ongoing support for the staff team moving forward. The manager now planned to involve staff in the consultation of the first draft of this new policy/procedure and welcome their views on this. This would support staff to feel valued and enable them to influence the delivery of this new process. Leadership had taken on board the feedback from the last inspection and had taken steps to bring about positive changes. This contributed to the positive atmosphere that had been created.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To support children's overall safety, health and wellbeing, the manager should ensure the effective use of information sharing with all relevant individuals. This should include the staff team across the whole ELC setting.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27).

This area for improvement was made on 15 March 2024.

Action taken since then

The procedures for information sharing had been improved and staff were now receiving the appropriate updates to enable them to effectively support children's safety, health and wellbeing. Staff were now leading in key areas of practice and ensuring all staff were updated with the relevant information. For example, key workers were now attending individual meetings to support children and families. This contributed to positive outcomes for all.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

To support children's experiences and help ensure their safety and wellbeing the service should review their reporting procedures and ensure they are making the correct notifications. This should include but not be limited to, understanding of the guidance titled 'Records that all registered care services (except childminding) must keep and guidance on notification reporting' (2020), and also becoming familiar with key good practice guidance in relation to managing a care service.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (4.23) and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 15 March 2024.

Action taken since then

The service had clear reporting procedures in place in relation to reporting and making the appropriate notifications. This contributed the safety, health and wellbeing of children.

This area for improvement has been met.

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?	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

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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