Saint Paul's Nursery Centre
Day Care of Children

Saint Paul's Primary School
Backmuir Road
Whitehill
Hamilton
ML3 0PX

Telephone: 01698 284 777

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
3 November 2023

Service provided by:
South Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003481

Service no:
CS2004084564

About the service

Saint Paul's Nursery Centre is registered to provide care to 42 children. Of those 42 children no more than 10 are aged 2 years to not yet 3 and 32 children are aged 3 to not yet attending primary school.

Care is provided from Saint Paul's Primary School, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire. The service is close to local shops, schools, transport routes and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 1 + 2 November 2023 between 08:30 and 17:00. Feedback was provided on 3 November 2023. The 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Spoke with six people using the service and 20 families
- Spoke with 13 staff and management
- Observed practice and daily life
- Reviewed documents
- Spoke with one visiting professional.

Key messages

- There was a calm and relaxed atmosphere throughout the service. Children were happy, settled and having fun.
- Additional support plans were in place. Agreed actions and strategies were supporting improved outcomes for children.
- Experiences on offer outdoors were helping to build children's opportunities for learning through challenge, risky play and imagination.
- Quality assurance monitoring needed to be more robust to secure long lasting improvement.
- The management team had already considered the skills, knowledge and expertise of the staff team as part of the improvement plans for the service. Continuing to develop this would help ensure children have positive experiences across the day.

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?	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? 4 - Good

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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were valued, loved and secure. Overall interactions were warm and supportive. For example, a staff member provided reassurance when a child was upset on arrival. The child responded positively to this sensitive support. A parent agreed, telling us "Staff are lovely and take a genuine interest in the family as a whole".

Personal plans were in place for each child and contained information to help meet their needs. For example, likes and dislikes and allergy information. We discussed the importance of considering children's significant needs and interest to support positive outcomes for individual children and the manager agreed.

Care and support needs of children were being met. Relationships between children and staff were respectful and nurturing, with support offered in a dignified way. A parent told us "Everyone knows my child well if anyone's off its ok as the other staff all take time to know all the children".

A visiting professional told us "The nursery staff are very flexible in responding to the children's needs on any given day and engage in reflective practice when considering whether current strategies are still being effective or need to be adapted". They also told us "Nursery staff work very well with families and other agencies. The nursery will always strive to take a multi-agency approach, where appropriate, and liaise with all relevant agencies as they support the children". The service had adopted an individual approach to meeting children's needs through links with visiting professionals such as educational psychology, community nursing and speech and language therapy. We observed staff being respectful and sensitive of children's personal preferences and individual needs. This ensured children's individual needs were considered and supported in a consistent way.

Children had some opportunities to self-serve and develop skills in cutting food and pouring drinks during snack times. There were a few missed opportunities during the lunch time experience to further explore these skills. However, mealtimes for children were relaxed and unhurried. Staff sat with children and used the time to connect and build bonds. Water was available for children at all times and they were encouraged to remain hydrated supporting their health and wellbeing.

Overall, the administration of medication and the recording of accidents and incidents were recorded in line with best practice. Forms were up to date and relevant paperwork was in place. This supported keeping children safe and well.

Staff understood their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children. They had undertaken child protection training, were aware of potential indicators of abuse and what action to take to keep children safe.

1.3 Play and Learning

The development of language, literacy and numeracy across all areas had been identified as a focus for the service 2023/24 improvement plan. Some elements of this were already in place and having a positive impact on children's experiences. For example, strategies and games were being used and were helping to improve communication for all children including those who were non-verbal or had English as an additional language.

Some examples of curiosity and imagination were experienced through opportunities to participate in various types of play. For example, block play and sensory exploration. However, adult initiated large group times before transition points in the day interrupted children's play. This meant opportunities to develop ideas, thinking and imagination were reduced. The management team and staff should reflect on opportunities to support these times of day in a less rigid manner. This will enable appropriate consideration to be given to children's wellbeing and feelings and will ensure that experiences and support of children remains the focus of staff (see area for improvement 1).

There were a few missed opportunities to support children's imagination, depth of learning and thinking. We encouraged the service to reflect as a team to bring a balance of spontaneous and planned play experiences. Continuing to reflect as a team and provide these provocations and opportunities for children would support high quality play and learning.

Children were happy and confident in their play. Most learning was responsive and children's needs and interests were at the heart of this approach. For example, a child discovered a ladybug outdoors when climbing. Staff supported with an initial discussion, they extended learning reflecting on another ladybug found the previous week and then suggested children look back through the photos from the previous week and discovered this was a different ladybug. The staff member worked at the child's level, promoted imagination, discussion and generated enthusiasm in the child. This type of learning ensured children's imagination was sparked, they were engaged and having fun.

Staff told us the service was on a journey with planning for children's learning. This was consistent with our findings. One parent told us they would like "More information on my child's learning" and another said, "It would be nice to see what they are doing/learning". Other parents told us "Staff give us a good handover at the end of the session" and "Staff always let you know what child has been doing". Following a discussion, we encouraged the manager to keep reflecting with the team on how to offer and present learning in a manner that was engaging for children and accessible to parents.

Outdoor play was supporting children with fun, challenging and risky play in nature. There was a large, grassed hill with a hobbit hut and mud kitchen. Some children engaged in rich learning in these spaces. For example, they made water and leaf potions, walked through the falling leaves and searched for insects in the garden with magnifying glasses.

The introduction and development of loose parts, block play and open-ended resources were beginning to support children to further develop their thinking, problem solving and to work as a team. For example, some children were engaged in building towers of bricks and exploring the shape and features of faces with pasta, playdough and twigs.

Areas for improvement

1.
To reduce the amount of interruptions to children's play from adult initiated large group times before transition points in the day and to ensure that children receive high quality experiences, the manager should ensure that the team reflect on opportunities to support these times of day in a less rigid manner.

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)

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.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Playrooms were welcoming and homely. Consideration had been given to the layout and content of areas to support the interests and needs of children. The service was bright, spacious and a pleasant environment for children to play, learn and relax.

Overall safety measures were contributing to keeping children safe. For example, a secure entry system, risk assessments of the environment and clear communication between staff. We identified a few areas to reduce the possible risks to children such as loose cables and storage of materials. Actions taken were contributing to keeping children safe and some points were addressed before the inspection concluded.

A variety of open-ended materials and equipment were available to children. This supported learning across all curricular areas such as obstacle courses, access to the gym hall and nurture room within the school. One parent told us "There is a good range of resources" and another said, "There is no shortage of available resources in the nursery".

Equipment and furniture were well maintained and resources used by children were varied and in a good state of repair. Maintenance logs were up to date and areas identified were actioned and recorded.

Policies were up to date and available for families. These were supporting the management of the service and covered subjects such as administration of medication, first aid, hand washing and partnership with families.

We discussed the importance of robust cleaning practices for nappy change and bathroom areas and storage and the manager agreed. Overall infection control procedures were contributing to keeping children safe such as the use of gloves and aprons at nappy changing, and embedded handwashing. This was helping to ensure children's health and wellbeing was maintained.

The service had worked with the primary school to develop a shared vision and set of values which included helping children to build resilience, ambition, confidence, respect and kindness. The team focused on delivering a nurturing and family led approach to support children and families. This helped give children and families a sense of belonging and ownership in 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.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are well led

A parent told us "The depute communicates with me very well and is very approachable with anything that I've needed to speak to them about" and another parent told us "The management team know all the children and their parents. A parent's survey was recently carried out and the feedback in the newsletter showed they have taken on board one of my suggestions. The newsletter shows what the nursery is working towards and shares policies and procedures". This helped demonstrate a well led service with capacity for and commitment to improvement.

The manager and staff team worked well together and were committed to bring about positive outcomes for children through regular self-evaluation. The management team told us an area of ongoing focus was to strengthen the monitoring of staff practice and playroom environments. However, other elements of the service 2022/23 improvement plan priorities had already been identified by the team and were reflective of some of our findings on planning for learning and staff training.

Quality assurance processes were in place and we observed some elements of this having a positive impact on practice and improving outcomes for children. Staff told us they were involved in reflecting and acting towards improvement through opportunities such as the recent nurture training and loose parts and curiosity training sessions. We agreed that continuing to reflect and share new learning in this way would contribute to a high quality well-managed service.

Strong and trusting relationships with families had been established and were supporting meeting the needs of children. Parents told us staff were "Consistent with children and their family" and another said "Staff all really care about my child. They have an additional support need and we have strategies in place to ensure their needs are met. I feel confident and happy leaving my child in their care". Two-way communication methods to engage with families were embedded such as online updates, newsletters and daily chats at drop off and collection times.

The service offered stay and play sessions, keyworker meetings for individual children's families and the opportunity to take part in woodland adventures with children as part of their parental partnership working. Some families however told us, "I haven't met my child's key worker I've only seen a picture of them on the door" and another said, "I would love to be able to see the playroom and how it's set up". We discussed the importance of parents being able to be in the nursery playrooms such as during drop off and pick up times. The management team told us about the current system in place for these times and said they would reflect on this feedback and were committed to exploring this further with parents. This type of partnership working with families would ensure parents have the information needed to support their child's needs and interests.

Respecting children's rights was a central part of the service approach to improving outcomes for children. Staff actively ensured children were listened to. For example, children's art and creations were celebrated and displayed in a respectful way giving them a sense of ownership of the space.

Staff meetings took place regularly and were used to share new learnings and discuss next steps and improvements at the service. We discussed the importance of all staff being involved in these to ensure the shared vision and consistent whole team approach was in place and the manager agreed.

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.

4.3 Staff deployment

Deployment of staff supported supervision of children. Staff were consistent in their communication during daily tasks and responsibilities. We identified a short period during lunch time preparation and routines where the movement of staff could have been more effectively deployed. Following a discussion, we were satisfied that the management team would reflect on this to minimise impact on children and meet their individual needs.

Management and staff told us the service had faced challenging circumstances in the last year. However, parents told us the team had "A broad range of staff skills and experiences" and another said, "Staff are always happy and their communication is outstanding. If an incident occurs, they are quick at communicating this". Staff were motivated, happy to be at work and committed to their role. They shared a common vision and worked hard to achieve quality care and learning for children.

There were a few missed opportunities to enhance positive experiences across the day for all children. We discussed this with the manager and they agreed. The management team had already considered the skills, knowledge and expertise of the staff team as part of the improvement plans for the service. Continuing to develop this would help ensure children have positive experiences across the day.

The induction process helped new staff to build relationships with children and families, understand their responsibility to keep children safe, and continually develop their learning. We signposted the service to good practice guidance the national induction resource to further support communication and staff inductions moving forward.

All staff caring for children were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. They are the regulatory body responsible for registering the social services workforce. They provide public protection by promoting high standards of conduct and practice and support the professional development of those registered with them.

Parents overall were confident that staff were working well as a team to support children and to improve outcomes for them. Parents told us "I think it's a great nursery and I'm pleased my child goes here. They are happy going in and always seems happy coming out", "It's great we can rely on the nursery to take parents views onboard" and "My child has thrived significantly since joining and their development has excelled in all aspects. The nursery is a credit to Hamilton and the children in it".

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	4 - 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

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

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