Paradykes Family Learning Centre
Day Care of Children

Paradykes Primary School
Mayburn Avenue
Loanhead
EH20 9HB

Telephone: 01312 714 653

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 August 2026

Service provided by:
Midlothian Sure Start

Service provider number:
SP2003003175

Service no:
CS2005103645

About the service

Paradykes Family Learning Centre is located within Paradykes primary school in the town of Loanhead, Midlothian. The service is one of four Sure Start family learning centres across Midlothian. The service operates from a purpose-built centre, close to shops and local community facilities. The large, attractive, open-plan playroom has direct access to a well-resourced outdoor area. There is a kitchen, children's toilet facilities, a dedicated cloakroom area, a small breakout room, a spacious family room and office space.

Paradykes Family Learning Centre is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 30 children not yet attending primary school at any one time, of whom no more than 10 are aged under two years. At the time of inspection, 24 children were registered and eight children were present on the day.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 8 August 2026 between 09:00 and 17:30. 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
- considered feedback from 10 families and eight staff, though an online questionnaire
- 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, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement was necessary within the heading 'Leadership.'

Key messages

- The vision, values and aims of 'building best beginnings' was clearly reflected in the ethos and day to day life of the service.
- Children were actively engaged in meaningful learning experiences that developed their thinking, language and problem-solving skills.
- Outdoor play experiences enriched children's curiosity, connection with nature and physical development.
- Meaningful engagement with families and the wider community was a clear strength of the service.

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 vision, values and aims of 'building best beginnings' was clearly reflected in the ethos and day to day life of the service. One family commented, "Our relationship with the staff has been outstanding from the very beginning. They have always treated us with kindness, respect and genuine compassion, making us feel like valued partners in our child's care and development." Staff were welcoming, kind and caring. Evidence gathered, demonstrated a range of targeted support for families and the wider community. These included, 'good start', 'raising children with confidence', 'lunch club' and financial support services. This led to improved outcomes by increasing confidence, enhancing access to support and promoting wellbeing.

The service had effectively managed recent Sure Start organisational changes, including staffing and leadership restructuring. The manager was new to the service and also managed another setting. They provided consistent support across both services and led change at a pace that suited children, families and staff. Some staff had progressed into promoted roles. This helped maintain continuity for children and families and supported a smooth transition through the changes.

The service demonstrated commitment to improvement through ongoing self-evaluation. They had created conditions where the views of children, families and staff were valued and used to develop the service. Opportunities to feedback included, quick response (QR) codes, a family feedback book, you said we did and question of the month. One family told us, "The staff actively seek feedback and genuinely value the views of children and parents, making us feel that our opinions matter."

Leaders had begun to involve all staff in self-evaluation and improvement planning. For example, the playroom self-evaluation floor book included environmental audits, which had led to identified actions and meaningful improvements. Priorities in the new improvement included actions for staff to take forward. This approach will contribute to a shared responsibility for developing the service and develop staff confidence in implementing change.

Quality assurance and moderation was taking place and overall, positively impacted on children's outcomes. During our visit, we identified a few safety concerns which were not picked up through risk assessment of the environment. These included large outdoor wooden sand tray lids, which were balanced on their sides and medication stored in a low-level kitchen cupboard with a broken lock. Although access to the kitchen was restricted by a low-level kitchen partition door fitted with a locking latch, there remained a risk that children could gain access to the medication. The service immediately moved the medication into a high cupboard out of children's reach and moved the lids for the sand tray, this ensured children's safety. The introduction of a new quality assurance calendar, which included well timed monitoring and auditing, will support leaders in evaluating and sustaining a high-quality service over time in line with best practice guidance.

The service's recruitment processes were values-led. Staff had been recruited in a way that had been informed by all aspects of safer recruitment practices. This included volunteers within the service. The national induction resource was used to support new staff into the service. Clear processes were in place for mentoring and training new staff and those in newly promoted roles.

Staff told us they felt well supported by leaders and their colleagues. One staff commented, "I have been one hundred percent supported with paperwork and through the induction, leaders always check in with me, I honestly couldn't ask for better." Daily huddles, weekly meetings and quarterly meetings across the year with other Sure Start services helped staff communicate, connect and learn from each other. As a result, staff were well supported in developing their knowledge, skills and confidence. This helped to ensure consistency and high-quality practice across the service.

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 motivated, confident and engaged in their play. Staff enabled children to make informed choices and lead their own play and learning within a creative, challenging environment. Staff had a good understanding of how children learn and develop. They provided an enabling environment with wide range of experiences for children that were rich and challenging. Families told us, "My child enjoys a fantastic variety of activities, including outdoor play, creative experiences, sensory activities, stories, music and opportunities to build friendships and independence" and "There are so many different areas inside the nursery, as well as outside, that the children can literally choose whatever they wish to do."

Staff regularly evaluated spaces with children to ensure they reflected children's interests and developmental needs. For example, new children starting were encouraged to add their photos and ideas to floor books and displays. This helped them to develop a sense of belonging and feel valued as part of the setting. Staff were responsive in extending play, for instance they brought out the magnifying glasses while children were hunting for bugs. Children experienced much joy at finding a ladybird. As a result, children benefited from a rights-based approach that promoted sustained engagement in their play, learning and development.

Outdoor play experiences enriched children's curiosity, connection with nature and physical development. One family told us, "There are excellent opportunities to play outdoors, and this is one of the things we value most about the nursery." Children had fun in the garden hunting for insects, chalking, counting, playing in the sand making tracks with the diggers, pretending to make and sell ice cream. Staff interacted and explored alongside children, building vocabulary and creating a sense of wonder and excitement about the world. They joined in with children's walking band, singing and marching alongside them while they played musical instruments. This enabled children's enjoyment, movement and supported rhythm and coordination. As a result, children were confident to explore, make choices and take ownership of their learning.

The service had received recent funding for children to participate in football coaching sessions outdoors. Children returned excited and enthusiastically shared their enjoyment of the experience. They told us, "It was fun", "I played football, we used the cones." These extended opportunities helped children develop their physical skills and work cooperatively with others.

Overall, children benefited from high-quality, attuned interactions to extend their play, learning and development. As children played in the water tray, staff used comments and open-ended questions to extend their learning. For example, "it's sinking, this must be heavier" and "I wonder if the leaf will float or sink?" Similarly, when discussing acorns, staff supported children to compare and describe size. Staff's responsive interactions supported children's language, comparison skills and understanding of size. As a result, children were actively engaged in meaningful learning experiences that developed their thinking, language and problem-solving skills.

There was a balance of planned and responsive experiences which supported children's play learning and development. Plans were mainly clear and well documented, with evaluations recorded in floor books. Learning was linked to the curriculum, best practice guidance and some observations captured children's levels of engagement and wellbeing. One family commented, "Our child is given a wonderful range of fun, engaging and meaningful experiences that are tailored to their individual needs and interests." We discussed the importance of regularly observing and documenting children's individual learning and progress. This would help ensure that all children are appropriately challenged and receive the support they need to make continued progress in their learning 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.

Nurturing care and support

Children and families experienced warm, responsive, nurturing care and support from a committed staff team. Trusting relationships had been established between children, staff and families. Staff provided emotional security to children through cuddles, comfort, praise and reassurance when they needed it. For example, staff recognised when a child was tired at lunchtime and offered a cuddle and the opportunity to sit on their knee. This helped children feel loved, safe and secure. One family commented, "Our child's key worker has built such a trusting and caring relationship with both our child and our family."

Children benefited from personalised, child-centred transitions when settling in and when moving on from the service. Transitions were individual and responsive to children and families' needs, wishes and choices. Supporting transition was incorporated into weekly play planning. This helped ensure children were effectively responded to and helped to manage change. Daily routines provided children with opportunities to build confidence and grow through their own experiences. During mealtimes, within nappy changing and handwashing, children's independence was promoted, and support was provided when needed. As a result, children developed self-help skills and confidence. Staff asked for children's consent before nappy changes and respected their privacy and dignity. This meant children were valued and their choices were respected.

Snack and lunchtime were calm, nurturing and well planned. Staff sat with children engaging in conversations and provided support when needed. Opportunities promoted children's choice, independence and responsibility.

Children served their own lunch and poured their drinks. Staff encouraged children to try new foods, respected preferences and offered alternatives. This helped children feel confident, included and developed positive relationships with food. One family commented, "The nursery provides a range of foods to choose from, which allows my child to try new things."

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. Plans valued children's individuality and reflected their strengths, needs and interests. Plans were developed and reviewed with families. One family commented, "Reviews are a great way to sit with my child's key worker and discuss all areas of my child's development. It's helpful to speak and discuss areas that can be worked on at the centre and at home." Entries documented in wellbeing logs were regularly reviewed and used to ensure children were kept safe and protected. Plans included clear strategies to support individual children. Staff used this information well in daily practice. This meant children received care and support that was right for them which helped them thrive.

Children's healthcare needs were managed effectively. Staff kept accurate, up-to-date records and children's individual medication was regularly reviewed. Children benefited from a staff team who were trained in managing their healthcare needs. One family commented, "They have gone above and beyond to meet my child's medical and healthcare needs." As a result, children experienced safe, well-managed healthcare that supported their wellbeing.

Meaningful engagement with families and the wider community was a clear strength of the service. One family commented, "The open communication and genuine partnership between our family and the nursery have given us great confidence that our child is receiving the very best care and support." Opportunities for families to be involved included, the big bedtime read, book bug sessions and parents' evenings. Additionally, parents joined in with a sponsor welly walk and easter hunt to raise funds for the garden development. These opportunities provided families time to connect, learn together and support children's development in a relaxed, welcoming environment.

Newsletters and the effective use of a digital app shared children's daily routines and experiences. This meant information was shared in a timely manner keeping families informed and included. Families used the app to share their children's experiences and achievements from home. Staff used this information to celebrate achievements and build on children's interests and experiences. This collaborative approach enabled the service to learn from families, recognise and support children's care learning and development.

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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