Oaklands School Nursery Class
Day Care of Children

Oaklands School
750 Ferry Road
Edinburgh
EH4 4PQ

Telephone: 01313 158 100

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 May 2026

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002576

Service no:
CS2007153489

About the service

Oaklands School Nursery Class is based in Oaklands School to provide a care service to a maximum of nine children, aged between 3 years and primary school entry, at any one time.

Oaklands School Nursery Class provides a significantly adapted and supportive learning environment for learners with profound and multiple learning disabilities and often associated health care needs. The service is close to local parks and transport links. Children are transported to and from the service in a minibus.

At the time of the inspection three children were using the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19 May 2026 between 9:30 and 16:30 and an announced inspection which took place on 20 May 2026 between 9:15 and 16:30. 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, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- observed children who used the service
- spoke with three staff and management
- reviewed electronic questionnaire returned by two parents
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with health care professionals involved with children's care.

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, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Children received high quality, individualised care.
- Extremely well considered routines and highly skilled staff interventions supported children to be motivated and engaged in learning.
- Individual needs were exceptionally well considered, in partnership with health care professionals working with each child. They credited children's progress to the outstanding commitment of the staff team.
- Established strong partnerships with families and highly effective information sharing included families in their child's learning and development.

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	6 - Excellent
Children are supported to achieve	6 - Excellent

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.

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

Oaklands School Nursery Class promoted, sustained and was highly committed to a shared vision that reflected the highest possible standards for children and families. One of the values that was clearly demonstrated was 'We nurture our learners, staff, parents, carers and partners who are a central part of the vision, values and ethos of the school'. This was apparent from the atmosphere within the school and nursery, the feedback from staff and parents and the care and attention given to children. All staff spoken with throughout the school were happy in their work and positive about working at the school.

The headteacher provided highly effective leadership and modelled a strong, value-based approach. They demonstrated a willingness to work alongside staff, including providing direct support in practice when required. This visible and approachable leadership style promoted a culture of respect, collaboration and professionalism. Staff confidently approached the inspector to share their practice, reflecting a culture of openness and pride in their work.

The nursery class had begun to use the challenge questions in the shared Quality Improvement Framework for the early learning and childcare sector and planned to use this to inform the Standards and Quality Improvement Plan. Self-evaluation was taking place and was helping staff to reflect on and continually improve their practice. As a result, each child's care and experiences were closely monitored, supporting staff to respond to individual needs and promote positive outcomes for children.

There was an ongoing focus to ensure that families' views were actively sought to inform the development of the setting. This included opportunities to spend time within the nursery with their child, attend stay and play sessions and baby massage. In addition formal feedback was sought through questionnaires, daily diaries, parent evenings and opportunities to have discussions with health care professionals. A family link worker supported families, offering practical advice and support. This helped families to feel included, valued, and well informed about the development of the service.

High quality learning and development was at the heart of improvement planning. Continuous improvement, success and achievement for all children was central to the planned implementation of strategies for improvement. As a result, several improvements had positively impacted on outcomes for children, for example the increased use of the local area, parks, the library and spaces that were wheelchair accessible. The introduction of Developmental Milestones Learning Outcomes (DMLOs) allowed children's progress to be tracked, all of which had a positive impact on outcomes for children.

The recruitment and retention of a stable, skilled team was recognised as key to supporting the wellbeing of children and staff. A long-serving staff member participated in the recruitment process to help ensure successful candidates were well suited to the team and aligned with the service's values.

Strong leadership supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their ability to support children and families to reach their full potential. To enhance this developing supervision opportunities, in addition to the annual professional development review (PRD), to include regular peer monitoring opportunities for all staff could be considered. This could enhance reflective practice, professional growth and build on the supportive team approach through a culture of continuous improvement.

Children play and learn 6 - Excellent

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent, where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

The nursery was bright and spacious with direct access to the outdoor playground. Overhead tracking hoists and hygiene rooms enabled much smoother transitions for children with physical needs. The large playroom had smaller rooms off it which were set up as sensory areas or areas for children to rest. Children accessed different areas of the school for a range of activities such as assembly, soft play, 'Rebound therapy' (when trampolines are used to provide structured, therapeutic exercise) and performing arts classes, all of which supported children's development and gave them access to a variety of experiences.

Children had daily access to an outdoor woodland space, which supported their opportunities for fresh air and outdoor play. The environment provided a range of experiences, including exploration of musical instruments suspended from trees, use of a hammock swing, and access to a wheelchair-accessible trampoline. On occasion, performing arts activities were delivered outdoors, further enriching children's experiences. Staff told us that children particularly enjoyed sensory experiences, including feeling and responding to different weather conditions. This supported inclusivity for all children.

Staff had a strong understanding of how children develop, learn and progress. Staff used relevant theory and practice to support their delivery of high quality experiences that supported children's development. Staff placed the greatest importance on providing relevant and personalised learning opportunities, with bespoke experiences to help develop specific skills. Staff were supported by a multi-disciplinary team who were on hand to offer support, advice and contribute to their DMLOs and learning plan.

Careful observations and effective assessments recognised and promoted children's progress and achievements. Children's individual needs were at the heart of planning. Planning for children's learning was based around four foundation milestones for children with complex additional support needs. These are communication, functional movement, self and emotions, and making connections, to provide an individualised and holistic learning experience for each child. Any additional supports were identified, planned for and implemented. This highly responsive approach ensured that children were developing skills for life and learning. These high quality individualised learning and development targets were reviewed and evaluated regularly with families and health care professionals. Health care professionals credited children's progress to the outstanding commitment of the staff team.

Staff were very attentive to children's needs, expression and non-verbal cues. They used a variety of approaches to communicate with children, depending on their need. These included Signalong sign language as well as on body signing, eye-pointing, gesture and facial expression, song signifiers, voice output communication devices and symbols. They recognised if children were sad or uncomfortable and took action to rectify the situation. Staff gave children the time, space and support they needed to make decisions and express themselves. Children's interactions with each other were encouraged, as staff recognised the importance of the role of other children in enriching play.

Staff used song signifiers to ease points of transition and to help children to develop an awareness of routine. Staff gently sang familiar songs for each situation as they moved to different areas in the service. This supported children to understand and anticipate where they were going, helping them to feel secure.

Children attending currently were not independently mobile. Staff used equipment to safely move children from their wheelchairs to standing frames to enable them to fully engage with activities. There was a well-planned daily timetable packed with bespoke experiences to help develop specific skills. Floor books and learning journals evidenced the play and learning opportunities available to children. These included art activities, sensory experiences and baking. These activities were tailored to meet the interests, likes and needs of individual children. Children's achievements were celebrated through star of the week at the school assembly. A parent told us "I love how inclusive Oaklands is, every child is considered carefully during activities. The care and attention in everything they do is unmatched. The staff are incredible".

There had been an increase in trips out with the nursery to the Botanical gardens, Deep Sea World, the park, a cafe and the library. Parents were positive about their child's experiences telling us, "My child's been ice skating, bakes, has lots of sensory play, enjoys soft play, swimming, rebound therapy" and "My child goes to walks nearby sometimes to get the baking stuff and sometimes for extracurricular activities" and "My child goes for walks and the outdoor park within the school". This gave children a connection to the local community.

Frequent visits from the Clown Doctors offered fun individualised social learning opportunities. This fun opportunity supported children to feel included as part of a wider community.

Staff discussed the resources and activities available for the current cohort of children attending and changes that they would make if they had more independently mobile children attending to offer choice which was accessible to them.

Children are supported to achieve 6 - Excellent

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent, where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced nurturing relationships that were responsive to their growth and development. They were safe and sensitively cared for by a highly skilled and experienced staff team. A collaborative approach with families fostered the development of trust and co-operation. Staff spoke about the importance of their relationships with parents. Parents told us "The staff are wonderful they are caring and listen" and "Oaklands is a great school and I can see the efforts everyone puts in to do their best". We saw how staff sensitively supported a parent when their child was unwell. This supported children's wellbeing and development and gave them opportunities to flourish.

Personal plan information was gathered and children's development supported through a range of information from families and health care professionals. A variety of documentation was available to support children. This included individual 'Moving and Handling assessments', 'Individualised Education Plans' as well as input from physiotherapists. Staff used all of this information to devise DMLOs for children. Information to support children's care was shared appropriately and parents were given opportunities to be involved. Parents were partners in their child's care, telling us "I am fully involved with my child's doctors/ nurses. If there is any change of plan in my child's diet or feed, I discuss that with NHS staff at school. They keep me posted in regards to their eating, drinking, physio and even behavioural side".

Mealtimes were tailored to support children's individual needs. Each child had an 'Eating and drinking profile' from the dietitian and speech and language therapists, who had trained all staff to support each child's well-planned profile. Staff provided one to one support, encouragement and conversation during mealtimes. Children were given time to eat at a pace that was right for them. Mealtime experiences were consistently positive and supportive.

Nurses were always onsite, and children's medication was managed well. Staff were trained to support individual children in a safe and sensitive manner. As a result, staff supported children to keep safe and well.

The importance of transitions was known and understood. Health Care Professionals who worked within the school had often worked with children and families prior to them starting at the nursery. This meant that they were familiar with children and families and prepared staff to meet individual children's needs. A family support worker engaged with families prior to them starting at the nursery to offer support. This was comforting to parents, to know that their children would be well cared for and safe. A parent told us "Sending my child to Oakland's has been the best decision I've ever made, it feels so welcoming and friendly from the start. I know my child is cared for so well and all her needs are met. Nothing is ever too much for the staff".

Children were familiar with the school building and staff through participation in school activities, including performing arts classes, weekly assemblies, use of the soft play room, and whole-school events such as sports day. Rebound therapy was provided by a physiotherapist to support individual physical development.

Staff knew the children and families very well. They created a warm and welcoming environment where families felt valued and supported. Parents told us "All the staff are very welcoming and helpful. I like the fact that you can stay with your child for as long as you want for the day if needed. They make sure parents are comfortable as well and they deal with every child according to their need" and "The staff are extremely caring and friendly. It is so convenient to have an easy access to approach them in need and they do their best to fulfil your child's requirement". All staff spoke about the importance of their relationships with families. They told of the success of the Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) group and baby massage and how this allowed parents to form friendships with each other. This provided another form of support for parents. Staff understood the challenges faced by parents and siblings and were sensitive to their needs. 'Stay and play' sessions were offered to parents and siblings and there were plans to increase the frequency of these. These opportunities impacted positively on parents and the quality of children's care both at home and in the setting.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	6 - Excellent
Playing, learning and developing	6 - Excellent

Children are supported to achieve	6 - Excellent
Nurturing care and support	6 - Excellent

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.scot

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.