

Bright Sparks Nursery Day Care of Children

65 Telford Road
Edinburgh
EH4 2AX

Telephone: 01313 153 214

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 April 2026

Service provided by:
Edinburgh Childcare Limited

Service provider number:
SP2004004489

Service no:
CS2015335199

About the service

Bright Sparks nursery is a day care of children service, registered to provide care to a maximum of 71 children at any one time aged from 6 weeks to entry into primary school.

The setting operates from a converted detached house. The ground floor accommodates children from two to five years old and the younger children are cared for in the upstairs playrooms. Children have access to an enclosed garden to the rear of the house.

The service is situated in the west of the City of Edinburgh and is close to local transport links, shops and community services.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 14 April 2026 between 9:00 and 17:00. Additional inspection visits were made on 15 and 16 April between 9:00 and 17:00. 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:

- spoke with children using the service and three members of their family
- reviewed electronic questionnaires returned to us
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Connections with families positively impacted on outcomes for children.
- Staff training resulted in improved practice and the quality of children's experiences.
- Self-evaluation was beginning to contribute to continuous improvement within the service.
- Most children benefitted from play experiences which reflected their needs and interests.
- Further work was required to ensure that learning journals included meaningful observations of children's learning and development, enabling effective planning to support each child's progression.
- Improvements should be made to the outdoor area to allow children to lead their own play and learning.

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	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 4 - Good

Quality indicator : Leadership and management of staff and resources.

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

The manager and senior staff within the service were effective in supporting the safe operation of the setting and maintaining a positive culture for children, families and staff. Management demonstrated a clear commitment to safeguarding, staff wellbeing and continuous improvement. Staff spoke positively about feeling supported, particularly through regular team, room and senior meetings, and there was growing confidence within the team as they became more established.

Recruitment and staffing processes were informed by safer recruitment practices. Modern apprentices were supported through mentoring arrangements, probationary reviews and access to training and qualifications, demonstrating a clear commitment to developing staff capacity. This supported staff in new roles with the knowledge and skills to provide high quality care for children.

Professional learning was a strength within the service. Staff accessed a wide range of relevant training, including child protection, trauma informed practice, infection prevention and control, Realising the Ambition: Being Me (Scottish Government 2020) and the Curriculum for Excellence. Staff were confident in articulating how this learning had increased their confidence and understanding in practice. While evaluation of the impact of training was evident in some areas, the leadership team recognised that this approach needed to be embedded more consistently to ensure sustained improvement across all rooms.

The service had begun to use the Quality Improvement Framework challenge questions to underpin quality assurance and self-evaluation. Although this was at an early stage, the manager demonstrated a clear understanding of how this work would inform the Standards Quality Improvement Plan (SQIP) and support continuous improvement.

All staff were involved in self-evaluation activities, with senior staff taking responsibility for evaluating their own rooms. Seniors confidently discussed the self-evaluation processes they had undertaken to identify priorities and actions and the improvements made as a result.

Families were invited to share their views on aspects of the service. Parents told us "There are opportunities to contribute although usually you have to ask rather than being asked" and "There are communicative newsletters and we're regularly encouraged to make suggestions, inform topics, suggest priority learning points or just comment on a specific topic like snacks, or the garden etc". Some parents wanted clearer feedback about how their suggestions influenced practice, which the manager recognised as an area for further development. We discussed various ways in which this could be carried out to ensure that participation was meaningful.

Quality assurance processes were developing and becoming cyclical. The manager showed an understanding of how evidence from self-evaluation, staff discussions and record keeping could be used to drive improvement. Management oversight was evident through effective follow-up, evaluation of impact and timely responses to issues identified. The manager should ensure that improvements made are sustained and that quality assurance impacts on all aspects of the service, including the garden (see area for improvement one).

The manager was currently completing a leadership qualification in Childhood practice; they discussed the positive impact that this learning had on their practice. They were also due to attend the Care Inspectorate Improvement programme which would further support practice.

The service had a written vision, which was evident in many aspects of practice, particularly in relationships with families. However, this statement needed to be updated to reflect current practice and the future direction of the service. When updating the vision, values and aims, this should include the views of children, staff and families, to reflect their aspirations.

Areas for improvement

1.

To ensure that children receive a high-quality service, the provider should ensure that the current self-evaluation processes are strengthened and embedded and that a robust quality assurance approach is developed that consistently supports ongoing improvement across the service.

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).

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator : Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children had access to a range of enjoyable and meaningful play and learning experiences that reflected their individual needs and interests and supported their development across different areas. Most staff demonstrated a strong knowledge of children and used observations effectively to extend learning and development opportunities. All children had Developmental Milestones/Developmental Learning Outcomes (DMLOs) in place, which included contributions from parents. This supported staff to identify individual areas for development and plan appropriate opportunities to support children's progress. As a result, most children were confident and actively involved in their learning.

Younger children explored sensory and hands on play that was appropriate to their age and stage, helping to build curiosity and early learning skills. Play spaces were well prepared, children were able to lead their own learning successfully supported by sensitive staff, who supported their emerging language development. Staff had attended training on Realising the Ambition (Scottish Government 2020), a national practice guidance for early years in Scotland, and used this knowledge to improve the provision for children. This was particularly evident within the environment, as they offered opportunities for children to be curious and creative.

In the pre-school room, children took part in construction play, creative activities, planting, outdoor play and imaginative experiences. When play spaces were well prepared, children were able to lead their own learning successfully. Observations of creative play, such as mixing paint and exploring colours, showed children were interested, curious and clearly enjoying what they were doing. Staff supported this play by offering encouragement and using descriptive language and developmentally appropriate questioning. Construction play using large blocks and magnets supported problem solving and cooperation. However, there were times when staff could have extended children's thinking and language further by asking more open questions or building on children's ideas.

Learning journals showed variable quality. Some journals contained clear, well-focused observations that captured children's interests and learning over time. For example, one child's interest in numbers and colours was effectively recorded, showing progression in sorting, identifying and grouping objects. Parental contributions to learning journals supported continuity of learning between home and the setting. However, other journals included entries that did not clearly identify learning, such as general stories, activity descriptions, or administrative notes. This reduced how effectively learning journals were used to support planning and progression. Some staff recognised that they would benefit from more guidance around what makes a strong, meaningful observation and how this should be recorded. This was being supported through training and support from the room seniors and management.

Staff reflected thoughtfully on practice and showed a clear commitment to improvement, however, children did not yet consistently experience high quality child-led play, particularly outdoors. The garden was not always set up or well resourced to support choice, creativity and longer periods of play. Responsibility for preparing and maintaining play spaces was not shared consistently across staff, which limited opportunities for children to fully follow their own interests and ideas. More focused work is needed to ensure that the outdoor environment is always welcoming, well organised and based on children's interests. This will help children consistently to lead their own play and learning (see area for improvement one).

Areas for improvement

1. To support children to achieve their full potential, the provider should ensure children experience high quality play, learning, and development opportunities. This should include a well-resourced environment outdoors to allow children to lead their own play and learning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: "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 for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity" (HSCS 2.27).

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good**Quality Indicator : Nurturing care and support**

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Nurturing care and support was a clear strength of the service. Children experienced warm, caring and respectful relationships with staff who knew them well. Interactions were calm and reassuring, and children appeared settled, confident and emotionally secure. Staff responded sensitively to children's needs and cues, helping children feel safe, valued and understood throughout the day.

Children under 3 years of age had daily dairies detailing their naps, what they had eaten and experiences they had participated in, giving parents an insight into their child's day. Pick up was a relaxed time, when parents were welcomed into the playrooms, staff took time to give feedback and ask about the parent and home life. It was clear that staff knew the children and their families well and were aware of events in their home lives. This contributed to partnership working and continuity of care for children.

Daily routines were organised well and supported children's wellbeing and sense of security. Mealtimes were calm and social, with appropriate supervision. Children were encouraged to serve their own food and drinks, which supported independence, choice and fine motor development. Staff sat with children, talked with them and offered encouragement, helping to make mealtimes a positive experience. Allergy risk information was clearly displayed, and staff showed an awareness of individual dietary needs. Some small improvements were discussed for pre-school children, such as easier access to cutlery and clearer routines for facecloths, but these did not take away from children's positive experiences.

Personal plans were in place for all children and generally supported continuity of care. Plans included information about routines, medical and dietary needs, interests and development. Parents were involved in completing personal plans, and staff showed good knowledge of children's needs and family situations. This helped staff provide consistent and responsive care. Personal plans were updated with parents every 3 months, ensuring that information was current and allowed staff to meet children's needs. Some issues were identified, such as information about children's interests and likes not being used by staff. These need to be addressed to ensure that information shared by parents is known and used by staff, to support children's development.

The service worked proactively with children, families and partner professionals to identify and support children and families with additional needs. Staff had begun to develop and maintain chronologies for children, providing a clear and shared record of needs, involvement and support over time. This helped staff respond promptly and appropriately when additional support was required, which improved outcomes for children.

Staff worked in partnership with parents to promote and support diversity and inclusion. A range of books in children's home languages were available, and parents were invited into the nursery to read stories in their own language. Staff spoke positively about the impact this had, particularly for children speaking more than one language. Children with dual language benefited from seeing their home language valued and reflected within the setting, supporting confidence, a sense of belonging and communication skills, while helping all children develop an understanding of diversity.

Relationships with families were positive and respectful. Parents described staff as caring, approachable and knowledgeable about their children. Daily handovers supported the sharing of helpful information about children's routines, wellbeing and experiences. Stay and play sessions were being introduced in the preschool room to provide families with regular opportunities to participate in activities alongside their children. These sessions, along with family days and events such as the Mother's Day tea party, supported positive partnerships and encouraged parental involvement within the nursery. Children benefited from shared learning experiences with their families, which supported emotional wellbeing, confidence and continuity between home and nursery.

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 that children receive the right care, the provider should ensure that personal plans are in place before children start at the service. Staff should discuss the personal plan with parents at the time of completion to ensure that they understand all of the information. This would contribute to ensuring that staff were aware of children's needs and how to meet them.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 31 July 2025.

Action taken since then

Personal plans were in place for all children and contained relevant information provided by parents. Plans were formally reviewed and updated with parents every three months. In between reviews, staff updated the chronology with information shared by parents and through their own observations.

It was discussed that personal plans could include additional sheets to allow more space for staff to record information, as staff held a significant amount of knowledge which was not consistently recorded. Staff understood the purpose of this suggestion and the importance of capturing this information to support children's wellbeing and development.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children to achieve their full potential, the provider should ensure children experience high quality play, learning, and development opportunities. This should include a well resourced environment both indoors and outdoors to allow children to lead their own play and learning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: '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 for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity" (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 31 July 2025.

Action taken since then

Children experienced more high-quality play, learning and development opportunities. Resources had been improved, and children had access to loose parts and well-planned areas that encouraged choice and independence.

The garden area, however, was not consistently set up. This resulted in limited opportunities for children to lead their own play and learning outdoors. It was discussed that staff need to view the outdoor environment as an extension of the indoor learning environment and ensure it is planned to provide meaningful learning opportunities for children. Without this, time spent outdoors is perceived as simply 'time outside' rather than a valuable learning experience.

This area for improvement has been met to reflect the progress made in the indoor environment. A new area for improvement has been made in relation to the outdoor environment.

See area for improvement one under Quality Indicator: Play, learning and developing.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure staff access training appropriate to their role, and apply their training in practice. This should include, but is not limited to observation writing, becoming familiar with the curriculum, and providing high quality play and learning environments.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, and skilled' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 31 July 2025.

Action taken since then

All pre-school staff attended training on Curriculum for Excellence; staff described the training as very useful, and now linked the experiences and outcomes from the curriculum to children's learning. Observational practice in the pre-school room had improved. Staff used focused observations of key children, which positively supported children's learning. All children received regular one-to-one time with their key worker. Some staff required further support in writing meaningful observations, this had been identified and peer support was in place.

Children in the under-3s room benefitted from care delivered by staff who had accessed relevant training, including Realising the Ambition (Scottish Government 2020). Staff used this guidance to plan developmentally appropriate and meaningful experiences for younger 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

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

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