Busy Bees at Dean Terrace
Day Care of Children

12 Dean Terrace
Edinburgh
EH4 1ND

Telephone: 01313 325 920

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 September 2026

Service provided by:
Busy Bees Nurseries (Scotland) Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003002870

Service no:
CS2017354650

About the service

Busy Bees at Dean Terrace is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 55 children at any one time, between the ages of three months and primary school age entry. The service is part of a large organisation providing childcare services throughout the country.

Based in Edinburgh city centre, the service is close to local transport routes and amenities, such as shops and parks. Children are accommodated over three levels of a townhouse. Gardens are accessed at the front and back of the property.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 14 September 2026 between 09:00 and 15:30 and 15 September between 09:00 and 15:00. This inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spent time with children using the service
- received six completed questionnaires from families
- received three completed questionnaires from staff
- spoke with staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- 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.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing relationships with staff, helping them feel safe, secure and valued.
- Staff promoted children's wellbeing through responsive care and sensitive support tailored to individual needs.
- Families described positive, trusting relationships with staff and felt welcomed, respected and supported by the service.
- Outdoor learning opportunities, exploration of natural environments and meaningful community connections enriched children's learning and development.
- The environment should be improved to ensure children experience high-quality facilities. For example, general decoration and nappy changing areas which meet best practice.

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 thrive and develop in quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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

Leaders created a supportive and inclusive culture within the setting. They engaged positively with the inspection process, demonstrating openness to feedback and a commitment to continuous improvement. Staff told us they felt well supported by leaders and were confident that their views and suggestions were listened to and acted upon. For example, changes had been made to the environment to create more opportunities for babies to crawl and develop their physical skills. This responsive approach contributed to positive staff morale and supported improvements in the service.

The service's vision and values were reflected in staff practice and interactions with children. There was a clear focus on providing the best start in life, valuing families and promoting diversity. As a result, children experienced a nurturing environment where they were supported to feel safe, valued and respected. The leadership team confirmed that the vision, values and aims were currently under review. We discussed the value of undertaking this process in partnership with children, families and staff; to help ensure these continue to reflect the needs, aspirations and priorities of those using and delivering the service.

The service improvement plan identified quality assurance, the environment and planning as key priorities for development. We found progress had been made across these areas, demonstrating the service's commitment to improving outcomes for children. Staff told us they felt involved in self-evaluation activities and most were aware of the key priorities for improvement. We discussed how improvement priorities could be broken down into clearer, manageable actions, to further strengthen staff engagement and ownership of the improvement journey. This would support staff to reflect on practice, identify areas for development and contribute more confidently to ongoing improvement activity.

Leaders had established regular auditing and monitoring arrangements to support quality assurance. This included oversight of medication, accidents, incidents and children's observations. Records were analysed to identify patterns and trends and support actions to reduce risk. Leaders should continue to strengthen reflective discussions with staff about their practice, to ensure evaluations are clearly focused on the difference this makes to children. This would support staff to better understand how their practice contributed to children's wellbeing, confidence, engagement, sense of security and progress in learning.

Families were encouraged to contribute to improvement and self-evaluation activities. For example, all parents agreed they were involved in a meaningful way to develop the service. Families had opportunities to share their views and experiences of the service. Feedback gathered had informed aspects of service development, for example increasing walks and outings. To build on this positive practice, the service could further strengthen how it communicates improvements made in response to feedback. Approaches, such as sharing "You said, we did" information, would help demonstrate the impact of family feedback. This could encourage families to continue contributing to the service's improvement journey.

Staff had been safely recruited, with appropriate checks completed to ensure their suitability to work with children. Staff spoke positively about their recruitment and induction experiences. Regular meetings, wellbeing check-ins and appraisals supported their practice and professional development.

The provider demonstrated a commitment to safe recruitment practices. For example, seeking additional references to support recruitment decisions and help ensure the quality and suitability of candidates. To further strengthen this, the leadership team should continue to review processes to ensure they are applied consistently. For example, clear recording and scoring of interviews to support robust decision making.

Staff Skills and staff deployment

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.

Staff reported feeling well supported in their roles and had access to a range of opportunities to develop their skills. Through mentoring and involvement in leadership activities, staff were able to contribute to service improvement. For example, the development of planning processes using new systems, which helped to build confidence and foster emerging leadership skills within the team.

Children benefited from a consistent staff team who knew them well and responded to their individual needs. This helped children feel safe, secure and supported. Staff received regular breaks during their shifts to support their wellbeing. Leaders should continue to reflect on how break arrangements are managed, to minimise any impact on children's experiences and routines, particularly during periods, such as lunch, sleep and rest times.

Staff communicated effectively and worked collaboratively to provide children with fun, meaningful and engaging experiences. When additional support was required to meet children's needs, staff sought assistance appropriately, helping to ensure care and support remained consistent with the service's values and expectations.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces — 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate, where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Children experienced care in a warm, welcoming and safe environment. Secure entry arrangements supported children's safety and wellbeing, in some areas comfortable furnishings and displays helped create a nurturing atmosphere. Staff had generally created spaces that supported children's play and learning. However, several aspects of the environment required improvement. Peeling paint on window ledges and worn, marked furniture did not consistently provide children with an environment that reflected a respectful environment. (See area for Improvement 2, in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

The provider had plans in place to refurbish areas of the service, including improvements to toileting and nappy-changing facilities. These planned developments should better support children's dignity and privacy during nappy changing routines.

Infection prevention and control practices (IPC) were generally effective and supported a clean and healthy environment for children. More consistent handwashing procedures, for example, after nose wiping, would further reduce the risk of infection and support children's health wellbeing and safety.

Some aspects of practice still required greater consistency, including following correct handwashing procedures and ensuring prompt handwashing after nose wiping. Strengthening these practices would further reduce the risk of infection and support children's health, wellbeing and safety. (See area for improvement 2, in 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection').

Indoor spaces were generally organised to meet the needs of children across different ages and stages of development. Children could independently access a range of resources which supported choice, creativity and learning. Resources were readily available and promoted children's confidence and independence. Opportunities remained to ensure spaces consistently inspire curiosity, imagination and challenge. Some resources and role-play areas would benefit from development, to ensure they reflect familiar and positive real-life experiences and maximise children's engagement in play and learning.

The outdoor environment was safe, secure and supported children's physical development and exploration. Children confidently created obstacle courses, developing balance, coordination and risk assessment skills. They also demonstrated curiosity and enjoyment as they explored insects and natural features within the outdoor space. A range of resources, including a mud kitchen, supported imaginative and exploratory play. Further development of natural learning opportunities would enrich children's experiences and promote a deeper connection to the natural world.

Children's opportunities to access outdoor play independently were limited, as access was restricted to designated times of the day, due to the size of the outdoor area and the number of children attending. The service had taken positive steps to address this through regular use of local community environments, which extended children's outdoor experiences beyond the setting. Since the previous inspection, younger children had also benefited from access to a dedicated outdoor area where they enjoyed ball play, water play and singing activities.

Parents spoke positively about the opportunities their children had for outdoor play, including art activities in the garden, and trips to local parks where children collected leaves and explored the natural environment.

The service had established systems to support children's safety through risk assessment and risk management processes. Staff demonstrated a good awareness of risks when accompanying children into the local community. However, written risk assessments were often generic and did not consistently reflect the specific risks associated with individual venues or children's individual support needs. More location specific and dynamic risk assessment processes would strengthen children's safety while continuing to support adventurous and meaningful experiences.

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 were happy, confident and engaged in their play and learning, both indoors and outdoors. They had developed positive friendships which supported their social and emotional wellbeing and demonstrated a sense of belonging within the setting. Children showed confidence and independence as they led and extended their own learning experiences. For example, they engaged enthusiastically in dough-making activities, explored a variety of mark-making opportunities and enjoyed sensory experiences through water and sand play. These experiences supported children's curiosity, creativity and developing independence. While children benefited from a range of engaging opportunities, there was potential to further enhance experiences for older children. For example, using inviting provocations and providing appropriate challenge which encourage deeper exploration and sustained engagement.

Staff were actively involved in children's play and learning, with interactions that showed warmth, responsiveness and meaningful connections. These positive relationships contributed to a nurturing environment where children felt secure and valued. Staff used narration and conversation to support language development, while recognising and naming emotions helped children develop emotional literacy and self-awareness. We identified opportunities for some staff to further extend children's thinking through approaches, such as open-ended questioning and sustained shared thinking. Leaders were providing for this to strengthen practice and consistency across the team and had already recognised this as an area for development and were providing monitoring and support to strengthen practice across the team.

A range of experiences supported children's developing literacy, language and numeracy skills. Children enthusiastically participated in songs, stories and conversations and enjoyed using a variety of materials for mark making, both indoors and outdoors. Opportunities for counting, sorting and problem solving were incorporated into everyday play experiences. The outdoor environment offered valuable opportunities for learning and could be further enhanced through additional literacy and mark-making experiences to encourage children to apply and develop their skills across different contexts.

Children's learning was documented through photographs, floor books and online learning journals which were shared regularly with families. This helped parents feel informed and involved in their children's experiences. Observations and assessments captured aspects of children's learning and development. There was scope to strengthen consistency in how observations informed planning and demonstrated children's progress over time. Leaders were supporting staff to develop their understanding of high-quality observations and assessment approaches. We discussed opportunities to make clearer links between observations, development trackers and planned experiences, to further support children's progression and help parents better understand their child's learning journey.

Parents were positive about their children's experiences and the communication provided by the setting. A few parents shared suggestions that could further strengthen partnerships with families. For example, one parent commented, "I would like to know what songs or books they are reading so we can learn at home too," while another would welcome more updates through the app.

Children benefited from meaningful opportunities to engage with both the local and wider community. Regular visits to the community garden, the Royal Botanic Garden and walks along the Water of Leith provided rich experiences that supported wellbeing, confidence and a sense of belonging. These experiences helped children develop curiosity, an appreciation of their environment and respect for the natural world. For example, children enjoyed observing and handling ladybirds, demonstrating interest in nature and developing an understanding of how to care for living things.

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

Staff were warm, nurturing and caring in their interactions with children. Children had developed positive, trusting relationships with staff and appeared confident, happy and settled within the setting. Staff responded sensitively when children required reassurance, providing comfort and emotional support that helped children feel safe and secure. In the pre-school room, there were occasions when staff were stretched in responding to children's emerging needs; however, they appropriately sought support from leaders to ensure children continued to receive effective care and attention.

Feedback from parents highlighted the strong, trusting relationships that had been established with staff. Parents valued the caring and personalised approach, noting that staff took time to get to know each child and family and responded sensitively to individual needs. They felt well supported, listened to and confident in the care provided, contributing to positive experiences and a strong sense of trust in the service.

Staff consistently used nurturing approaches to promote children's wellbeing, behaviour and safety. They used positive language, praise and gentle guidance to help children learn to share, take turns, resolve minor conflicts and make safe choices during play and daily routines. Consequently, children experienced positive relationships and were supported to develop confidence, resilience and social skills.

Children benefited from care that was informed by personal plans, risk assessments and health information. Personal plans contained relevant details about children's routines, preferences and individual needs. Whilst information was available to support staff's understanding of children, approaches to recording strategies of support and development records were not yet fully consistent across the service. Staff and leaders recognised this and were continuing to develop systems to ensure information was consistently recorded to support children to progress in the service.

Medication was stored, administered and recorded safely, with appropriate documentation maintained. Individual risk assessments provided staff with clear guidance to support children's health, safety and wellbeing. For example, staff consistently followed detailed care plans and risk assessments to support children with complex health conditions. This demonstrated a good understanding of the child's individual health needs and helped ensure they received safe, responsive and appropriate care throughout the day.

Staff promoted children's dignity and privacy during personal care routines. For example, they sought children's consent before nappy changing and used respectful language, such as "freshen up your nappy", helping children feel valued, respected and involved in their care. Children's sleep and rest arrangements reflected parental wishes. However, the service should continue to review sleep arrangements for some older children, to ensure that those who require rest can access a calm, comfortable environment that effectively supports their rest, wellbeing and individual needs.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable experiences that promoted children's wellbeing, safety and sense of belonging. Staff sat with children, fostering meaningful conversations and positive interactions. Children were encouraged to develop independence through opportunities, such as self-serving and helping to set tables, while younger children were supported effectively to build self-feeding skills.

Older children were demonstrating increasing independence; however, there were opportunities to further extend their responsibility for mealtime routines, make choices and contribute to decision-making, supporting the continued development of confidence and life skills.

Positive relationships with families supported a welcoming and inclusive ethos. Families were meaningfully involved in their child's care and learning through settling-in visits, ongoing communication and regular progress meetings. These approaches helped families feel welcomed, valued and well informed about their child's experiences and development. As a result, children and families experienced a strong sense of belonging and partnership within the setting.

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 progress in their learning, the provider should further develop and embed the quality of play experiences and opportunities.

This should include but not be limited to:

- the set-up of engaging and intriguing spaces
- enhancing staff interactions to enable children's thinking skills
- connecting children's interests with planning and evidencing their progress.

This area for improvement was made on 1 September 2025.

Action taken since then

The learning environment had been improved to provide children with greater challenge, depth and progression in their learning. Staff had developed their understanding and use of effective interactions, enabling them to more consistently support, extend and enrich children's learning. Planning and assessment processes had been strengthened, with children's interests, strengths and developmental needs identified. This supported intentional planning, helped track and review progress more effectively, and ensured next steps in learning were responsive to children's individual needs.

This area of improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure the environment meets children's health and wellbeing needs; the provider should improve:

- the general environment decoration
- the consistent use of infection prevention and control measures (IPC).

This area for improvement was made on 1 September 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff had created spaces that supported children's play and learning; however, aspects of the environment required attention. Peeling paint on window ledges and worn, marked furniture detracted from the overall quality and presentation of the setting, and did not consistently promote a nurturing, high-quality environment. Infection prevention and control practices (IPC) were generally effective and contributed to a clean and healthy setting. However, some inconsistencies remained, including adherence to effective handwashing procedures and handwashing following nose wiping. Addressing these areas would further minimise the risk of infection and enhance outcomes for children's health, wellbeing and safety.

This area of improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure all children have consistent and stable care and support to thrive, the provider should improve the arrangements for staff deployment, including planned and unplanned absence cover.

This area for improvement was made on 1 September 2025.

Action taken since then

The provider had strengthened staff deployment arrangements, including planned and unplanned absence cover. This helped ensure children experienced consistent and stable care and support from familiar staff, supporting their wellbeing and development.

This area of 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.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - Good

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children experience high quality spaces	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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

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.gov.scot

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.