Loretto Pre School
Day Care of Children

Loretto Junior School
North Esk Lodge
North High Street
Musselburgh
EH21 6JA

Telephone: 01316 534 570

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
26 November 2021

Service provided by:
Loretto School

Service provider number:
SP2005007905

Service no:
CS2019373560

About the service

Loretto Pre School is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 40 children at any one time aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school.

The pre-school is an integral part of Loretto Junior School in the town of Musselburgh, East Lothian. Children have access to the wider school campus for specialist classes and outdoor learning and make use of the local community.

The pre-school comprises of two playrooms, cloakroom and toilet facilities. Children have direct access to the outdoor area from their main playroom.

Aims and objectives for the pre-school include:

"- encourage and develop a welcoming ethos in which staff, children and parents interact with mutual co-operation and respect.
- work in partnership with parents to provide a safe, enjoyable, stimulating environment in which all children feel happy, healthy and secure.
- use the curriculum to encourage the emotional, social, physical and intellectual development of each child, using a wide range of interesting and stimulating resources and the local environment."

As part of this inspection, we took into consideration Key Question 5 - Operating an early learning and childcare setting (including out of school care and childminders) during Covid-19 with a specific focus on Quality indicator 5.2: Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff. We will report on the overall performance of this indicator in Theme 1 Quality of Care and Support.

What people told us

We spoke to children informally about pre-school during our visit. We observed happy and relaxed children who were having fun and were engaged in learning through their play.

We asked the manager to issue an e-mail to parents to enable us to gather their views. Two parents responded to our request. Comments included:

"Overall we are fully satisfied with the pre-school."

"Forest school is great. The kids have a nice balance that value time out and activities inside."

"I think the communication is excellent, I always love seeing photos and updates about my child's day on learning journals and the teachers are always readily available to ask questions as well."

"I think the preschool does well in offering a wide range of activities for children. It's very exciting and varied."

"I feel very included in my child's learning and informed."

Self assessment

We did not request an up to date self-evaluation. We looked at the self-evaluation documents used in the nursery and were satisfied that there were processes in place for assessing quality and identifying improvements.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	4 - Good
Quality of environment	4 - Good
Quality of staffing	4 - Good
Quality of management and leadership	4 - Good

Quality of care and support

Findings from the inspection

Children enjoyed their time at pre-school and had developed friendships which helped them feel included. Staff knew children well and had a good understanding of their individual needs. Personal plans were developed with parents and gave an effective overview of each child and how staff supported their wellbeing. These were enhanced by learning journals which included regular observations of children's play. They helped parents to feel included in their child's learning experiences and share achievements from home. We discussed the importance of ensuring observations reflected each child's individual development.

Staff had developed positive relationships with children and families. Interactions were caring towards children and respected their individuality. Staff gave reassurance when needed and children were confident to approach staff for help. This showed they felt at ease and secure. Staff encouraged children to consider the needs of others and praise was used effectively to recognise their efforts and achievements. As a result, there was a welcoming atmosphere where children were respected. Some staff skilfully interacted with children in a way that encouraged them to extend their thinking. This could now be developed further throughout the team.

Children were interested by the range of toys, resources and planned activities. These promoted their independence well and helped develop a broad range of skills. On the day of the inspection children enjoyed creating a 'Christmas present wrapping station' and took part in a yoga session. This helped them to keep active and developed their creativity skills. Approaches to planning took account of children's interests and experiences. The team had begun to use floor books as a tool to involve children in this process. We discussed the need to develop this approach further to provide children with more challenge and opportunities to deepen their learning.

We observed children's lunch time experience and found that this would benefit from review and improvement. While most children enjoyed a range of healthy food options, they needed more consistent support to achieve a relaxed and sociable experience. Staff should ensure all children can sit comfortably at the table and use this as a time for meaningful interaction.

Staff were confident about their role in safeguarding children. They had attended training to develop their

knowledge and understood how to respond to a concern. Arrangements for storing and administering medication and infection prevention and control followed good practice guidance which helped to keep children safe.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of environment

Findings from the inspection

The pre-school environment provided children with a welcoming and comfortable place to play. Each child had a space to store their belongings and their artwork was attractively displayed around the room. This helped children to feel valued and respected. There was space for children to play alone or in small groups as well as larger open spaces outdoors for children to play energetically. Children could choose where they wanted to play, both indoors and outside for most of the session. This promoted their choice and independence well.

Opportunities for play and learning were well supported by a good range of resources and equipment. Outdoors, children enjoyed riding tricycles and climbing on large pieces of equipment while playing imaginative games together. This encouraged them to be active and healthy. Indoors, children played board games with staff and explored their own ideas with art materials. We discussed the need to develop further the indoor environment to provide appropriate challenge for children. For example, the water and sand play areas needed additional resources to effectively support children's developing numeracy and literacy skills.

Outdoor play and time spent in natural spaces was a key feature of children's experiences. The team had a good understanding of the importance of physical play and time outdoors for children's resilience and wellbeing. Children benefitted from the use of the wider school grounds for gardening and regular forest school sessions where they learnt about the natural world and took part in activities such as cooking outdoors. This helped to foster a sense of curiosity as well as a healthy approach to adventure and risk. Children also learnt about keeping safe as they walked in the community around the school. As a result, they were developing a good sense of responsibility. There is potential to develop further children's understanding of sustainability throughout daily routines.

There were effective procedures and policies in place to promote good infection control practice. For example, staff performed regular cleaning of resources and supported children to wash hands regularly and effectively according to best practice guidance. This helped to reduce the risk of infection and keep children safe.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of staffing

Findings from the inspection

The staff team were positive about their work and committed to providing high quality experiences for children. They showed kindness and care towards children which helped them to feel valued and secure. Staff listened well to children and showed interest in them as individuals with their own personalities and experiences. Where children needed more support to feel settled staff were responsive by sitting close to them and providing reassurance.

The staff group worked well as a team. They communicated effectively with each other throughout the day and were familiar with children's care routines. Time was set aside daily to share any important information about children's wellbeing and learning. This helped all staff to be aware of children's needs and ensure a consistent approach to their support. Across the day, staffing arrangements meant that there was minimal impact on children when staff took breaks or were involved in other commitments. We discussed ensuring that children consistently experience meaningful interactions during the routines of the session such as when lining up to leave the pre-school for lunch or other classes.

The team had regular meetings to discuss children's development, planning and other issues affecting practice. They valued this time as important to building team relationships. Staff were reflective about their professional learning and had undertaken a range of training. These opportunities were selected to develop their own practice and also benefit children's experiences. For example, a member of staff had trained to deliver yoga sessions to the children which enhanced their wellbeing. There is now potential to develop further leadership opportunities for individual staff to support improvement work.

Staff were well supported by the manager and school management team. Records of professional development meetings included observations of practice and valuable discussions about outcomes for children. These meetings provided staff with an opportunity to reflect on their development and strengths as well as identify areas for future learning. Staff were building their understanding of national practice documents such as 'Realising the Ambition' to support their work and help guide improvement. This could be built upon to deepen understanding about children's learning and development.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

Quality of management and leadership

Findings from the inspection

Communication with families was a strength throughout the work of the pre-school team. They valued the feedback of parents to help improve the service. Due to Covid-19, opportunities to talk to parents face to face had been restricted. However, staff ensured they were available to parents in the garden area at arrival and pick-up times to be able to share important information about children's care. A board placed outside each day also informed parents about children's activities. Parent consultations provided an opportunity to discuss in depth each child's learning, development and personal plan. Parents told us that these conversations were very valuable.

The pre-school team continued to develop with the support of the management team. The manager spent regular time in the playrooms. This allowed her to build relationships and assess on an ongoing basis the strengths and potential areas for development. The supportive leadership approach encouraged staff to have high aspirations for the future. Each team member had their individual strengths which were valued.

Staff were developing good approaches to self-evaluation. The manager had begun using the 'quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school age children' to reflect on the experiences offered to children. This good practice supported the team to understand what was working well and also what could be improved over time. We discussed with the manager the need to develop this further alongside observations of practice. This could help strengthen quality assurance processes and continue to improve outcomes for children.

The pre-school team had developed an improvement plan for the academic year. High quality learning through play was at the heart of this plan. Targets were specific, appropriate and achievable and took account of current circumstances. For example, it was acknowledged that due to the pressures of Covid-19 it was not possible to progress some targets as planned and these will therefore be continued as ongoing priorities. It would be useful to share progress regularly with children and parents to celebrate the achievement of the pre-school.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

Inspection and grading history

This service does not have any prior inspection history or grades.

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