Blossom Tree Children's Nursery - Fairmilehead
Day Care of Children

2 Oxgangs Road
Edinburgh
EH10 7AU

Telephone: 0131 445 1566

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 March 2025

Service provided by:
Blossom Tree Children's Nursery Limited

Service provider number:
SP2021000230

Service no:
CS2023000426

About the service

Blossom Tree Children's Nursery - Fairmilehead is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 62 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 20 are aged under 2 years.

Care is provided from a homely setting in Edinburgh. Children are cared for in three groups, 3-5 year old space, toddlers and babies. The setting is close to shops, schools, transport routes and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between Monday 17 March 2025 and Wednesday 19 March 2025. 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
- received on line questionnaires from 12 families
- spoke with staff and management
- received on line questionnaires from nine staff
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced a sense of belonging which positively impacted their overall wellbeing.
- Families were complimentary and appreciative of the care and support their children received in the setting.
- The setting was comfortable, furnished to a high standard and welcoming.
- Staff worked well as a team, creating positive outcomes for children.
- Management inspired staff, empowering them to be their best and deliver high quality care, play and learning experiences.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning? 4 - Good

We evaluated different parts of this key question as good and very good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children received warm, caring and nurturing approaches from staff, which contributed to their overall wellbeing. Consequently, children were observed to be confident and happy in the loving relationships they had formed with staff. Staff took the time to get to know the children well, understanding not only their individual personalities and needs but also their family lives, including new siblings, parents' jobs and family background or ethnicity. This deep understanding of each child's life contributed to the strong bonds they formed with the children. Through our questionnaires, families showed appreciation of the care and support staff provided their children. For example, one said, "I like using this service for my child as it is in a relaxed environment and all staff are smiley and friendly. This service also provides child care for my child to a high standard and always ensures my child is well looked after."

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning, taking account of the wellbeing indicators. Children and families were central to this process, ensuring meaningful information sharing that provided consistency and continuity of care. This enabled staff to respond quickly, sensitively and compassionately to changes in a child's life. Staff shared that plans were regularly updated with families, who were invited to contribute both through conversations at drop-off and pick-up times and by using online learning journals to share 'next steps.' One staff member explained, "We use the learning journals to gather information from parents and involve them in the planning process." This strong partnership approach was reflected in the feedback we received, with all families confirming they were fully involved in their child's care, including the development and review of personal plans. One shared, "All staff do an amazing job with my child. With them starting, they settled them in so well, even though they found this really hard. They've all created a lovely bond, and my child loves coming to nursery." Another noted, "My child has come along with their speech incredibly since staring nursery, they are a lot more sociable. My child has also formed positive bonds and relationships with the staff within the room and is able to learn and play in a safe environment with all their needs met." This collaborative approach had a positive impact on children's care, play and learning.

Children enjoyed eating together in an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere, ensuring a caring and positive social experience. Staff recognised daily routines as a valuable opportunity to promote close attachment and develop independence. At mealtimes, staff sat with children so they could offer support and encouragements and respond immediately should an emergency, such as choking, occur. During inspection, food choices were nutritious and reflected current guidance, with options tailored to children's individual cultural and dietary needs. However, one parent raised concern about the alternative to the main meal, which was often a jam sandwich, feeling it was not an appropriate option. Management acknowledged this and agreed to review the alternatives offered to ensure they better met children's nutritional needs. Fresh water was available throughout the day and children were encouraged to remain hydrated.

The pace of the day was flexible and responsive to suit children's individual needs. Staff respected children's preferences, such as having an earlier lunch to suit nap times and seeking their consent when changing clothes or nappies.

This approach empowered children through free movement around the space, highlighting the importance of their input and voice in shaping daily routines. Staff spoke about collaboration with families to maintain consistency with home routines.

Staff used playful and meaningful ways to promote children's rights through the wellbeing indicators, such as creating a wellbeing tree, incorporating rights-based messages into play experiences, using floor books and embedding them into daily interactions with children. One staff member shared that their focus on equality, diversity and children's rights had helped highlight the impact of discrimination from the perspectives of both families and children. They explained how these values were actively embedded in the 3-5 year old play spaces through the wellbeing indicators, further supporting inclusive, respectful practice.

1.3: Play and learning

Play spaces and experiences indoors and out promoted learning and engagement. We observed children freely transporting resources around the spaces to lead their own play. As a result, children were busy and engaged in their play for long periods of time as they extended their interests and developed their own ideas. During our visit, most children chose to play outdoors, where they had ample opportunities to run, cycle, swing, engage in sand play, balance and climb. The recently improved outdoor play spaces were continuously evolving, with staff planning to mirror the numeracy and literacy experiences offered indoors. This integration of learning in the outdoor environment would further enhance children's development by providing playful literacy and numeracy opportunities. Given that many children chose to spend the majority of their time outdoors, this approach would further enrich their learning experiences.

When asked about experiences their children had been involved in, a family gave examples of fun experiences, "My child has taken part in lots of play activities such as paintings, drawing, different counting activities and lots more. I am provided with feedback at the end of the day as to what my child has done and also photos on my child's learning journals. I am also kept up to date with my child's progress." This positive feedback reflected how these engaging experiences contributed to their child's development, while also strengthening the connection between home and the setting.

The staff actively engaged with the local community to enhance children's play, learning and sense of belonging. By visiting local woods, parks, the library, garden centres and a nearby care home, children engaged in rich, hands-on experiences that fostered curiosity, creativity and social connections. A family said their child really enjoyed, "Trips to local library, trips to park and to see the local 'highland coos.' Their visits to the care home encouraged intergenerational play through activities like singing, bingo and arts and crafts, which helped develop empathy, communication skills and a deeper appreciation for different generations. These experiences not only broadened the children's understanding of their community but also nurtured confidence, social skills and a sense of responsibility.

Staff used a combination of responsive and intentional planning to support children's learning and development. Through the use of floor books and learning journals, we saw how staff met children's interests and needs. For example, they created an obstacle course based on children's physical development, incorporated dancing inspired by a child's family background, supported children in becoming a sibling and facilitated the recognition of shapes in the environment. As one staff member noted, "In our floor books, we have responsive planning, which staff complete as we observe our children within the playroom's interests. This is always very relevant for our children." By using observations of children's play to guide planning, staff created meaningful experiences that promoted engagement, curiosity and active learning.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was comfortable, furnished to a high standard and welcoming. Children had ample space for their care, play and learning needs, giving a strong message that they mattered. The natural light and ventilation created a refreshing atmosphere. Careful consideration had been given to the layout of the playrooms to offer a range of spaces for children to make choices, support their interests and develop their ideas. Staff spoke enthusiastically about changes they had made to create quality play spaces and experiences. As a result, they had created spaces for children to play together or be on their own to help to support their choices and emotional development.

The garden areas had been significantly improved, creating more engaging outdoor experiences and additional space for some children. These improvements reflected children's interests, supported by appropriate resources and materials. Families shared positive feedback, with one saying the garden was "much better" and their child "adores playing in it." Others praised the variety of outdoor spaces, including the baby garden and the larger toddler and preschool garden with sand, water and imaginative play areas. All families confirmed their child had outdoor play opportunities, and one child shared, "We play outside all the time. We put our hoods up when it's raining and only stay in when it's big hailstones." Further improvements were planned, reinforcing the setting's commitment to high quality outdoor experiences. Children had actively contributed to these plans, and were awaiting delivery of a kitchen and climbing frame, demonstrating their involvement in shaping their environment.

The employment of a kitchen assistant to manage meal deliveries, prepare snacks, wash dishes and handle laundry played a key role in maintaining infection prevention and control practices. This allowed staff to dedicate more time to engaging with children, enhancing the quality of care, play, and learning. Additionally, the clean and well organised environment created a positive atmosphere that benefited both children and staff.

Sleep routines were designed to be calm and relaxing, with staff creating a soothing environment using soft lighting and maintaining a comfortable temperature. A variety of sleeping options including cots, dream coracles and mats were available, accommodating children's individual sleeping preferences and needs. Safety and comfort were prioritised by monitors, staff presence and regular physical checks to ensure the wellbeing of children during their rest times. One staff member shared, "Recently, we moved the toddler sleep room into the playroom due to overcrowding. We focused on navigating safe sleep in the new space, and staff are confidently ensuring children are spaced out appropriately." This transition was managed well, maintaining a safe and comfortable sleep environment for the children.

How good is our leadership? 5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The management team engaged positively and actively during our visit, providing clear insights and demonstrating a strong commitment to the setting's goals.

Their involvement created an open and collaborative atmosphere, allowing for productive discussions that helped us better understand the setting's strengths and areas for growth. This engagement contributed to a clear picture of how management supported staff and ensured children were nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience.

Staff shared that they felt valued and heard by both their colleagues and management, creating a supportive environment that fostered confidence and encouraged staff to lead change and bring about improvements. This, in turn, directly benefited the outcomes for children and families. One staff member highlighted, "The nursery has had a transformation over the last 18 months, and that is a massive achievement," further reinforcing the positive impact of this supportive culture. Staff also noted, "Management are always very supportive," emphasising the role of effective leadership in empowering staff to take ownership of their professional development and contribute to positive change.

A culture of continuous improvement was evident, with staff having a clear vision of where they wanted to improve and a well defined plan for achieving this. For example, staff in all playrooms used start and end of day chats, communication logs and review books to reflect and plan together. These reflections allowed staff to identify areas for improvement and implement changes that led to better outcomes for children and families.

Staff meetings were highly engaging, with interactive sessions that included activities like using floor books to explore key topics such as core values and 'what matters to us.' These discussions helped strengthen the shared vision of improvement and alignment across the team. Additionally, staff requested safe sleep training, which management then delivered, ensuring that safety standards were reinforced and improved for children. The team also engaged in interactive sessions around themes such as the 'safe staffing programme' and the setting's improvement plan, both of which supported staff development and wellbeing, contributing to sustained positive outcomes for children.

The management team effectively informed the development of the setting by sharing successes and achievements through various ways, including displays, online platforms and newsletters. These communications not only kept children and families informed but also served as a starting point for future improvements. Families shared positive feedback, with one commenting, "They often ask if I have any views or suggestions to improve things," and another saying, "I appreciate all the communications and suggestions to add things to the learning journal." This open dialogue fostered strong leadership that supported staff in having high aspirations and confidence in their ability to help children reach their full potential. The result was a setting that continuously evolved based on both staff input and family engagement, creating a quality environment that supported children to thrive.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

4.3: Staff deployment

Through our feedback, with one exception, all families confirmed they had a strong connection with staff. Staff were described as "welcoming, approachable and caring", highlighting the positive relationships they had developed with them. Many appreciated how staff members took the time to know their child well, communicated effectively and were always happy to answer questions.

The staff's genuine interest in the children's wellbeing and the high level of communication through learning journals and updates were also praised. One parent expressed concern about the high staff turnover and lack of formal introductions to new staff, but overall, the feedback about the staff's dedication and warmth was overwhelmingly positive. One family reflected this sentiment, "My children absolutely love nursery, I feel the staff really care about them and this is clear as my children skip in happily every day and are cheery at pick up telling me about what they have been doing. They are learning and enjoying all sorts of different things. Thank you!!"

Staff consistently communicated with each other and children regarding their movements within the spaces, including when they were leaving and when children were moving between indoors and out. This practice not only ensured appropriate staffing levels but also reassured children that key staff would return, promoting a sense of security and continuity in their relationships. One staff member reflected this, stating, "Staff communicate well and effectively with each other to ensure all the children's needs are met.

During our visit, it was evident that there were always enough staff to meet children's needs. Staff movement was minimal, ensuring consistency and promoting the development of strong, positive relationships with children. With the support of management, busy times of the day, such as mealtimes, arrival and departure, were effectively recognised and planned for. This proactive approach ensured there were always sufficient staff available to meet the needs of the children during these times. Staff shared their perspective, saying, "There is a spare person in each room to support the day-to-day running, as well as a kitchen assistant, deputy manager, manager and the owner." This highlighted the clear and thoughtful staffing structure in place. In our feedback, families also expressed confidence in the setting's staffing, with one commenting, "Whenever I pick my child up from nursery, there are always enough staff to provide a good, informative handover, while also ensuring the other children are well cared for."

The skills and knowledge of the experienced staff in the setting played a key role in the positive outcomes for children. The strong mentoring system, alongside the enthusiasm and dedication of the support workers, contributed to the overall quality of care provided. One staff member shared, "The induction was detailed and helped me to feel settled into the nursery. I was also given a mentor to help me with my college work and someone who I was able to ask any questions I may have," highlighting the value of structured support for new and less experienced staff. Although we understood the challenges involved in employing more experienced staff, management needed to give careful consideration to the roles and responsibilities of support workers in the setting. While the current support structure had led to good outcomes, it was essential for management to ensure that best practices were followed in defining and implementing support workers' roles. We were reassured by the provider that this was expected to lessen over time as support workers complete their training and transition into practitioner roles, reducing the need for as many support workers in the future.

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

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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