St. Margarets Nursery & Preschool at Craiglockhart Avenue
Day Care of Children

38 Craiglockhart Avenue
Edinburgh
EH14 1LT

Telephone: 0131 667 0778

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 April 2026

Service provided by:
St Margarets Nursery Limited

Service provider number:
SP2011011617

Service no:
CS2024000369

About the service

St Margaret's Nursery & Preschool at Craiglockhart is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 50 children not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 17 children are aged under two years.

The nursery is located in the Craiglockhart area of Edinburgh. It is a detached building on two floors. The lower floor accommodates children from two to five years, and the upper floor, children under two years. Toilet and nappy changing facilities are located on both floors. The outdoor space is accessed directly from the lower playroom and through the main entrance, for children on the upper floor.

The service is situated close to public transport routes, shops and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 April 2026 between 9:00 and 15:15 and 16 April between 8:45 and 15:15. This 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke to, and spent time with children using the service
- received seven completed online questionnaires from families
- spoke with staff and the management team
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- 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, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care, that supported their wellbeing and helped them to feel safe, secure and valued.
- Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of children and their families. This enabled them to create a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Children were supported to lead their own play and learning at a pace that suited their individual needs and interests. They were visibly engaged and motivated as they explored a wide range of meaningful learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors.
- Families were actively encouraged to be involved in their child's learning journey. Staff fostered positive, welcoming relationships with families, ensuring they felt invited into the setting and well-informed through daily interactions at drop off and pick up times.

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	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very 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 resources

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

The service demonstrated a clear vision and values, underpinned by a positive ethos. Staff modelled values-based practice, showing warmth, kindness and attentive listening in their interactions with children. This helped children feel secure, respected and included. Feedback from parents was consistently positive, demonstrating confidence in the care, support and learning opportunities provided. Relationships with families were a clear strength and contributed to a welcoming and inclusive community. One parent shared, "I have been consistently pleased and encouraged by the nursery ethos, staff enthusiasm and learning opportunities in this setting. I feel secure knowing my child is secure and that feeling is very valuable."

Leadership and management arrangements were effective in creating a positive and supportive working environment. Staff spoke positively about the support they received and described feeling motivated and valued in their roles. The development of emerging leadership roles was helping to encourage shared responsibility and strengthen professional engagement within the team. The recent appointment of a new manager presents a timely opportunity to review and refresh the service's vision and values. This would support a shift from a more corporate focus to be more distinctive and reflective of the service's unique context.

Quality assurance processes, including monitoring and auditing arrangements were well-established and generally robust. Monitoring processes helped ensure key aspects of the service were regularly reviewed and actions were taken to improve practice. The quality assurance calendar outlined tasks and timescales, helping staff track improvement.

Leaders demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement through an improvement plan, that focused on developing the planning cycle and staff confidence in practice. Strengthening the evaluative focus of this plan, including clear measures of the positive impact on children would help the service demonstrate improvement over time.

Staff were engaged in self-evaluation using best practice guidance, including the 'Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare Sectors (Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland, 2025)' to support and understand how well the setting was meeting expectations. Children's and families' views were actively sought and valued. The setting used a range of approaches to gather feedback, including questionnaires, informal discussions and the parent committee. This feedback was used effectively to inform service development and practical improvements. For example, enhancements to the drop off area had been made to create a more welcoming environment for families. Practical arrangements were also adapted in response to feedback, including the provision of umbrellas in the outdoor storage area to support safe access during poor weather. Parents shared, "As a parent I feel heard and I know my child's needs are fully understood and supported" and "I was invited to join the parents' committee and enjoy being part of decision making, advocating and learning. I have always felt heard and never had trepidation about reaching out."

Safer recruitment practices were followed, and staff files sampled contained appropriate documentation to support children's safety. Induction arrangements were supportive and staff reported feeling confident in their roles. A professional learning record was maintained, and staff described being encouraged to pursue training linked to their interests and the needs of the service, including trauma skills practice and management qualifications.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces — 4 - Good

Children experience high quality spaces

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

The setting provided a welcoming, inclusive and well-maintained environment that supported children's wellbeing. It was clean, suitably furnished and benefited from good, natural light and ventilation, helping children and families to feel settled. Staff interactions were calm, friendly and respectful, reflecting a positive service ethos and supporting effective relationships with families. Information for parents was clearly displayed, contributing to partnership working.

Effective arrangements were in place to support children's safety. The premises were secure, and staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities in maintaining supervision and managing risk. Risk assessments were regularly reviewed, and children were meaningfully involved in understanding risk through age-appropriate approaches. Staff supported children to explore their environment safely through the use of the 'Safety SIMOA' elephant. This was a tool to help reinforce safe movement and risk awareness.

Infection prevention and control measures were effective and well-embedded in daily practice. Personal care routines were managed sensitively, and staff promoted children's independence, by encouraging participation and seeking consent. While the environment generally supported independence, there was scope to further strengthen opportunities for skills, such as tidying up and more independence during toileting.

There were cosy areas for children to rest and relax which supported their emotional needs. These spaces were also used for shared story reading, which promoted language development and strengthened relationships. Designated storage areas, name tags and photographs effectively supported children's sense of belonging and identity, helping them to feel valued within the setting.

Children benefited from daily access to outdoor play, which supported their physical wellbeing and enjoyment of learning. A good variety of equipment, including a mud kitchen, construction resources and sensory experiences promoted children's exploration, curiosity and creativity. While the outdoor environment provided positive learning opportunities, this could be developed further to enhance children's experiences through a stronger focus on nature-based play. The service had recognised this, and shared future plans that demonstrated a positive commitment to extending the breadth and depth of learning outdoors.

Systems for the management of paper and electronic records were well-established. Information was stored securely in line with data protection requirements, with appropriate oversight in place.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

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

Quality indicator: Play, learning, and developing

Children experienced a welcoming and nurturing environment where they felt settled, confident and emotionally secure. They formed positive relationships with staff and peers and were engaged, motivated and happy within their play. Children showed independence, making choices, leading their own play and sustaining interest, which supported their overall development and wellbeing.

Staff provided a range of experiences that supported children's communication, physical and creative development. They were supported to develop early language skills through songs, stories and musical instrument experiences. Children demonstrated imagination, curiosity and creativity during construction and expressive activities, such as painting, drawing and playdough. Recent developments, including the introduction of more natural materials and adaptable resources, such as 'tap tap boxes' across rooms, further enriched children's experiences.

Staff were attentive and nurturing, with many positive and responsive interactions observed during play. These interactions helped create a warm and supportive learning environment. Strengthening staff skills in extending children's thinking and adding appropriate challenge, would support richer learning and help staff identify meaningful next steps, particularly when children show strong interests or sustained engagement.

Planning was responsive to children's interests and demonstrated a clear focus on seasonal learning and living things, including themes such as caterpillars, wings and springtime. Floor books effectively captured these experiences and shared children's play and learning over time. Children's voices were evident throughout, supporting ownership and engagement in their learning. Staff recognised the need to more consistently identify and record clear next steps in learning, that build directly on children's interests and ideas. Strengthening this aspect of planning will further support responsive practice and ensure learning experiences are thoughtfully extended to meet children's individual developmental needs.

The use of online journals and regular progress discussions supported meaningful partnership with families and helped them to feel included in their child's learning. This approach strengthened continuity between home and nursery and ensured that children's learning was well-supported, responsive and reflective of individual needs. Children were encouraged to recognise their own achievements and take pride in their learning. Some parents shared they would like more photographs to capture children's experiences. This would further enhance their understanding of learning across the setting.

Children's experiences were enriched through regular opportunities within the local community, including walks along the canal and meaningful intergenerational visits to a local care home. As a result, children developed increased confidence and a deeper understanding of their community. Parents told us of the experiences their children enjoyed in the local community, including trips to the aquarium, book bug sessions and visits to the local nursing home, "I love seeing what they get up to daily, it's clearly well-planned and I'm surprised and delighted by the activities every week."

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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.

Children experienced a warm, nurturing and supportive environment, where staff demonstrated a strong and meaningful understanding of children and their families. Interactions were caring, respectful and responsive and children were treated with sensitivity and kindness. Staff responded promptly and appropriately to children's emotional needs, including offering reassurance and comfort when required. As a result, children felt secure, valued and emotionally confident. Strong, trusting relationships were a clear strength of the setting and had a very positive impact on children's wellbeing.

Approaches to settling and transitions were well-planned, flexible and embedded in everyday practice. Staff worked effectively in partnership with families to ensure transitions were individualised and supportive, promoting continuity and emotional security. During the inspection, children who became unsettled were supported calmly and sensitively through reassurance and play-based approaches. This helped children feel secure, settled and part of the setting.

Personal planning was well-developed and guided by clear, effective strategies to support children's individual health, safety and wellbeing needs. Staff used these plans confidently and consistently in practice, enabling them to respond appropriately and in a timely way. Where children required additional support, staff worked proactively with relevant external agencies, including speech and language therapy services, supporting early intervention and promoting inclusion and positive outcomes. The use of visual and communication supports further enhanced some children's understanding of routines and supported the development of their communication skills. One parent shared, "Staff really do take the time to learn individual needs and provide personalised child-centred care and learning to increase my child sense of safety and security. This allows my child to blossom in the setting."

Medication systems were well-managed. Medicines were securely stored, clearly labelled and administered safely, supported by detailed healthcare plans that were well-understood by staff. This contributed to a strong culture of safety and wellbeing.

Children's emotional wellbeing was supported through well-embedded routines for rest, sleep and personal care. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of children's individual preferences and worked closely with families to ensure continuity between home and the setting. Personal care routines were delivered sensitively and respectfully, supporting children to feel safe, secure and cared for. These routines were calm and unhurried, allowing children to build trusting relationships with staff and promoting their overall comfort and wellbeing.

Mealtimes were calm and well-organised, providing children with a positive and enjoyable experience. Staff were warm, attentive and responsive, and effective systems were in place to ensure children's dietary, cultural and health needs were consistently met. Children were encouraged to develop independence and make choices about their food, including being supported to serve themselves. This contributed positively to children's confidence and wellbeing. Further opportunities should be provided at lunchtime, particularly for older children, to extend opportunities for independence and learning.

Relationships with families were a clear strength. Staff created a warm and welcoming environment, where families felt valued, respected and listened to. There was a strong emphasis on meaningful partnership working, supported by a range of effective communication approaches. These included both informal day to day interactions and planned opportunities, such as stay and play sessions and parent consultations, which helped to further enhance and strengthen family engagement.

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

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - Good

Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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