

Cowcaddens Day Nursery Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 June 2025

Service provided by:
Glasgow City Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003390

Service no:
CS2003014822

About the service

Cowcaddens Day Nursery is registered to provide a care service to provide a care service to a maximum of 75 children in the following age ranges: 6 children aged from birth to under two years; 15 children aged two to under three years; 54 children aged three years and over, but not yet attending primary school. The service is provided by Glasgow City Council in an adapted and refurbished former infant school and red sandstone building located in Cowcaddens, north central Glasgow. The accommodation is over three levels with and children have access to a secure outdoor play area. The service is close to public transport routes and other amenities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection, which took place between 9 and 12 June 2025. Two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with 20 children and received survey responses from 16 parents or carers
- spoke with 12 staff including the senior leadership team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met.
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Staff worked closely with families, involving them in decisions about their child's care and development.
- Positive working relationships between the management team and staff promoted a collegiate approach to providing high quality play experiences for children.
- Children benefited from a skilled staff team who worked very well together and had created a welcoming, inclusive environment.
- A review and planned adaptations to the nursery playroom layouts had widened opportunities for children to experience active play and learning opportunities within an engaging outdoor space.
- Staff promoted a culture within the service that focussed on promoting the children's right to play, have fun and experience challenge.
- The senior leadership team's approach had helped build, maintain and strengthen the capacity of the team to deliver continuity in children's care.
- Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes enabled the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children's and families particular needs and choices.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good as we found performance demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and did not require any significant adjustment.

We looked at how the service's planning approaches for children's care, learning and development ensured they experienced positive outcomes. Children benefited from a skilled staff team who worked very well together and had created a welcoming, inclusive environment. Their sound knowledge of child development, GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child) and the well-being indicators resulted in children's individual needs being met. We observed staff being responsive to children's changeable interests and demands. Children were spoken and listened to in ways that encouraged them to feel valued and included. Where children required support with personal care, interactions throughout were warm, caring and nurtured children's sense of security, confidence and helped build positive relationships.

Staff worked closely with families, involving them in decisions about their child's care and development. This enabled the relevant staff to respond quickly, sensitively and compassionately to changes in a child's life. Staff were skilled in using the information in children's personal plans to meet their needs. We discussed with staff how personal planning approaches could be streamlined and restructured to provide an up to date summary of ongoing key support, care and learning needs for every child. Plans and records for children with identified additional support needs took account of multidisciplinary assessments and inputs. One parent commented: " My older child has a wellbeing assessment plan and I have regular meetings with his keyworker discussing his progress and next steps. We also have a communication diary as he isn't able to communicate about his day in the way a typically developing child is and we can share information easily between home and nursery." A second parent told us: "If I have anything I feel my child needs to work on, I have full confidence in expressing this to the staff where they will work on this through personal plans which are available to view on seesaw online, with linking evidence". The personal planning approach followed by the staff team helped promote children's all round wellbeing by being solution focussed. It promoted shared discussions with parents and carers about children's strengths, personal challenges and development outcomes.

Overall the planning approaches we found in place helped staff to work with parents to identify and implement appropriate support strategies based on children's individual needs. Staff were knowledgeable about the potential impact on children of adverse childhood experiences and implemented supports that helped build children and family resilience where needed. A third parent commented: "Since my children started at Cowcaddens the staff have listened to my personal issues with my older child, and supported me with changing hours, accommodating my needs more than once. They will listen without judgement or prejudice."

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good as we found performance demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and did not require any significant adjustment.

We found that staff promoted a culture within the service that focussed on promoting the children's right to play, have fun and experience challenge. Staff worked hard to provide high quality learning experiences by continuously promoting choice, and children's interests. Systems for tracking children's learning across key areas of the early years curriculum were particularly robust. This information provided a sound platform for informing shared discussions with parents about their children's individual progress and achievements. Staff had high aspirations to enable children to be successful. Children's voices were highly valued, as a result, children were confident, happy and motivated to learn.

We found that staff had a shared understanding of child development and early years pedagogy and used this to scaffold and shape the breadth and depth of children's learning. Both indoors and outdoors there were many examples of well considered open ended materials and creative approaches that engaged children's imagination and enriched their play and learning. One parent commented: "My child loves being outside and has the opportunity to do this daily with his freedom to choose and is supported to do so, with engaging in fun, and motivating experiences inside and out." Another parent told us: "My children are constantly learning new things at nursery. They love being in the block room and outside. They know the nursery routine in depth. The freedom of choice the children have is second to none at Cowcaddens." Another parent listed a wide range of experiences their child had participated in including: "eco drama with a visiting organisation, den building, stories, singing, bubble play, mark-making, scavenger hunts, paper airplanes, splashing in puddles, numeracy." The systems in place for planning and resourcing play opportunities encouraged children to engage in a range of role play, active and creative experiences that helped them to share, collaborate and learn together. The use of questions from staff helped children to extend their thinking and consolidate their thoughts and ideas through play.

We discussed with staff observation approaches that could help identify and evaluate play experiences that children found particularly engaging and challenging. We highlighted how this could help foster meaningful discussion between children and staff about play and development. We discussed with staff how this would enhance the systems already in place for recognising children's achievements as well as further promote children's sense of ownership and leadership of play. In particular, we identified a need for staff to take forward and implement strategies for developing children's sense of ownership of leading change related to their self chosen play projects. Staff agreed that more flexible use of big books or similar planning tools that were based on observations of children's most engaging and involving play experiences could strengthen existing opportunities for children to shape their play environments.

We found that staff used observations of children's significant play interests to adapt their support for and resourcing of play experiences. We highlighted to staff the value of ensuring written comments on potential lines of development for children's play and related future play challenges are set out clearly as part of each learning journal observation. This can enhance the systems in place for highlighting the developmental progress children are making through planned play and learning experiences.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good as we found performance demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and did not require any significant adjustment.

The service made very good use of available resources to create a motivating environment for children to play together. The internal nursery environment was very comfortable, furnished to a high standard and

welcoming, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. It gave a strong message to children that they matter. The indoor and outdoor environments were sensitively structured and took account of all children's stages of development and learning. Spaces reflected children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate resources and materials to support learning. Play spaces included a range of open-ended and natural resources to stimulate children's creativity and problem solving. Staff ensured spaces were set up in ways that were adaptable and had potential to encourage children's sustained thinking. We found that staff shared their reflections on how setting up and monitoring of each play area can lead to challenging and engaging play opportunities for children. This helped to ensure that all play environments offered excitement, were richly resourced and appeared attractive to children. It supported children use of resources to extend and develop their play in line with their own ideas. Wall displays contributed to a stimulating environment that celebrated children's creativity and achievements.

Extensive recent developments to the outdoor play space as well as a revision of the organisation and layout of internal playrooms and a review of the children's daily routines had contributed to a significant improvement to children's daily free-flow engagement with challenging outdoor play experiences. Children now had increased freedom of movement between indoor and outdoor play spaces. One parent commented: "I'm really pleased the garden area is secure now. The changes to the environment have been really positive and the children all seem really engaged." Another parent told us: "I feel the nursery is a safer environment now that the garden gate is locked and the entrance to the nursery is to the rear of the building, which gives me peace of mind when my child is outside." The outdoor space included opportunities for children to experience: active play such as tree climbing, swings and hammock play, ball games, riding bikes and wheeled toys; curiosity based play; cosy spaces for reading; creative and transient art; play with malleable materials; constructive play; problem solving; mud kitchen play; experimenting with sound; planting and growing; loose parts play; experimenting with transporting objects; small world play. The changes to the internal playroom layouts and daily routines had ensured progress towards the nursery's improvement goals of extending opportunities for children's autonomy, choice and active engagement in play and learning.

We highlighted and staff agreed that more regular planned outdoor play and forest kindergarten opportunities within parks or woodland spaces beyond the setting would further increase opportunities for children to experience fresh air and enjoy challenging play. The management teams agreed to make this a focus of future improvement and professional development planning.

Children's safety was promoted through detailed risk assessments for all environments and activities accessed by them. These were regularly reviewed and staff were aware of their responsibility to identify and remove any new hazards in the way of children's safety and wellbeing. Robust infection prevention and control and food safety practices provided high levels of safety for children. Staff understood the arrangements for cleaning within the service. Risk assessments had been undertaken that followed current national guidance in respect of infection prevention and control. There were clear policies and procedures in place to ensure consistent approaches across the setting.

Protection of children's personal information complied with relevant best practice guidance. Appropriate systems were in place to manage electronic information in line with general data protection requirements.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good as we found performance demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and did not require any significant adjustment.

We found that staff were highly motivated, very well led and passionate about improving outcomes for all children. Positive working relationships between the senior management team and staff promoted a collegiate approach to providing high quality play experiences for children. The senior management team promoted and sustained a shared vision for the setting that reflects the aspirations of children, families and partners. One parent commented: "The manager has made a lot of amazing changes for the children and made the whole environment a lot freer for the kids to move around, and make choices of their own." Another parent told us: "The head of the nursery is amazing at what she does. Planning out the nursery and changing it about to suit the kids needs and the staff. Always trying to make it safer anyway she can - right down to changing doors we go in. It is so much better for the kids."

Staff told us how the senior management team provided a clear focus for their shared team work including setting out clear responsibilities and expectations. The manager had created conditions where all staff felt confident to initiate changes and share responsibility for the process. We found that this leadership approach had helped build, maintain and strengthen the capacity of the team to deliver continuity in children's care. It had contributed to children's emotional health and wellbeing being a central feature of transitions into and beyond the setting. This ensured the care children experienced was delivered by familiar key adults who were perceived as consistent, reliable, trustworthy, and responsive to their needs.

We found that strong leadership of the service supported staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to help children to reach their full potential. Staff were familiar with national quality frameworks for early learning and childcare. The management team followed an inclusive and supportive approach to quality assurance and improvement. We found that team meetings took place regularly and staff had the opportunity to take part in one to one meetings with management. These provided an opportunity to discuss any improvement ideas and identify any related training needs. We found this helped to channel each staff team member's enthusiasm for taking forward current ideas and developing and implementing best practice guidance. It helped to ensure that care, play and learning experiences were consistently meeting the needs of children.

We discussed with the manager opportunities for widening staff leadership roles in areas of the curriculum linked to children's play and development needs such as forest kindergarten play. We highlighted the potential value of extending leadership roles in observation and responsive planning approaches. We discussed with the management team their improvement plans for introducing MAKATON. This a communication system which can be used alongside spoken language, to children to understand and express themselves more effectively. The discussion included reinforcing leadership initiatives with the potential to enhance development of children's self-control, emotional awareness and interpersonal problem-solving such as PATHs. The management team agreed that these curriculum leadership approaches had the potential to support the nursery team rise to Glasgow's Grand Challenge of closing the poverty related attainment gap and help meet national priorities in improving attainment for all children.

The management team told us how they dedicated time to analysing children's, staff and parents' contributions to any consultations and extracting the key messages or themes. This feedback had been used to support the development of an improvement plan that clearly set out the nursery's priorities and targets for change. We highlighted practical consultation strategies for widening family engagement in the improvement planning process. The staff agreed these would help strengthen the capacity of service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children's and families' particular needs and choices.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

4.3 Staff Deployment

We evaluated this quality indicator as very good as we found performance demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and did not require any significant adjustment.

The importance of ensuring that the nursery was appropriately staffed during the day was recognised by the senior leadership team as essential to the wellbeing of children. Staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed. Effective staff deployment within the nursery meant that children's individual needs were being met by the right number of staff throughout each element of the day. A parent told us: "I always observe plenty staff within the rooms I've never had any concerns with my children being left in the care of any of the staff at Cowcaddens." The staff to child ratio allowed staff to be responsive to individual needs which enhanced children's experiences and ensured children had the right support at the right time.

Arrangements were in place to provide continuity of care across the day and support transitions and communication with families. One parent commented: "Lots of staff members around at all times which is nice to know if you need to chat there is always someone about." A second parent stated: "Staff are very welcoming. They always ask how my children have been. They always make themselves available (or direct me to management) if I have anything more personal I need to discuss that can't be done in the playroom." Effective use was made of the differing experience, knowledge and skills of staff to ensure children's experience across the whole day was positive and that they were safe. Staff worked together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with the children across the day. Staff communicated very well with their colleagues when a personal care task took away from their play area based responsibilities. Staff supported children with additional learning needs to feel respected and included in daily experiences.

A robust induction process supported newly appointed staff to meet children's needs. The induction programme had helped new staff to settle into their role and become part of the staff team. As a result, they were clear about their roles and responsibilities which supported children's experiences.

The staff routinely engaged in a range of professional learning activities that built on and sustained their practice. We found staff were confident in discussing how they had improved their practice as a result of their own professional learning activities. Responsibility for implementing improvement planning priorities was partly distributed through staff leadership groups in self evaluation, planning and progress, transitions and outdoor play. We found that these staff leadership groups had a positive impact on the quality of experiences for children, their progress and parental engagement in their children's learning.

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

Staff should ensure that if a child requires emergency medication that the medication is within easy reach in order for them to administer and meet child's health needs.

Health and Social Care Standards:

1.14 - 'My future care and support needs are anticipated as part of my assessment.'

3.21 - 'I am protected from harm because people are alert and respond to signs of significant deterioration in my health and wellbeing, that I may be unhappy or may be at risk of harm.'

This area for improvement was made on 25 October 2018.

Action taken since then

An easily identifiable first aid pouch has been purchased for each room and all emergency medication including inhalers, epi pens and rescue medication was placed in this when the child was outwith the playroom. This included outings and when using the secure outdoor area. This pouch was available to member of staff taking the child outdoors. All staff members were instructed on its use and written guidance to be prepare . Children's wellbeing plans were updated to reflect this action when necessary.

This area for improvement had 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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