

Summarised inspection findings

Victoria Quay Nursery

The City of Edinburgh Council

30 July 2024

Key contextual information

Victoria Quay Nursery is located within the Scottish Government's Victoria Quay complex at Leith in Edinburgh. It is run and managed by North Edinburgh Childcare (NEC) Ltd. The nursery uses a small ground floor wing of the building, with access to a spacious secure outdoor area. The centre is registered for 37 children aged three months to five years attending at any one time. No more than 18 children can be under two years of age. There are currently 45 children on the roll who access their 1140 hours in a wide variety of attendance patterns, to suit families' working arrangements. The nursery is open from 8am to 6pm all year. It experienced significant management changes prior to the inspection, including the general manager of NEC moving to the nursery temporarily. She has been supported by a manager from one of the company's nearby nurseries. In addition to the temporary leadership team, staffing includes a deputy manager, six early years practitioners and a modern apprentice.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Practitioners are calm and kind and have created a relaxed playroom environment. They know children well and show care and concern as they play with them. Staff need to respond to children's ideas and interests, increasing opportunities to deepen and enrich learning through play and real-life experiences. Practitioners sometimes miss opportunities to extend children's learning and make too little use of questions and explanations. They would benefit from professional learning on how to develop learning spaces, experiences and interactions. This will support them to plan more stimulating play contexts both indoors and outdoors.
- Practitioners are committed to improving their practice and are keen to develop their knowledge of early years pedagogy. They now need to develop a shared understanding of what high quality provision looks like. Senior leaders from NEC should improve the strategic leadership of the nursery, build capacity among staff through ongoing professional learning and improve learning and teaching overall.
- Staff and children relate well together. Children are settled and confidently explore their learning spaces. A few children persevere and show sustained interest in activities. However, many engage for short periods only, moving around areas without settling. At times, children need skilled adult intervention to engage them more fully in their learning.
- Overall, practitioners provide good role models for children. They should support children to better regulate their emotions and behave kindly towards their friends, for example by engaging them in restorative conversations. This will support children to manage any feelings of anger or upset calmly and without conflict.
- Practitioners have created a stimulating block play area indoors. Other play spaces indoors are not sufficiently rich and varied. Whilst the large outdoor space offers great potential, there are

too few planned learning areas and high-quality resources to sustain children's interest. Practitioners need to review the learning environments with children. They should focus on ways to encourage imagination, investigation and curiosity, including through digital technologies. Staff need to significantly improve the provision across the nursery for children to learn important skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

- Practitioners' planning focuses on adult-directed activities in which children can choose to participate. A few activities are linked to children's own ideas and interests. However planning is not yet sufficiently responsive to these ideas and interests, failing to take account of children's learning styles and needs. Practitioners match children's activities to national early level experiences and outcomes. At times there is a mismatch between activities and their stated learning experiences and outcomes. Practitioners need to develop planning which is more child centred. This will require managers to provide time for staff to gather, plan and review as a team.
- Practitioners do not yet collect reliable evidence about children's progress. There are no current accurate assessment profiles for each child. Practitioners are at the early stages of recording their observations of children's play or using these records to plan next steps in learning for groups and individuals. They now need to ensure that observations are unique to each child and are used to track their achievements. This information will enable staff to monitor and report on children's progress over time. Staff need to develop individual plans for those children who need additional help with their learning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the nursery, NEC and the education authority.

3.2 Securing children's progress

weak

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Children's progress in early language and communication is weak. A few children communicate with each other and with practitioners, while a minority interact only occasionally. Children need to be provided with many more opportunities to develop their spoken language by talking in different contexts with adult support. A minority of children access books independently but few display an understanding of story characters and sequences. Children need access to literacy resources across the environment which are inviting and engaging. Too few children can recognise or write their name. They will make better progress in early writing if they are provided with experiences and materials which encourage mark making and pencil control.
- Children's progress in numeracy and mathematics is weak. A few children measured the growth of their sunflower plants. However, there are limited experiences for children to develop their skills and make progress in their mathematical learning. Children need to be provided with a breadth of mathematical experiences and vocabulary to make progress. This would include opportunities to sort, match, count and order. Providing them with real life and imaginary contexts will support children to effectively develop skills in, for example, using money.
- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is satisfactory. They are creative in their physical play using loose parts such as pallets and tyres. They have opportunities to balance, climb and take risks in their play. Children show independence at snack and lunch times, serving themselves and clearing away. They need many more opportunities to learn about aspects of healthy living, including their feelings and emotions and their rights as a young child.
- Children's progress over time is not yet tracked and monitored effectively. The information which practitioners gather and share in the learning journals does not accurately demonstrate individual children's progress. Practitioners' observations of children do not yet identify the learning and skills being developed or detail relevant next steps in children's learning.
- Children's achievements are not sufficiently strong, and they are not provided with their own learning targets. Children's successes need to be recorded and celebrated. Practitioners need to value children's individual achievements and encourage them to be more fully involved in the life of the nursery.

- Practitioners treat children with respect and allow them to make decisions throughout their day. Staff do not yet display a sound understanding of equity for all children. They are unaware of information about issues which may present barriers to learning. They do not yet have interventions or strategies in place to support children who need additional support for their learning. Practitioners need to gather information which enables them to plan to meet the needs of individual children. This will support all children in making strong and secure progress. Parents and specialist professional partners need to be involved in these processes wherever appropriate.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were generally nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience. Mostly, staff noticed and responded to children's cues for comfort, containment, personal care and encouragement. This ensured children felt valued and listened to. Children were welcomed warmly to the setting by staff using their name and showing interest in them. As a result, children were comfortable and secure. However, there were also occasions when cues were not responded to. This resulted in children's experience not being recognised and needs not being met.

Routines of the day were generally responsive to children and respectful of their choices. For example, babies could sleep when they needed to, and outdoor play was accessible for most of the day. Personal care was dignified and private, with children being involved in the process through consultation and decision-making.

Mealtimes were inconsistent in quality across the playrooms. To improve mealtimes, children of all ages should be further involved in the preparation and self-serving of food. This would help them develop independence and lifelong skills. A recent mealtime incident had not initiated learning or informed changes in practice. Therefore, some children continued to eat without full supervision. The service should improve mealtimes to ensure children are always safe (see area for improvement 1). We referred the service to best practice document 'Food Matters' (Care Inspectorate 2018) for inspiration to improve the mealtime experience.

Children's individual wellbeing was not yet benefiting from the effective use of personal planning. Therefore, not all children were getting the support they needed to reach their full potential. Whilst staff were generally knowledgeable about children, support strategies were not consistently evident and most personal plans were out of date. This meant that children were not always benefiting from continuity in their care. Children's progress was not being monitored and so it was unclear whether supports were effective. Children must have their health, welfare and safety needs planned for, monitored and met (see requirement 1).

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

1.3 Play and learning

Children mostly had fun as they experienced play opportunities. They were familiar with their environment and at times confidently explored and used it during their play. Practical tasks had some learning benefit, such as responsibility with tidying or independence with self-care tasks. However, opportunities to extend children's learning were frequently missed across all rooms. For example, babies were continually lifted away from activities they were interested in. Children were rarely enabled to problem-solve, make decisions and be curious in play. As a result, children did not have periods of extended quality play.

The layout of the environment and staff deployment impacted on children's ability to choose where and how to play. For example, preschool children were actively moving sand around in the same area where some children were having lunch indoors. The garden area was not freely available due to the mix of staff in the room. While a range of core resources such as sand, water and dough, were available across indoors and outdoors, the quality of the experiences needed to be improved. For example, water trays were too small to fully explore the water. Similarly, some

areas in the garden were not set up to interest or entice children to explore them. Some open-ended and real items were available to bring a more authentic perspective to play. However, the range of these should be extended further to offer curiosity, exploration and intrigue for children.

Children's literacy and numeracy development was at the early stages of being supported through modelling of language, stories and songs. To develop this further, children would benefit from the use of visual signs and props to intrigue them as well as add value to the environment. Children enjoyed joining visiting services for song and rhyme times. However, there were missed opportunities to engage children in their local community for variety and new experiences.

The tracking, monitoring and planning for children's learning was in the very early stages and so was not yet effective to support children's progress. For example, children did not have individual next steps planned based on their interests and needs. As a result, planning for learning was not yet fully informed by children's needs or wishes. The provider should ensure children are supported in their learning through quality interactions, resources and planning (see area for improvement 2).

Care Inspectorate evaluation: weak

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Not assessed during this inspection.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: Choose an item.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

A strength of the service was the daily welcoming of families into the playrooms to settle or collect children. This allowed staff and parents to share information and let parents see children at play. However, limited opportunities were available for parents to be involved in evaluating or planning for the service. This was a missed opportunity to develop a shared vision.

Service quality would appear to have deteriorated over time and so a culture of continuous improvement was not evident. At the time of inspection, the manager was absent, and the baby room did not have a room leader. The absence of these leadership roles resulted in the staff team being in the midst of significant change. Current best practice and guidance in early learning and childcare were not used to guide improvements and so aspects of the environment did not meet children's needs. For example, the nappy changing area was shared among differing age groups and provocations for play were limited.

There were significant gaps in quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement planning. For example, issues were either not addressed or were addressed informally and not monitored to ensure improvement. This meant that the quality of outcomes for children was not being measured or enhanced. Some recent improvements in medication management had been made which staff were responding positively to. This would suggest a willingness to improve. However, other issues had not been identified and could potentially impact on children's health and safety. For example, personal plans were out of date, baby safety gates were no longer effective for older babies and parents were accessing the preschool toilets to support their own children.

Whilst we recognise the service is currently in a period of transition, issues should be consistently identified and addressed. The provider must implement effective quality assurance systems which can aid continuous improvements of children's outcomes (see requirement 2).

Care Inspectorate evaluation: weak

4.3 Staff deployment

A core team of staff had been established, providing stable familiarity to parents and children. Covering staff were equally familiar to children as the same people were used regularly. As a result, all staff had built relationships with the families they worked with.

However, deployment and levels of staff were not yet effective in ensuring good outcomes for children. Documents sampled showed that the service worked within the recommended ratio of staff to children. During inspection however, there were occasions where children's needs outweighed the staff available. For example, staff breaks took place during high support times such as mealtimes. This meant missed opportunities to fully keep children safe and engage them in a supportive, learning experience. Children's experiences were impacted upon as staff covered each other's breaks. For example, preschool children were unable to free flow back indoors during specific times of the day. It also resulted in staff not having lunch breaks until later in the day, which was too long for staff to continue to be energised for children. The provider must ensure children's needs are met by the right number of people throughout the day (see requirement 3).

Whilst we saw some delegation between staff and direction given to covering staff, there was further need to develop staff accountability for professional standards within their rooms. For example, recognising when practice needed to improve and taking action to benefit children. The use of best practice documents would inform staff of what children should expect from a registered daycare service. Best practice documents would also promote professional reflection and discussion to aid improvement. We referred the service to the Care Inspectorate's website The Hub for further guidance.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement. As a result of this inspection, there are three requirements and two areas for improvement.

Requirements

1. In order to identify, plan for and meet children's health, welfare and safety needs, the provider must ensure their personal plans are up to date and used to inform care.

By 28 June 2024, the provider must have specifically but not exclusively:

- worked alongside parents to update children's personal plans
- recorded enough information in children's plans and used it to guide staff in providing consistent care
- ensured that all staff understand the purpose of personal plans and are familiar with the guidance 'Guide for Providers on Personal Planning, Early Learning and Childcare' (Care Inspectorate 2021).

This is to comply with Regulation 5(2)(b)(c) (Personal Plans) of the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is also to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

2. To ensure the best possible health, welfare and safety outcomes for children, the provider must quality assure key aspects of children's care and support, to aid improvement.

By 31 July 2024, the provider must have a robust procedure in place to monitor at a minimum:

- Children's personal plans including medication
- Health and safety
- Staff and child interactions
- Children's play experiences

This is to comply with The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, (SSI 2011/210) Regulations 3 and 4.

This is also to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health & Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

3. To ensure children's health, welfare and safety needs are met at all times, the provider must ensure there are enough staff available throughout the day.

By 7 June 2024, the provider must:

- Support effective deployment of staff skill and experience in each room
- Review break times to ensure children are supported through transition points in the day such as lunchtime
- Review break times to enable staff to be refreshed and energised for children throughout the day
- Empower staff to always maintain professional conduct within their team.

This is in order to comply with section 7(1)(a) of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019.

This to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My needs are met by the right number of people.' (HSCS 3.15).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children have a consistently safe and positive mealtime experience, the provider should improve the supervision of children and involve them more in the process.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state, 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

2. To ensure children are consistently supported in their learning, the provider should engage staff in training and self-evaluation. This would enhance the learning environments, planning and interactions.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state, 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.