

Summarised inspection findings

Bright Sparks Nursery

The City of Edinburgh Council

17 June 2025

Key contextual information

Bright Sparks Nursery is a funded provider working in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council to provide funded early learning and childcare (ELC). The nursery is registered for 48 children at any one time. It caters for babies to children not yet attending school. There are currently 54 children on the roll. The minority of children in the playroom for children aged three to five years, 'young learners', will start school in August 2025. Children can attend between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. over 51 weeks of the year with parents able to select hours that support the needs of their family. The nursery is privately owned and run by the manager and a depute manager who have been in post for several years. The manager has recently commenced maternity leave, with the depute manager acting as manager in her absence. Staffing includes three room seniors, seven practitioners and four apprentice practitioners, working towards initial qualification. Two room seniors are working towards further qualifications. A cook is employed to provide snacks and meals for children. The staff team are well established with most being employed for several years, often starting as apprentices. The building is a converted and extended residential property in the Murrayfield area of Edinburgh. Accommodation consists of five playrooms used for different age groups, two snack/lunch rooms and five separate outdoor spaces. The rooms used for children aged 2-5 years have direct access to outdoor spaces.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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

- In all playrooms, adult relationships with babies, toddlers and older children are nurturing and supportive. Children feel valued, safe, and secure and engage well in their learning throughout the day. They enjoy their experiences and demonstrate confidence and motivation in their learning. When interacting with children, practitioners are respectful, listening carefully to the verbal and non-verbal cues. Children mirror this approach and are polite and demonstrate kindness, developing an understanding of the needs of others. They are supported to learn in an unhurried and relaxed way, often based on their interests. As planned, practitioners could continue to develop their skills in using commentary and questioning to further support and challenge children's learning.
- Practitioners have used professional learning carefully and creatively to develop outdoor areas, maximising space available to provide attractive learning environments. This includes the promotion of open-ended, natural resources. Practitioners reflect on how environments support children's interests and learning needs and make adaptations as required. They should continue to embed these approaches. Practitioners should ensure children consistently experience sufficient depth and challenge in their learning, including in literacy, numeracy and mathematics.

- Practitioners make extensive use of the local community to enrich children's learning. This provides children with stimulating and exciting real-life, first-hand experiences, including visiting the zoo, shops, a care home and outdoor spaces. Children access digital technology including programmable toys and tablet computers. This motivates and engages them, for example as they take photographs. Practitioners should provide opportunities for children to use a wider range of technology to support, extend and enrich learning in exciting and purposeful ways.
- Practitioners know children very well as individuals. They plan learning experiences responsively to children's interests, and increasingly to their developmental needs using 'invitations to play'. They are careful to ensure that children experience a breadth of learning over time through engaging experiences. Practitioners make observations of children's experiences and learning, documenting them in electronic profiles and floor books. They should now ensure observations of children's learning happen more regularly and spontaneously to capture the learning of individuals. This should ensure assessment information captures fully the progress made because of experiences at nursery. Practitioners use helpful local authority tools, and work with parents, to identify what children know, can do and what they need to learn next. Practitioners would now benefit from support in identifying significant and more individualised next steps in learning for children. These need to be more focused on the development of skills and allow the progress children make to be easily measurable.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The setting 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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.2 Securing children's progress

good

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 under three

- The younger children settle well in their playrooms and benefit from regular outings and time spent outdoors. Babies enjoy simple cause and effect when building with soft bricks and readily identify their families in photographs. Toddlers move enthusiastically to music and enjoy singing and taking part in action songs and rhymes. They are becoming increasingly independent at mealtimes and preparing to go outside.

Children aged three and over

- Almost all children make good progress in early language and communication. They listen very well to adults and each other. Children are familiar with a range of texts and enjoy sharing their likes and dislikes. Recently they created a puppet theatre to retell favourite stories using puppets. Most children use a range of vocabulary to share their ideas and would benefit from increased challenge to extend this further. Almost all children recognise their name confidently and the majority identify letter names and their associated sounds. Through different experiences almost all children are developing fine motor control. This is helping them be physically ready to develop increasing control of a pencil. They enjoy exploring mark-making and writing for different purposes including captions for displays.
- Almost all children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They readily apply their understanding of number as they count and recognise numerals in routines and play. A minority of children would benefit from the challenge of exploring larger numbers. Children explore measure when baking and making dough. They investigate information handling as they record foods they like and dislike. Almost all children are ready to develop and apply their understanding across the full range of mathematical concepts including time, money and shape.
- Almost all children's progress in health and wellbeing is good. With a visiting specialist, children practice a range of physical skills in imaginative contexts. These include hand-eye coordination and ball control. Most children persevere well and demonstrate resilience when faced with challenge. They understand how to keep themselves safe, for example when crossing the road or using bikes and scooters. Most children demonstrate increasing independence and are now able to take on increased responsibilities to help them develop leadership skills.
- Children are making good progress over time. They are confident individuals who are curious and have a positive attitude to learning. Building on existing approaches, the majority of

children would benefit from more challenge in their learning building more effectively on what they already know and can do. This will support all children to make the progress they are capable of, as a result of their nursery experiences.

- Practitioners regularly and spontaneously recognise and celebrate children's successes and achievements through praise and encouragement. They encourage parents to share children's achievements from outwith nursery. Practitioners plan to recognise these achievements more widely through displays. Children develop the skills required to be responsible citizens and effective contributors. They develop an understanding of the needs of others during visits to a local care home and collect and deliver food to a local foodbank. They demonstrate care and nurture as they look after their caterpillars and duck hatchlings.
- Practitioners understand the needs of children and their families. They have created a nurturing ethos that is inclusive of all. Senior leaders make increasing use of a range of information to promote equity. To ensure maximum impact they should continue to embed approaches to gather and analyse information and data over time.

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.