

Summarised inspection findings

Tom Thumb Nursery and Playgroup Ltd

The City of Edinburgh Council

19 November 2024

Key contextual information

Tom Thumb Nursery and Playgroup Limited is in partnership with Edinburgh City Council to provide funded early learning and childcare (ELC). The nursery has been in the community for over 35 years. The nursery is managed by a voluntary board of directors which includes parents and members of the local community. The board supports the manager with recruitment and financial matters. The setting is situated in the Vennel Hall, which is owned by the local church. There is a very small garden area with a shed which the team use for their breaks. Practitioners have use of a community garden which is adjacent to the nursery. Equipment in this area requires to be packed away at the end of each day.

The setting offers placements for children aged from two years until they start primary school and is registered to take 40 children at any one time. The current roll is 30 children and of this, 70% are aged three. Most joined the setting in August 2024.

The team consists of a manager, depute manager, four fully qualified practitioners and a catering assistant, 50% of the practitioner team are new to the setting. The manager took up the post of nursery manager in January 2023.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The management team and practitioners work well together. In a short time, they have developed positive relationships with each other which contributes to the welcoming ethos within the setting. The management team supports all practitioners well and is currently mentoring new members of the team. This includes modelling practice and building their knowledge of current local and national guidance. This support is welcomed by new members of the team as they develop confidence in their role. To ensure the right level of support is provided for new team members, they have included this as a priority within this year's improvement plan.
- Since becoming the leader of the nursery, the manager has demonstrated commitment to improving the quality of the nursery provision. She continues to develop her knowledge and skills well as a leader. This includes accessing professional learning, collaborating with colleagues from other settings and undertaking further qualifications. The manager could benefit from ongoing support to continue to develop her skills and confidence as a leader of learning. It would be helpful to include visits to other settings to observe good practice.
- A full review of the setting's vision, values and aims was undertaken in 2022. This involved practitioners, parents and children. The values of the setting are brought to life meaningfully through interactions, children's experiences and learning spaces. The manager has plans in place to consult parents annually to ensure the vision, values and aims remain relevant.

- Practitioners are enthusiastic about their individual leadership roles. They continue to deepen their learning through training events and reading which is often undertaken outwith their working hours. As a result of these roles, children are becoming aware of how to care for their environment, the national wellbeing indicators and children's rights.
- The team encourages parents and children to share their views to support the continuous improvement of the nursery. Parents provide useful feedback to the manager through surveys. The manager ensures parents receive helpful information on the progress of improvements made as a result of their feedback. Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the setting. The team supports and encourages children well to communicate what is important to them, such as, how to be safe, have fun and be confident. Children have ongoing opportunities to contribute to nursery improvements. Their suggestions have helped to develop the outdoor area.
- The management use in-service days and weekly meetings well to undertake self-evaluation using local and national toolkits. Practitioners' effective use of digital technology helps them to reflect on practice and evaluate children's experiences. The team recognise that they now need to engage in critical reflection of their practice. The management team is ready to implement an improved process supported by the local authority to ensure robust self-evaluation. As a result, the management team and practitioners should be able to demonstrate clearly the impact of change on children's learning more effectively.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- There is a welcoming ethos which supports children to settle and feel relaxed in the nursery. Parents are very positive about the time practitioners spend to talk to them at the start and end of the day. Almost all responded that their child likes coming to the nursery. As a result, there are positive relationships with practitioners, children and parents. Practitioners are sensitive in supporting individual children as they learn to manage their emotions.
- Most children engage well in play at the start of the day and choose from the wide range of experiences in the playroom. Most sustain good concentration and play well with one another in areas such as block play. Practitioners are responsible for specific areas of the playroom and spend considerable amounts of time in their areas. Children would benefit from practitioners being more aware and flexible when children require support during play. There were too many missed opportunities to support and extend children's learning. The management team should continue to model good interactions and questioning that supports and extends children's learning. Children have access to a limited range of digital technology. Practitioners now need to explore ways to increase the use of technology including opportunities for children to talk about and reflect on their learning and achievements.
- Practitioners use electronic learning journals to record children's experiences and learning. They provide good information about children's engagement, enjoyment and experiences in the nursery. Practitioners should continue to develop the journals to capture the skills and outcomes children achieve and the progress they make in their learning. Parents have access to the journals and a few contribute valuable information about children's achievements.
- The team meets together to plan activities that take account of children's interests. They use intentional and responsive planning to identify key focuses for children's learning. The planning is not sufficiently well-developed to provide clear information on children's skills and outcomes. The management team and practitioners would benefit from working with the local authority to develop how they plan and assess children's learning. They need to be able to support children's progression more effectively and identify next steps in key areas of learning across the curriculum. The manager, with support from the local authority, has recently put in place new approaches to improve how they track and monitor the progress children are making. This is at an early stage.
- Practitioners link effectively with parents and other agencies to gather information and identify support for children requiring additional support. Approaches to planning for individuals is not yet well enough developed to ensure that children's targets are clear and progress is monitored.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Practitioners provide a wide range of play experiences that are responsive to children's interests. The team need to improve their understanding of pedagogical approaches. This could help them to provide better play experiences that support the wide range of developmental stages of children. To support them in taking this forward, the nursery team need to now make more effective use of national guidance.
- Practitioners are aware of the importance of providing appropriate experiences that support literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. They are not sufficiently aware of how they can support and develop progressive skills. Practitioners need to develop their understanding of skill progression within key areas and across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence.
- The team make good use of the local community and Forest Fridays to enhance children's experiences and time spent outdoors. Children have the opportunity to use a range of transport to explore South Queensferry and the surrounding areas. These opportunities enable children to learn about people, wildlife and places within their local community.
- The management team and practitioners plan children's transition from home into nursery well. The process is flexible and sensitive to the needs of individual children and their families. A few children access blended placements between two ELC settings. Helpful information is exchanged between the settings to support practitioners to build on children's care and learning needs. For children moving onto school, information on their progress is shared effectively with the receiving primary school including individual electronic learning journals. Teachers visit children within the setting to begin building relationships.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have developed trusting relationships with parents. Parents are highly positive about the work of the setting. They feel fully informed about their children's experiences and the progress they are making in their learning. Practitioners provide daily information for parents through private social media which gives them an insight into their child's day. They provide helpful information and photographs on children's learning using individual electronic learning journals. Parents welcome the opportunity to meet with practitioners. This gives an opportunity for parents to hear about the progress their children are making.
- Practitioners provide events where parents can become involved in their child's nursery experience such as stay and play sessions and special celebrations. Practitioners provide resources to support parents and children to play and learn together at home. This includes soup and baking packs and Tom Thumb Ted who goes on adventures with families.

2.1 Safeguarding

- 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- The management team and practitioners know that positive, trusting and nurturing relationships are crucial to supporting children to feel safe and secure within the setting. Children are happy and most continue to gain confidence within the setting as they become familiar with the learning spaces and daily routines. Older children have developed friendships and younger children, new to the setting, are developing their social skills and independence well. Children demonstrate kindness to each other during their play as a result of the positive role models of the team.
- Practitioners have recently introduced 'Wellbeing Buddies' to help children to develop an early awareness of the national wellbeing indicators and children's rights. Children are beginning to talk about the characters and what they represent. The majority of children are becoming confident in sharing their views and ideas with practitioners. Children are able to talk about how to keep safe, care for their friends and be healthy. Building on this positive start, practitioners should continue with this work to embed it into everyday practice. This could support all children to become more aware of their rights and gain confidence to talk about their wellbeing more effectively.
- As a result of self-evaluation, practitioners have reviewed and adapted their lunchtime procedures. They now offer 'rolling lunches'. This supports children to gain independence when self-serving and clearing away their dishes. It would be helpful to continue to monitor and adapt the lunchtime experience to ensure high quality for all children. During and immediately after lunch, the noise level could be high and a few children became disengaged.
- The management team and practitioners require further support and guidance in completing key documentation in relation to statutory duties. In particular, relating to risk assessment and supporting children who require additional support with their learning. The manager has completed assessments to reduce risks within the setting and when using the community. These now need to be more robust. Practitioners create a personal care plan for each child that includes information on children's care and welfare needs. They now need to ensure that information relating to children's health needs are documented clearly and consistently.
- The team is fully aware of the importance of inclusion and treat children and parents fairly and with respect. The management team recognise where potential barriers may exist for children and work with parents and other agencies to put strategies in place to support. For example, using visual aids to support communication with children and for them to communicate their needs.

- Children develop an early awareness of cultural differences through the celebration of festivals that are important to families. Practitioners should embed how they promote and celebrate diversity through resources and experiences that will reflect the world in which children live.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

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 are making satisfactory progress in communication and language. The majority of children listen well to adults and other children. They enjoy when adults read stories with them. Supported by practitioners, children are learning to use simple signing during songs. Most children are at an early stage of mark making and need encouragement and opportunities to develop their skills. Children would benefit from more purposeful, planned opportunities to develop early language skills including rhymes and exploring print in the environment.
- In numeracy and mathematics children are making satisfactory progress. The majority of children, with support, are developing an understanding of number and counting objects. They enjoy learning about numbers during number songs. During water play, most children use mathematical language of more and less to talk about measuring and estimating. Practitioners need to have a greater focus on supporting children to develop early numeracy and mathematical skills within the relaxed play environment. This could support each child to make the progress they are capable of.
- In health and wellbeing children are making satisfactory progress. Most children are confident in climbing and using balance bikes in the outdoor area. They are developing an understanding of food through planting and growing. The recently formed children's Eco group is supporting children to learn about aspects of climate change. This includes activities such as litter picking and recycling. Children have opportunities to develop leadership skills, for example as helping hands. Practitioners should explore how they can build on children's skills to take more responsibility to tidy up and take care of toys.
- Practitioners have begun to track children's progress. They recognise that improvements are required to help them gather significant information about the skills and knowledge children are developing and demonstrating. The new process could be helpful to practitioners to plan next steps for children and demonstrate their progress over time more effectively.
- Practitioners recognise children's achievements from outwith the setting positively through displays. Parents have access to online learning journals and a few have commented in the profiles and shared achievements from home. Practitioners should continue to explore how they can work with parents to use children's achievements from home to celebrate and build on these in the setting.

- Relationships with parents are a strength. Practitioners make good efforts to communicate daily with parents. Parents trust and respect practitioners and value the support they provide for their children. Practitioners have a clear understanding of the impact of factors that can result in barriers to learning. They work effectively with other services such as health visitors to ensure that children and families get the appropriate support.

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%