

Wallace Hall Nursery Day Care of Children

Wallace Hall Primary School
Station Road
Thornhill
DG3 5DS

Telephone: 01848 332 120

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 November 2023

Service provided by:
Dumfries & Galloway Council

Service provider number:
SP2003003501

Service no:
CS2009234218

About the service

Wallace Hall Nursery is located within Wallace Hall Campus, Thornhill. The service is provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council.

The nursery is situated in its own playroom within the Wallace Hall school campus. Children can access a secure garden area for outdoor play and learning. Children also have opportunities to use other areas of Wallace Hall Campus, including the gym hall and grounds.

The service is registered to provide a care to a maximum of 48 children at any one time aged from 3 years to not yet attending primary school.

The service is based in Thornhill and is located in the centre of the local community and has access to local amenities and public transport.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 23 November 2023 between 09:45 and 15:00. The 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 information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- observed and spoke with several children using the service
- sent out a family questionnaire and received seven responses
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were cared for by staff who were attentive, caring and nurturing. We observed children warmly interact with staff and enjoy cuddles, conversations and fun.
- Children had access to a large secure outdoor garden which had been thoughtfully planned to offer children opportunities for creative and explorative play.
- To support the development of the service, we found the views of children and families were actively sought.
- Children were meaningfully involved and made informed choices about their play and learning.
- Staff had worked closely with families to gather and share effective information on children's personal preferences.
- Families were actively encouraged to participate in play and learning experiences within the setting.

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

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children. We evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support.

Children were cared for by staff who were attentive, caring and nurturing. We observed children warmly interact with staff and enjoy cuddles, conversations and fun. One parent commented, "The staff go above and beyond to provide excellent learning opportunities for the children and also listen carefully to the children and their needs."

We found staff worked closely with families to support children who were starting the service. The process from home to the setting was child-centred, nurturing and responsive to children's and families' preferences and wishes. Families told us they felt very supported throughout this transition process.

Each child had a care plan in place which outlined their needs, likes and dislikes. They also contained key information regarding any medical or dietary requirements. This information reflected families' personal preferences and helped promote children's independence, privacy and dignity. We found arrangements were in place to review this information to ensure it reflected children's most current needs. Staff worked closely with families to maintain a mutual exchange of information, this ensured the continuity of children's care and support between home and the setting.

Arrangements were in place to ensure that children requiring additional support, received the right support at the right time in a way that was sensitive to their needs. Effective partnerships were in place with external agencies and professionals to ensure they planned together to meet children's identified needs and support children to realise their potential.

Children were fully involved in the preparation of their snacks, this included choosing healthy options, designing menus and shopping for food. We observed children had worked together to design the week's snack menu; the menu included a range of fruit, vegetables and crackers. We observed children positively transition from play to lunch, a 'rolling lunch' approach enabled children to choose when they wanted to go for lunch. Children and staff sat together and enjoyed a warm, calm and sociable mealtime experience. Lunch was pleasant with lots of lovely chatting. We saw staff promote children's independence skills, they supported them in making choices, using utensils and pouring their drinks.

We found effective arrangements were in place to ensure all staff knew about children's dietary and health needs. Procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication were in place and we confirmed that these had been followed to keep children safe.

Staff were confident and well-trained in their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. They participated in safeguarding training and refresher sessions to ensure their knowledge was current and they understood their responsibilities to keep children safe.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and Learning.

The setting offered a range of resources which supported children's play and learning needs. These included areas designated for art and design, home, dressing up and construction, we could see children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and having fun.

One parent said, "My child enjoys playing with the different activities that are set out each day. I also know that his interests have been followed."

We observed staff participate in children's imaginary play and learning in the construction area. Staff were on the ground (at the children's level), wearing hard hats and fully and meaningfully engaged in a group of children's role play. We saw one staff member take this opportunity to introduce numeracy language and themes into the children's play, they included, counting, sorting and measuring blocks and tubes. Our observations confirmed that children were encouraged to problem-solve. Staff used questions effectively to encourage children to develop ideas and enhance and add depth to their learning.

Children had opportunities to celebrate their creativity, play and learning. We found each child had a section on wallboards within the playroom to display their work; several children excitedly took us to their section to show us their wonderful creations. This approach builds children's self-esteem, emotional intelligence and encourages communication.

We found families had opportunities to be involved in their children's literacy journeys. We observed children choose 'story sacks' to take home to enjoy with their families. They contained a book, with something to support the story; a puppet, game or puzzle. Families also had opportunities to use the settings 'learning library' where they could borrow a book to read with their children.

Families told us they received daily updates about their children's day in the setting. Learning journal online updates, telephone calls and conversations at pick up and drop off made them feel part of their children's nursery life. One parent commented, "The communication with teachers and parents is amazing and such a warm welcoming place."

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children. We evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

The setting was designed to encourage children to play, learn, and have fun, it was bright, clean, and spacious. The large playroom was well furnished and created a comfortable and homely environment. One area was full of framed family photographs, one child took us to the picture of their family. This approach builds children's self-esteem and gives them a sense of belonging.

Cosy areas offered children space to relax and rest, we observed staff and children reading in the sensory den area, children and staff were sitting on cushions and throws and were enjoying reading together. Resources were easily accessible and could be moved and adapted between play areas; construction to home to water. We found they were well-maintained and appropriate for children's stages of development. We observed wall displays that told the story of children's play, learning and interests. They included; learning for sustainability and numeracy and literacy.

Children could move freely from indoors to outdoors. The large outdoor space offered children opportunities for active and explorative play and included climbing apparatus, mud kitchen, secret garden and an extensive range of loose parts; tyres, tubes, bread baskets and guttering. These are materials which can be moved around, designed, redesigned and tinkered with. One parent commented, "Nurturing, open-ended play opportunities, excellent indoor and outdoor facilities, super communication."

We found comprehensive risk assessments were in place both indoors and out and staff understood how to keep children safe. Staff spoke confidently about the arrangements in place to ensure children's health, safety and security. This included monthly audits of accidents and incidents and children's medication.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children. We evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The leadership team, Wallace Hall campus headteacher, deputy and nursery manager worked closely to establish a shared vision for the setting. This whole team approach helped staff know what was important for the service and for children and their families. The team viewed the early years service as an integral part of the campus.

We found the whole team was committed to continuous improvement. Staff told us they undertook additional lead roles which included outdoor training, shared reading events for children and families and woodwork. These opportunities enabled staff to develop their early learning and childcare practice which positively impacted the wellbeing of children; weekly reading sessions enabled children and their families to share books in the nursery environment. One staff member commented, "Great teamwork, children's needs and interests are at the heart of the setting."

Regular team meetings, self-evaluation activities and professional dialogue helped identify areas of success, challenges and training that may be needed to support children, families and staff. Staff told us these meetings gave them valuable opportunities to discuss each child's development, support plan and development of the setting. Recent staff feedback has included redesigning the outdoor area, this is now included in the nursery improvement plan.

To support the development of the service, we found the views of children and families were actively sought. Families were encouraged to give feedback, which included at pick up and drop off, during nursery events and in response to nursery questionnaires. This enabled the staff team to develop the service to meet the needs of children and families; as a result of this feedback, weekly play and stay sessions are continuing.

The service had established strong relationships with families, most felt information on children's progress was effectively shared through online journals, social media updates and face-to-face meetings. These provide opportunities for families and staff to review how best to meet children's needs. One parent commented, "There is good face-to-face communication with the staff. Lots of online updates too."

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children. We evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

We observed nurturing, loving, respectful care and support by staff. Children's wellbeing was at the forefront of their practice and interactions.

The senior leadership team recognised the importance of ensuring the service was appropriately staffed throughout the day. Staff were deployed to maximise the play and learning opportunities of children. This meant staff could participate in weekly reading and play and stay sessions with children and families without interrupting the fun, play and learning of children not taking part.

Staff routines reflected the pace of the day and outlined daily tasks and responsibilities including snack, lunch and breaks. This ensured children's health, wellbeing and safety needs as well as their play and learning were supported.

We found staff kept a 'team book' to reflect on children's daily experiences, capture their interests and plan future activities. This book was reviewed daily and supported staff to share information across the setting. Staff used their varying knowledge, skills and experience to support each other and share best practice. This included planning and identifying children's areas of development through focused observations.

All staff were registered to practice with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and had undertaken qualifications relevant to their roles and engaged in continuous professional learning. To support their ongoing early learning and childcare practice, staff told us they had undertaken additional training, which included how to develop children's numeracy and literacy through play with nature. We observed wallboards reflected their learning journey.

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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