

# Summarised inspection findings

**Treetop Outdoor Nursery**

Glasgow City Council

4 July 2023

## Key contextual information

Treetops Outdoor Nursery is part of Maryhill Mobile Children's Services, a charitable organisation overseen by a voluntary board of trustees. The nursery works in partnership with Glasgow City Council to provide funded early learning and childcare (ELC). They offer places for eligible children aged two years and children aged three until they are school age. Parents can also choose to self-fund places for their children from aged two years. The nursery operates from a room and the extensive grounds of Cadder Primary School in Glasgow. There are longer term plans to use Cadder Woods as part of a local ten-year strategy and regeneration programme. Children can attend full days on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 50 weeks of the year with plans to extend opening times from August 2023. The nursery is registered for 20 children at any one time and there are currently 12 children on the roll. The majority of children are aged two and three years old.

The manager is also the manager of Evergreen Nursery, which uses Dawsholm Park. She is well supported by a senior practitioner. The nursery opened in March 2022 and the current staff team have been in post since August 2022. All practitioners are qualified and have or are working towards additional qualifications.

### 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

- Relationships between children and practitioners are positive and nurturing. This creates a supportive learning environment that helps children to feel safe, secure and develop confidence. Children who are new to the nursery settle very quickly. Children are caring and kind to each other and play alongside and with their peers. Practitioners are careful to ensure an appropriate pace to children's day, promoting quieter times in the busy nursery environment.
- Almost all children engage well in their play, often for extended periods of time. Children spend most of their day outdoors in the 'base' area. Practitioners continue to develop indoor and outdoor learning spaces with careful consideration. This is ensuring that children have increasing access to interesting, natural resources and spaces that encourage them to be curious, build resilience and develop independence.
- Managers and practitioners have highlighted children's learning in digital technologies as an improvement priority. Children now have access to an increased range of interesting resources that promote the development of a range of skills. As a result, children are becoming increasingly confident in their use of digital technology.
- Practitioners know and understand all children very well as individuals. They are very responsive to the care needs and interests of children. Practitioners plan for children's learning

based on this knowledge using an effective blend of child and adult-led learning. They now need to build consistently on what children already know and can do. Practitioners have made a positive start to using floorbooks to help involve children in planning and documenting learning. They should now use planned professional learning to help them extend and embed this approach in a way that suits the context of the setting. Practitioners should also involve children in reflecting on their own learning using floorbooks and individual learning journals.

- Practitioners use online learning journals to record observations about each child's progress. These include photographs, videos and descriptions of children's learning experiences. Practitioners should continue to develop their skills in identifying the significant learning of each child as they observe them at play. This will ensure that they are able to identify what each child needs to learn next. Practitioners should now ensure that these next steps are more specific as this will help them to measure the progress that children make.
- Practitioners recently introduced approaches to monitor progress children make in literacy, numeracy and digital technologies. This information is beginning to help inform how practitioners plan for children's learning to increase the progress they make. Managers recognise increased professional dialogue with practitioners about observations and assessment of children's progress would be beneficial.
- Practitioners support children well who require additional support with their learning. They regularly review approaches used to ensure they remain effective. Practitioners have participated in a range of professional learning to help them meet the individual needs of children. This includes learning an approach to signing to support the communication of all children.

## 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.

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 good progress with communication skills and early language. The majority talk confidently to share their ideas and experiences. Children enjoy learning different signs and practitioners should now support them to make even more use of them as they play. A minority of children create their own imaginary situations and stories as they make sense of their world. Most children listen well and enjoy sharing books with familiar adults. Most children are familiar with a range of stories, songs and rhymes. A few children are developing an awareness of letter names and sounds and most can recognise their own name. Children could be experimenting with mark making and writing for a purpose in a wider range of play situations.
- In numeracy and mathematics, children are making good progress. They develop their understanding of number as they count in routines and during their play. A minority of children understand measurement. Most children use simple mathematical language in their play, for example to describe weight or order size. A few children enjoy the challenge of simple addition and exploring fractions, such as halves. Children now need to develop and apply their understanding of mathematics and numeracy more through real-life experiences, for example as they grow vegetables and flowers.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. They are aware of each other and demonstrate respect to their peers. Almost all children are developing their understanding of their own feelings and of others. The extensive use of outdoors supports children to develop a wide range of skills. This includes gross and fine motor control as they climb trees, create obstacle courses and explore padlocks and a range of tools. Most children have a very well-developed awareness of safety and how to manage risk through daily 'risky business' discussions. Children are also developing their use of strategies to help them feel calm, for example yoga and mindfulness. They are very independent and demonstrate resilience as they dress for outdoors, manage their own clothing layers and eat snack and lunch.
- Almost all children are making good progress over time because of their nursery experiences. Children benefit from extensive time outdoors which allows them to make independent choices and play in an unhurried way. They are developing a sense of wonder and respect for the natural world.
- Practitioners use praise and encouragement to recognise and celebrate children's efforts and successes. They are at the early stages of capturing children's individual achievements within

learning journals. There is potential for practitioners to work more closely with parents to capture children's wider achievements and interests from home. This would further promote progress in learning, building on what children already know and can do.

- Practitioners have created a very inclusive and supportive ethos, built upon mutual respect and trust. The team have a good understanding and knowledge of the needs of children and families within the context of the local community. Practitioners, working with managers, should make use of all information about children to identify and reduce any potential barriers to progress. This should include data about socio-economic context.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

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 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. Staff involved parents and carers when making shared decisions about their child's care and development. This enabled the staff team 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. Personal plans and online journal observations were regularly reviewed and included care support strategies and next steps for learning. Staff told us how they worked with parents to ensure personal plans included the key information needed to provide appropriate care, meet any medical needs and take forward children's learning and play interests. Plans and records for children with identified additional support needs took account of multidisciplinary assessments and inputs. These supported a personal planning approach which was solution focused and identified children's strengths, personal challenges and development outcomes. We highlighted and discussed with staff schema based observation and planning strategies that had the potential support the transition experiences of the youngest children during their settling into the nursery.

**Care Inspectorate grade: very good**

### 1.3 Play and learning

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 a variety of high quality learning experiences by continuously promoting choice, children's interests, as well as tracking and reflecting on individual achievements. We found that children's voice was highly valued. Staff took time to extend conversations with children about their play and used well-timed open-ended questioning to further extend and challenge thinking and learning. We found that staff used observations of children's significant play interests to adapt their support for and resourcing of play experiences. Through discussion, it was evident 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. Staff had high aspirations to enable children to be successful. As a result, children were confident, happy and motivated to learn.

We discussed with staff 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 planning tools based on observations of children's most engaging and involving play experiences could strengthen existing opportunities for children to shape their play environments. This can extend opportunities for staff to reflect on when children display deep level engagement in their play and support them to provide greater autonomy and choice as to how this will be taken forward.

**Care Inspectorate grade: good**

## 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The service made good use of available resources to create a motivating environment for children to play together. 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 shared thinking.

We found that children's ideas and reflections on their play spaces were used to support changes and adaptations to the outdoor play environment. This included discussions between staff and children about adding a bug hotel, dens, pirate ship, water wall, shop, cars and diggers. Staff told us how the play environment had evolved and developed over the past year to include weaving areas, construction area, small world resources, story circles, mud kitchen, a tool station, loose parts, sand tray, tents, tree hammocks, obstacle courses, mark making, a planting and growing area, a sound wall as well as the use of digital technologies. We found that staff routinely shared their reflections on how setting up and monitoring of each play area led to challenging and engaging play opportunities for children. This helped to ensure that the outdoor play environment offered excitement, was richly resourced and appeared attractive to children.

We discussed with staff how regular planned outdoor play and walking trips within parks and woodland spaces beyond the setting had increased opportunities for children to experience fresh air and enjoy challenging play. The provider told us how they were actively pursuing plans to ensure woodland play from secure designated bases within Cadder Woods was central to children's future daily experiences at the nursery.

Children's safety was promoted through detailed risk assessments for all environments and activities accessed by them. Staff had worked with children to create 'risky business' books. These supported meaningful discussions about safety outdoors and children's ability to assess and manage their own risks during woodland play. All risk assessments 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. Children were also kept safe and healthy because of the robust infection control practices that were in place within the setting.

**Care Inspectorate grade: good**

## 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager promoted a shared vision for the setting that reflected the aspirations of children, families and the wider community. The senior management team had created conditions where all staff felt confident to initiate changes and share responsibility for the process. Positive working relationships between the provider, manager and staff promoted a collegiate approach to providing high quality play experiences for children.

Staff told us how the manager provided a clear focus for their shared teamwork including setting out clear responsibilities and expectations. We found that the manager's 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 major focus on transitions into 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 support children and families to reach their full potential. The staff team worked together effectively to evaluate and reflect on their practice. They were keen to take



forward current ideas, develop and implement best practice guidance. Staff were becoming familiar with the Care Inspectorate 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' (Care Inspectorate, 2022). The manager 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 service 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.

**Care Inspectorate grade: good**

### 4.3 Staff deployment

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. 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. Children who required additional support were well supported by staff 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 manager told us how the nursery's current staff recruitment plan would support any future increase in the number of children and families enrolled within the service.

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. For example, staff told us how autism awareness and Makaton training had led to better targeted and personalised support for children with communication difficulties. Eco drama training had been used to support children's creative learning outdoors through drama, nature-based storytelling and imaginative play. We found that staff development opportunities had a positive impact on the quality of experiences for children, their progress and wider improvements in the setting.

**Care Inspectorate grade: very good**

## 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.