Fort Out of School Care Provision
Day Care of Children

c/o Fort Early Years Centre
25 North Fort Street
Edinburgh
EH6 4HF

Telephone: 01313 328 001

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 October 2024

Service provided by:
North Edinburgh Childcare

Service provider number:
SP2003003092

Service no:
CS2005111539

About the service

Fort Out of School Care Provision is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 64 children at any one time age 4 - 13 years. Children may access areas of the premises as designated by Fort Early Years Centre and Fort Community Centre staff. Spaces used to care for children included two large open plan playrooms and an outdoor space to the front and the rear of the premises.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection carried out on Wednesday 02 October 2024 between 14:10 and 18:15. One inspector from the Care Inspectorate carried out this inspection.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection reports, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered over time.

In making our evaluations of the service we:
- observed children using the service and received feedback from five parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily routines
- reviewed documents relating to children's care and the management of the service.

There were 31 children present during inspection. We gave feedback to the provider and area childcare manager by videocall on Friday 4 October 2024.

Key messages

Children experienced nurturing and fun relationships in a safe and suitable space for their stage of development.

Daily routines were responsive and flexible to meet children's changing needs.

Recent changes had improved outcomes for children. Quality assurance processes should now be embedded to support a continuous improvement approach.

Children benefited from consistent and familiar staff who were committed to making improvements to their own professionalism as well as in their team.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement. However, improvements were needed to maximise wellbeing and ensure that children consistently have experiences and outcomes which are as positive as possible.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience. An ethos of kindness, respect and partnership was evident throughout the service. For example, staff and children talked, laughed, joked, negotiated and made decisions together. Children were praised, recognised and celebrated. As a result, children were relaxed, happy and confident. A parent said, "Staff do genuinely seem to care about all the children - they are welcoming and fun and loving to the children - a safe space and person for them to be with".

Children's involvement in daily routines was starting to build their ownership and ability to meet their own needs. For example, snack was free flow so children could choose when to eat or continue playing. The role of snack helper gave opportunities for children to be responsible. This could be developed further to support the learning of new skills such as preparing food. Snack time could also be enhanced to reduce the wait time for children. For example, serving plates could be set out on each table to allow children quicker access. Their independence was promoted through self-care, which also protected their privacy and dignity.

Children's individual wellbeing benefited from effective use of personal planning. Staff knew children well and demonstrated this in their interactions. For example, making reference to children's life in school and at home. Personal plans reflected staff knowledge so they were up to date and relevant. The service should further develop personal plans to make them as meaningful as possible and to enable staff to monitor children's progress. This would help staff to further plan for meeting children's needs.

Staff knew children's health and medication needs and so the right help could be given at the right time. All required medication was present in the building and stored effectively for easy access. To further enhance children's safety and health, medication should be consistently reviewed with parents termly. This would ensure medication and information is current and relevant. The service should also consider how to record medication which children self-administer. This would aid the sharing of information to parents and enable staff to support children when needed.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun as they experienced play, learning and development opportunities. During the inspection, all children were engaged mostly in free play of their choice. There were lots of opportunities for relaxing and unwinding from the school day through activities such as crafting and chatting together. Planned activities were available if children showed interest at that time. The service should continue to introduce new opportunities for children to build confidence, skill and knowledge.

Children were empowered to be involved in their play and learning through interactions and actions of staff. There was an interest in children's play without interrupting it, which meant children had space and time to immerse themselves in their own ideas. Staff were on hand to join in when invited, play games and offer

additional resources. As a result, children were often engaged in meaningful, complex play full of imagination and negotiation.

Children chose when to move between indoors and outside, which staff supported. They had lots of fresh air and physical activity on a daily basis. The outdoor environment offered opportunities for children to explore and discover in a natural environment. For example, moving items such as tree trunks to exercise muscle and practice teamwork.

Child - led planning was starting to develop and so children were often able to influence the day. Their ideas and interests were being noticed and were starting to be used to plan activities. A parent said, "Staff are friendly and take into consideration my child's favourite things to do and accommodate this". To develop this further, the service should consider how to capture ideas and planning. This would give children a visual reminder of what they have engaged in and contribute to evaluation and future planning.

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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was well furnished, comfortable and homely, giving children a pleasant place to be. Children's artwork and photos were attractively displayed and achievements were celebrated. Space to store their belongings was organised and welcoming for children. The setting had lots of natural light and was warm but well ventilated. Overall, the setting valued children and was respectful of their comfort and wellbeing.

The setting was safe, secure and well maintained. Risks around the building had been identified and minimised. Staff were vigilant with children's movements and reduced risks through communicating well with each other. Regular headcounts were carried out and children had clear boundaries which they understood and respected. For example, the school walk was consistent and familiar and children were clear about expectations. Children's involvement in risk assessing contributed to their participation in minimising risks.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place to reduce the risk of infection spread. For example, effective handwashing and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when preparing food. The setting was organised and visibly clean.

The indoor and outdoor environments were developmentally appropriate spaces. Suitably sized chairs and furniture physically supported this age group of children. Storage space had recently been organised so children could see what was available to them and access it independently. A wide range of resources suitable for the age group were free to use as they wished. For example, construction, electronics and crafts were popular. Some open-ended materials and real items added more intrigue and creativity to play. Children's current interests were known by staff and this was used to plan experiences and opportunities.

The outdoor area was a secure playground with a large green space. A selection of outdoor resources was available for use, such as balls and group game equipment. The green space offered a natural environment with grass, trees and mud. A selection of natural materials were available around the space to use in play.

Additional indoor space was available to offer a variety of experiences and flexibility for children. For

example, quiet spaces to relax and space to use in poor weather. Children were involved in planning for this space and were taking further ownership in it.

How good is our leadership? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement. However, improvements were needed to maximise wellbeing and ensure that children consistently have experiences and outcomes which are as positive as possible.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

A shared vision, values and aims positively informed practice. Children and staff were respectful to each other and worked together to ensure the service was a pleasant place for all. The service had undergone recent changes in management, which had resulted in some changes to procedures and approaches. Staff had embraced these changes and were demonstrating commitment to improvement. As a result, children were cared for in a fun and relaxed atmosphere. Parents agreed with this and told us how genuine and accommodating staff were.

The service had introduced meaningful ways for children and families to be involved in influencing changes and improvement. Children were having increased ownership in the service through more child-led planning and generally being in partnership with decision making. Parents were asked for feedback about aspects of the service. This was used to make improvements. Parents were kept informed of how their feedback was being used which showed some families that their input was valued. However, the parents who offered feedback during inspection felt uninformed about the recent management changes. The service should continue to be be creative when involving parents, to reach as many as possible.

Quality assurance processes were in place, however they were not yet embedded for consistent use. This was impacting on continuous improvement planning. For example, the service quality had dipped prior to the management changes, which was not identified quickly. The provider should ensure quality assurance processes are used consistently and meaningfully to enhance outcomes for children. In addition, the provider should review the content of audits to ensure processes are meeting children's needs. Audits need to be understood by staff in order to be effective.

An improvement plan reflected the changes staff spoke of and the further plans which were developing. Staff were able to talk about what needed to improve in the service as they had consulted each other and children.

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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Deployment and levels of staff were effective in ensuring quality outcomes for children. A core and consistent team of staff were present daily. This allowed relationships to build and become familiar and secure. As a result, children knew who to expect in the service each day. Staffing cover was arranged sensitively by management, with both children and staff's wellbeing in mind. Consistent cover staff

regularly worked in the service, ensuring consistency and familiarity for children. As a result, children benefited from a staff team who were motivated and committed to being there.

There was enough staff to meet the needs of children which provided choice, flexibility and responsive care. Children's requests were answered quickly and staff noticed children's cues. The team had a collective mix of skill, knowledge and experience which was used to compliment each other. For example, one staff member enjoyed the outdoors while another was skilled at organising spaces. As a result, children benefited from a skilled staff team that worked well to meet their needs.

Staff were flexible and supported each other to work as a team to support children. They independently recognised the gaps throughout the day and worked to fill these. For example, staff were quick to reset the environment for children's safety, comfort and enjoyment. Staff moved with children to ensure they had choice in where to send their time. This resulted in children having freedom to assess what they needed, when they needed it. As a result, children's wishes and choices were respected.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

We recommend that the service develop the variety of play experiences on offer, especially for older children. Consideration should be given to ensuring children engage in active, risky and challenging play, which helps them to achieve. Developing child led approaches to improving the service will create an inclusive and respectful ethos throughout. It will also ensure children feel a sense of responsibility over the development of the club.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Statement 5 - Quality of Experience

This area for improvement was made on 26 September 2017.

Action taken since then

Child-led approaches were developing as staff noticed and sought out children's interests. During inspection, children were engaged in a variety of opportunities both indoors and outside. They had free access to move between both and could access the storage area to choose more resources. The collection of real items and loose parts continued to build for intrigue and creativity. Overall, children were experiencing a good range of play experiences including challenging and risky opportunities.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

We recommend that the service develop the resources available for children, especially for older children. These resources should support risky, challenging and rich play experiences. Use of 'Loose Parts Play - A toolkit' (http://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/loose-parts-play-toolkit.pdf) and the new 'Play

Types Toolkit' (www.playscotland.org) from Play Scotland will support this work.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 11 - Access to Resources

This area for improvement was made on 26 September 2017.

Action taken since then

The types of play children were engaging in were reflective of staff understanding and commitment to supporting risk and creativity in play. For example, moving heavy tree trunks and tyres for their use around the garden which staff promoted safety and problem-solving. Children could lead their own ideas and had freedom to do this. Loose parts and real items were being added over time, increasing the materials children had to use.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

We recommend that staff in the service increase their understanding of best practice in out of school care. This should include:
- increasing levels of independence
- providing challenging, risky and varied play experiences
- developing child led approaches to planning and service improvement
- involving children and families.

This will ensure that children are offered a high quality of experience from well trained and motivated staff.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 12 - Confidence in Staff

This area for improvement was made on 26 September 2017.

Action taken since then

Children were taking responsibility in various aspects of the service such as snack and resetting resources. They had access to a range of challenging opportunities, which staff were using to enable children in confidence building and developing new skills.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

We recommend that the staff team work closely to develop a clear set of aims and objectives for Fort Out of School Care Provision. Discussions should include the ethos they hope to create, the expectations they have of themselves and children as well as how families can be more involved in the service.

This will raise morale within the team, promoting their sense of responsibility and motivation. It will also increase the stability of the team and help strengthen their relationships with families.

National Care Standards 14 Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - Well-Managed Service

This area for improvement was made on 26 September 2017.

Action taken since then

An ethos of partnership working was evident. This meant that children, parents and staff worked together to ensure good outcomes for all. The aims of the service reflected what was delivered.

This area for improvement has been met.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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