Wild Willows
Day Care of Children

Kincraig Church Hall
The Brae
Kincraig
PH21 1QD

Telephone: 07530 208 895

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
31 March 2023

Service provided by:
CALA Integrated Services

Service provider number:
SP2010011308

Service no:
CS2018371358

About the service

Wild Willows is registered to provide a day care service to a maximum of 17 children aged two years nine months to those not yet attending primary school. The service is provided by CALA Integrated Services and operates in term time only.

The service is based in a church hall in the village of Kingcraig. Children have access to a large hall, second room, toilets and cloakroom. Children spend the majority of time outdoors exploring local woodland areas and walks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 March 2023, between 09:00 and 14:30. Feedback was given on 31 March 2023. 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:

- spoke with five children using the service
- reviewed feedback received from two families
- spoke with three staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children enjoyed playing and learning in the local woods, developing their imagination and curiosities.
- Children's overall wellbeing was supported through regular physical play outside.
- Staff supported children with warmth and nurture which helped children to feel safe and secure.
- The manager and staff team should continue developing planning approaches.
- The manager used her time in the setting effectively to support staff, children and ongoing improvement.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - 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.

1.3 Care and Support

Children were happy and confidently playing in the setting. They were comfortable with the rhythm of the day, and confident in their interactions with staff. Staff welcomed children individually and there was a relaxed atmosphere from the beginning of the day. They supported children to regulate their emotions, offering cuddles and reassurance when needed. This meant that children felt safe and secure.

Effective sharing of information had a positive effect on children's health and wellbeing. Children's care reflected their families' preferences and staff were confident when discussing individual children's needs. One parent told us, "staff have been very supportive of helping my child". We saw staff use strategies consistently to support some children within the setting. Detailed records were kept of children's changing and evolving needs. As a result, they received care and support that was right for them.

Snack and mealtimes were relaxed and calm. Children were given opportunities to develop their independence through helping to prepare snack, setting the table, spreading and pouring. Staff ate lunch with the children, recognising the importance of daily routines as an opportunity to develop strong bonds. Children were supported to eat healthily as staff prepared nutritious, home cooked meals, taking into account children's preferences.

Staff worked in partnership with outside professionals to improve outcomes for children when they needed additional help. Appropriate strategies had been identified and put in place to support children, for example with speech and language development. As a result, children were supported to reach their potential.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children were supported by staff to develop their imagination and natural curiosity. They accessed local woods daily, where they explored their environment with confidence. For example, children were developing their risk awareness climbing trees and jumping into beds of leaves. Staff helped them to recognise their limitations and play safely. This supported children's physical development and their overall wellbeing.

Overall, staff used appropriate strategies to support children's developing language, literacy and numeracy skills. For example, supporting children to recognising letters and numbers on signs when accessing the woods. Children were actively leading their own play for most of the day, consolidating learning through rich play experiences outside in a natural environment.

Staff were developing their approach to planning to fully reflect children's interests. They were recording play and learning in floor books and children were beginning to engage in these through mark making and drawing pictures. Processes to track individual progress and achievements were in the early stages of development and had been identified as an area for improvement. We discussed providing further training for staff in planning and observations with the management team, to support ongoing improvement.

Children benefitted from good connections with their local community. For example, children and staff met with the local toddler group once a week. This supported transition for younger children, and enhanced children's social skills.

How good is our setting? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The setting was bright, clean and well ventilated. Children had access to a large hall and a smaller room where they could access a cosy space to rest and relax in. This room was warm and welcoming and had a homely feel. There were some real-life items and loose parts available to promote investigation. Staff told us they were keen to expand this type of resource to support children's developing thinking and problem-solving skills. Experiences provided in the hall supported children to develop their creativity through messy play and their gross motor skills on climbing and balance equipment.

Staff were very knowledgeable about the benefits of risky play and supported children to play safely both indoors and outdoors. They were vigilant about accounting for children, using head counts and keeping children in sight as they moved through the woods. Staff supported children to recognise risks and take appropriate action when visiting the woods. For example, children told the inspector they should, "stand still like a statue if a dog came up to them", and "move to the side if a bike or car came". This meant that children were able to confidently explore their environment and keep themselves safe.

Effective infection prevention control procedures were in place. Outdoor toilet and hand washing facilities were provided to ensure that children could maximise play and learning opportunities in the woods. Children were supported to wash their hands effectively by staff, such as before and after eating, and when returning from outdoors. As a result of this, children were protected from the potential spread of infection.

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

The vision, values and aims of the setting had recently been reviewed and shared with families. This meant that families knew what to expect from the service for their children. Staff told us that they felt very well supported by families, some who had been accessing the service for several years. Parental feedback highlighted their confidence in the service with parents telling us they were "very happy with the service staff provided."

Effective quality assurance and self-evaluation processes supported planning for improvement. Areas for improvement had been identified and were being actioned, in line with the findings of this inspection; for example, developing and embedding child centred planning, and improving experiences provided in the indoor environment. Staff undertook self-evaluation using best practice guidance, such as 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare'. They were beginning to evaluate the impact of improvements on children's experiences and outcomes. We signposted the management team to resources on the Care Inspectorate Hub to further support staff with this.

The peripatetic manager used effective processes to support staff to provide a quality service. Visit records were clear and outcome focused, which ensured staff were aware of their responsibilities. Staff told us they felt supported by the manager and were confident they could discuss any concerns they had with her. There were regular support and supervision opportunities for staff with the manager. This allowed them to reflect together on personal development and identify areas where skills and knowledge could be enhanced. As a result of this, relevant training had been identified for individual staff members to ensure continuous improvement.

How good is our staff team? 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The setting was staffed effectively to meet the needs of children. There was a good balance of skills and experience within the small staff team. Staff communicated clearly with each other in a respectful manner, which created a positive ethos and ensured that children's needs were being met. This meant that children were effectively supervised and received quality interactions throughout the day.

Children experienced continuity of care as staff knew them well. Parents told us they had the opportunity to discuss their child with staff at the beginning and end of the day. This supported smooth transitions and ensured good levels of communication with families was maintained. As a result, staff could be responsive to children's needs.

The manager and provider had identified the need for an additional staff member to support the staff team. The manager told us they had experienced difficulties in filling the vacancy but had recently appointed a support worker and hoped that they would be in position for the summer term. Increasing staffing over busier times of the day should ensure that staff have opportunities to have breaks without compromising children's experiences.

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	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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