Vogrie Outdoor Early Learning and Childcare
Day Care of Children

Vogrie Country Park
Gardener's Cottage, Vogrie Country Park
Gorebridge
EH23 4NU

Telephone: 01875 821986

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
11 May 2026

Service provided by:
Midlothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002602

Service no:
CS2019374676

About the service

Vogrie Outdoor Early Learning and Childcare is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 56 children from age three to not yet of an age to attend primary school at any one time.

The service is an outdoor nursery located within the grounds of Vogrie Country Park in Midlothian. Children spend the majority of their time outdoors, either within the walled garden or the wider park area. They also have access to a "round house", an indoor classroom which is heated. In adverse weather conditions, the service can access alternative indoor accommodation at Gorebridge Parish Church, Pathhead Pavilion, or Pathhead Village Hall.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 06 May 2026, Thursday 07 May 2026 and and feedback was given on Monday 11 May 2026. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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:
- spent time with children using the service
- received 19 completed questionnaires from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with the staff
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances

Key messages

Children experienced nurturing and caring interactions, where they felt valued and supported to thrive.

Most children engaged in rich, meaningful, play-based learning, resulting in high levels of engagement, confidence and progress.

A strong culture of self-evaluation and quality assurance supported continuous improvement, leading to responsive practice and improved outcomes.

Effective staff deployment ensured that children's individual needs were met throughout the day.

Children should be kept warm and comfortable, with appropriate clothing and adequate shelter provided.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources.

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

The service's vision, values and aims were reviewed and refined to be more child-friendly. A curriculum rationale, aligned to these, was developed and shared with parents and was evident in practice. Children experienced a calm, nurturing environment that supported their wellbeing and sense of security. Staff discussed with children how they care for themselves, other people and the wider environment. This positive aspect of practice should continue to be embedded and strengthened. A parent commented "It's a really outstanding nursery, they are so clear in their role. I think the clear values of the setting around belonging, relationships, outdoor learning and play, safety and exploration means they know when flexibility is needed for kids". This resulted in children who felt safe, valued and were supported to develop respect for themselves, others and their surroundings.

Leaders demonstrated a strong commitment to purposeful self-evaluation to improve the quality of care. Records were clear, reflective and evidenced a good understanding of strengths, areas for development and their impact on children. Progress had been made to further develop learning opportunities in literacy and numeracy to support challenge and transitions. Parental contributions through fundraising had supported improvement priorities, this included new resources, which in turn identified a need for further staff training. Leaders also prioritised staff wellbeing and recognised individual strengths, this contributed to a supportive environment. This reflected responsive leadership and a strong commitment to continuous improvement, that resulted in positive outcomes for children.

Quality assurance was maintained through a digital system that enabled staff to access all relevant documentation. This included regular reviews and updates to personal plans within key worker groups. Monitoring activities carried out by leaders have supported improvements across areas of the service. Strengths were identified in the consistent monthly review of medication in partnership with families, as well as reviewing accidents and incidents to look for trends. These reviews resulted in appropriate follow-up actions, and supported children to be safe and their wellbeing promoted.

The service model is under review and began with Senior Leadership Team discussions and wider staff consultation. This had been informed by the setting's rapid growth and feedback from families seeking increased challenge and broader outdoor experiences. The revised model aims to promote equity of choice, support wellbeing, strengthen transitions and provide appropriate challenge and progression. It was also identified that some spaces were not being used effectively and that staff confidence in outdoor learning varied. Staff will implement these plans and the changes to the team structure will support ongoing professional development and strengthen staff knowledge and expertise. These developments will support the continued improvement of the service and promote more consistent, progressive learning experiences and outcomes for children.

Staff reported feeling supported by senior leaders. Daily morning huddles kept staff informed with relevant, up-to-date information, while regular team meetings supported evaluation and professional development.

Strong teamwork was evident. One to one meetings had been held with all staff. Staff spoke positively about recent improvements in management that supported their wellbeing.

Parents commented positively about the relationship they had with the staff and stated "The staff are so special. They know each of the kids individually and spend time speaking to families. Staff build lovely relationships with the children over their time at Vogrie, and it's a great sign that the staff turnover is so low". Another commented "The staff at Vogrie have been incredible, they are all approachable, nurturing and knowledgeable about the children and where they are with their learning. It really is a community and the staff are central to that" and "All the staff members are so lovely really put so much care into each child". This resulted in strong, trusting relationships and a positive, supportive environment for children and families.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Children play and learn

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children primarily gathered and explored within the walled garden, which was well resourced and supported a range of outdoor play and learning opportunities. A polytunnel provided some shelter, it was not fit for purpose due to poor temperature control, uneven ground and overall condition of the space. Some resources appeared worn and uninviting. Plans have been shared to develop a fixed shelter, which would provide children with a warm, cosy and inviting indoor space. An additional indoor space "the round house" offered children a warm, comfortable, well resourced environment; however, this was not fully utilised. Although access was described as child-led, there were no visual prompts to support children's awareness. The manager indicated this will be addressed as part of the service model review.

Opportunities to develop language, literacy and numeracy were supported through a range of resources and well-organised play areas. Children engaged in painting, drawing and storytelling, while outdoor experiences supported physical development through climbing, balancing and building with natural materials. Parents highlighted the wide variety of play opportunities, including adventurous and nature-based experiences such as den building, wildlife exploration and water play. Children also learned about nature and caring for living things through planting, growing and activities such as beekeeping. The use of natural resources and loose parts encouraged creativity, problem-solving and imaginative play, which resulted in rich, engaging learning experiences that supported children's development across a range of skills.

Children explored the wider park with energy and purpose. A parent commented "My child is outside all day in all weather, and loves it. Adventures through the park are a favourite". They listened to the sounds of nature, hunted for bugs, climbed and balanced on fallen tree trunks. These experiences sparked curiosity and encouraged children to ask questions. Staff responded with open-ended prompts that extended thinking and inspired deeper exploration. Throughout the day, children climbed, balanced, and moved freely, developing creativity, coordination and an understanding of risk.

Interactions were calm, respectful and adapted to individual needs. Staff empowered children to lead their play and learning. They asked thoughtful questions, wondered aloud, and explained ideas to sustain children's thinking. Staff guided curiosity gently, encouraging children to explore and solve problems independently. Conversations flowed naturally, with children discussing the wider world around them. When questions arose, staff used technology and their knowledge of nature to provide answers and deepen

understanding. As a result, children demonstrated increased confidence, critical thinking and the ability to make connections in their learning.

Planning approaches ensured staff responded to the needs of children alongside implementing intentional experiences. This helped children develop their skills, knowledge and learning. Although a planning cycle was in place, it was lengthy and time consuming. Planning and tracking of children's learning will become more focused as part of the service model review. The manager should ensure children were consistently and appropriately challenged, with clear progression in their learning.

Individual tracking systems were in place and supported children's progress in learning and development. Weekly summaries and observations were regularly shared with parents. However, feedback indicated mixed views on the quantity of observations and how effectively they were used to track individual progress. The manager should ensure detailed observations were used effectively to support children's learning and strengthen partnership working with families.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Staff demonstrated warm, nurturing relationships which supported children to feel safe, secure and respected. They responded sensitively to children's cues and preferences, that promoted wellbeing and choice. A parent commented "The staff and the service is wonderful".

Medication was stored securely and taken by staff to support key worker groups, including during access to the wider park. Detailed medication records were maintained, regularly reviewed and updated when no longer required. Where additional healthcare support was needed, detailed plans were developed with specialist input, and appropriate guidance was provided. Allergy and dietary information was clearly recorded and easily accessible, with details on signs and symptoms. This ensured children's health, medication and dietary needs were well managed and supported their safety and wellbeing.

Mealtime experiences varied across the setting depending on where children were based. In the walled garden, children were supported to sit at tables and on logs during mealtimes. In the wider park, lunch was delivered to children; they sat on a tarpaulin and did not rest against any structure. While we recognise the outdoor nature of the service, children and staff should be adequately supported to eat comfortably. Snack times provided some opportunities for children to self-serve food and drinks, this could be strengthened to develop independence skills. Children had access to water bottles and were encouraged to drink to support hydration. The manager agreed to consider this as part of the ongoing service model review. This would ensure all children were comfortable, well-supported and able to enjoy a positive and social mealtime experience.

There were some areas that supported rest and relaxation and included hammocks and spaces within the walled garden; however, overall opportunities for children to rest and feel cosy were limited. Some children appeared cold, particularly when seated in shaded areas, with limited opportunities to warm up. Shelters did not always provide adequate protection from the elements or offer comfortable spaces for relaxation. A parent noted that during colder weather, children could become upset due to the cold. Staff should support

children to dress appropriately for the variable weather conditions and ensure shelters are equipped to promote comfort, wellbeing and support children to relax and recharge.

All children had a personal plan developed in partnership with families. Chronologies were maintained to record updates and provide an overview of needs. Where required, strategies to support wellbeing were included, and information from other agencies was shared to promote a consistent approach. However, further evaluation of these strategies is needed to ensure they remain effective and responsive. This would ensure children were safe, supported and receive consistent care that meets their individual needs.

Infection prevention and control procedures were in place to support wellbeing. Children washed their hands using suitably warm water, with temperatures monitored and adjusted as needed. However, water bottles were not always stored appropriately, with some left on the ground after being dropped. In addition, some resources, particularly in the polytunnel, required more regular cleaning. Addressing these areas would strengthen infection prevention and control and promote a safe, hygienic environment for children.

Families received regular updates at drop-off and collection, supported by online communication and opportunities to engage within the setting. Feedback from parents was mixed. Some spoke very positively, noting, "My child's named key workers are always open and available with updates or concerns, every staff member greets them on arrival. They support difficult drop-offs and celebrate successes with us". This highlighted warm relationships and effective communication. However, other parents raised concerns regarding the consistency and privacy of handovers. One parent commented on the lack of privacy at the gate, while another shared, 'there are no opportunities to build a relationship". The manager acknowledged this feedback and and will review current arrangements to ensure all parents feel confident, informed and secure when leaving and collecting their children.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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