Off Grid After School
Day Care of Children

Aidan's Brae Woods
Aidan's Brae
Clarkston
Glasgow
G76 7EP

Telephone: 07769 229 503

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 February 2023

Service provided by:
Off Grid After School Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2019013441

Service no:
CS2019378596

About the service

Off Grid After School is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 54 school aged children. Care is provided from a dedicated outdoor space, located within a private woodland in Clarkston, East Renfrewshire. The service has access to a local scout hall, where children can prepare for their woodland experience.

The service is close to a quiet residential estate, transport links, schools and local amenities.

Children have access to bathroom facilities both within the scout hall and on the woodland site.
A large cabin has recently been installed within the woodlands providing shelter for children.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 22 February 2023 between 14:50 - 18:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. We provided feedback to the manager on 1 March 2023.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered through the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service and five of their family members
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The management and staff team had created a welcoming, inclusive, nurturing, safe and caring environment for children.
- The manager was passionate about and committed to delivering positive outcomes for children.
- Children were at the heart of the service, with a child led approach.
- Children were developing their curiosity, imagination and problem solving through high quality play experiences.
- Staff were committed to their roles and the delivery of child centred, responsive care.
- Personal planning should be more collaborative and provide children with a greater sense of ownership of their next steps for play and learning.

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. Therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy and joyful when attending the service. Children experienced nurturing care and support from staff, which contributed to an environment where each child was valued and included.

Staff knew children well and spoke confidently about their individual likes and needs and how these were being met. Interactions were warm and supportive, which helped children feel secure and loved. One parent told us "staff are warm and nurturing. They see children as individuals and meet their individual needs."

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective use of personal planning which took account of wellbeing indicators from Scottish Government guidance, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Personal plans reflected children's preferences and contained information to support children's care. These were regularly updated with parents and carers. Parents told us they regularly contributed to children's plans and shared some examples of how their child's needs had been met.

The format of the plans was in a transitional phase and we encouraged the service to consider how best to evidence children's involvement within the new format. We discussed with staff approaches that may make gathering of personal planning more collaborative and provide children with a greater sense of ownership of their next steps for play and development. This will enhance the existing approach to personal plans by ensuing they become a meaningful, forward looking planning tool that supports children's ownership of developmentally challenging play opportunities.

Children were safe and protected from harm with clear policies and procedures in place in relation to child protection. Staff understood the role they played in this and had undertaken training to support them in their role. Overall, robust protection processes were in place and we were confident the service would respond correctly to any concerns about a child.

Children experienced a positive, relaxed and unhurried experience as they ate their snack around the campfire. Children could independently choose when to have snack, ensuring no interruptions to their play. Children told us they helped to choose snacks and that they liked the options available. We discussed how snack time could be further developed to give children opportunities to be involved in preparing snack.

1.3 Play and learning

There was a good balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences that promoted children's choice and independence. The manager and staff provided a stimulating, challenging, creative setting that supported children to engage in self-directed play. Children played independently and in small groups.

Play was at the heart of the service's approach and was clearly led and directed by children.
Children's curiosity, creativity and imagination was supported through the use of natural open ended resources that supported their play.

For example, a group of children were creating a den, negotiating what was needed and gathering resources to support their ideas.

Staff clearly understood their role in supporting children's development and confidence in their own abilities. Interactions between children and staff were carefully considered and were respectful of children's rights, wishes and choices.

This supported children to play with unnecessary interruptions and encouraged a deeper learning experience. During interactions staff used careful questioning to support children's learning. For example, encouraging children to use their senses to discuss textures, smells and sounds. One parent told us "my child is allowed to flourish and grow, they feel responsible and in charge of their play."

The outdoor service encouraged children to make connections with nature and they used a variety of natural resources to support their creativity and curiosity as they explored the woodland with confidence. This supported children to feel connected to their community.

Planning approaches were child led and were responsive to children's interest, which supported them to feel involved and empowered. One parent shared "they spend time talking to my child and tailor activities to their likes and dislikes." Children were given ownership of their play and encouraged to be independent.

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.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced an environment that promoted imagination and curiosity. They had access to a large woodland play area, which was stocked with natural materials and loose parts for children to play and learn with. Parents told us "the grounds are very welcoming" and "they create an environment where natural play is encouraged."

The environment was well maintained, secure and welcoming. Areas had been developed to provide children with natural log seating, shelter and open-ended play. This included a rope swing, different sized tyres for climbing and balancing on, a campfire and a mud kitchen. Parents commented positively on the environment. One parent described the environment as "a fully immersed outdoor learning experience, where my child feels safe and secure."

The manager had plans to develop the site to provide more opportunities for children to explore risk and challenge. We agreed this would be a suitable next step for developing the environment.

Children benefitted from well-structured play spaces, which had been arranged so children had spaces to play together or on their own. A wide range of resources were available which consisted of mostly natural and real-life items. We discussed with the service how this could be further enhanced by adding more natural resources within the mud kitchen area, including herbs to stimulate children's senses and support curiosity.

The service had introduced a large cabin within the woodland grounds, however this wasn't always accessible to children. We discussed with the service how the environment would benefit from having some small enclosed cosy spaces where children could self-regulate according to their own wishes and choices.

The outdoor nature of the service had been carefully considered when assessing risk. All areas used by the service were safe and secure with a range of measures, such as secure gates and fencing in place, to ensure children did not come to harm. We identified a small gap in the boundary during our inspection and this was immediately rectified by the provider.

Safety was also a key consideration around any heat sources such as the campfire or log burner. Children understood where to stand in order to remain safe and staff were vigilant, ensuring risk was suitably managed. Children were supported to be aware of risks and consider their own safety. Children confidently told us about some of the rules to keep them safe within the site. For example, where they could go, how to carry items and what resources could not be used within the camp. Parents told us "space is well maintained and everything has clearly been thought out to balance safety and adventure."

Toilet facilities were clean and well designed, with a composting toilet as well as a main toilet indoors.

Children's safety was supported by the risk assessment of facilities and activities. Daily risk assessments of the site helped to ensure the ever changing nature of the setting were identified and minimised.

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. Therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

A clear vision shared by staff and children ensured children were at the heart of positive outcomes and improvements within the service. The aims reflected the practice of the service, including children leading their learning through outdoor experiences, whilst benefitting from risky play.

We found the manager of the service offered very good support to staff. They were enthusiastic, knowledgeable and motivated. The manager was keen to ensure that the service provided to children and families met their needs. To help achieve this they had developed approaches to gather feedback from parents, including parental questionnaires, informal discussions and emails.

Successes and achievements were shared with families in various ways, including a closed private Facebook page. One parent told us "There are lots of Facebook posts on the closed parents group with regular updates. I thoroughly enjoying seeing photos and reading about what my children get up to in the woods."

Clear quality assurance and improvement processes were in place and had taken account of children's views. To ensure improvements can be fully embedded and remain focused, consideration should be given to how the service evidences the outcomes of any monitoring or auditing activity and the impact this has on quality.

Regular meetings allowed staff to reflect together on planning for children's needs, sharing knowledge from training and identifying improvements. Staff valued this time to work together to influence positive change.

A staff training programme ensured staff were supported to develop their skills as practitioners, and opportunities were provided for staff to reflect on their training. This meant that learning from training, such as fire training, had been embedded within the service and was being used to provide positive experiences for children.

Children were protected by policies and procedures developed to reflect the unique nature of the outdoor service. These helped staff support children in line with company policies, ensuing positive outcomes for children.

While storage of medication was appropriate, improvements were needed to the policies and procedures for the administration of medicine, in line with best practice, to ensure children's health and wellbeing. The service had identified this within their improvement plan and we agreed this is an area for development the service should address.

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.

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff were respectful and worked well with each other. They clearly enjoyed their work and being with children. They worked effectively with each other, to ensure a positive environment that provided challenge and innovative play opportunities for children. This ensured there was a positive team ethos which benefitted children and helped them feel secure and settled within the service. Children told us that staff were lovely, caring, kind, good fun and that they felt safe with them. One child told us staff "make it exciting for us and are all kind."

We found that the service was appropriately staffed to meet the needs of children and in keeping them safe while attending the service. The number of staff present contributed to meeting all children's needs. Enhanced staffing levels above the standard ratio ensured staff were suitably deployed to care for and supervise children in the open outdoor space.

Staff were deployed well ensuring a mixture of differing experienced staff worked together. This provided opportunities for good role models and mentoring of less experienced staff to ensure positive experiences for children. The management team were also visible and played a key role in promoting good practice.

Annual appraisals helped staff reflect on their learning and development. Staff confirmed they felt fully supported by the manager. They commented positively about them being approachable, supportive and communicating effectively.

We sampled recruitment documentation and found that staff had been recruited safely with the relevant checks in place before they started in their role. Suitable induction processes ensured staff received guidance and support from the outset of their employment. As a result, staff fully understood key information such as safety and child protection and could use this to support children.

Overall we found communication between staff and parents meant that parents were very happy with the staff team and the care their child received. This included ensuring children were prepared in advanced of any changes to their key worker. One parent told us "staff are supportive and kind and feel like an extended family."

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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànain eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.