Chapter One Childcare Dalkeith TreeTops
Day Care of Children

The Country Park Nursery
Dalkeith Country Park
Dalkeith
EH22 2NA

Telephone: 0131 663 8325

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 August 2023

Service provided by:
Chapter One Childcare (UK) Limited

Service provider number:
SP2021000080

Service no:
CS2021000133

About the service

Chapter One Childcare Dalkeith TreeTops is a daycare of children service and is registered to provide a fully outdoor care service to a maximum of 25 children aged 2 years 9 months to those not yet attending primary school at any one time.

Chapter One Childcare Dalkeith TreeTops is an outdoor nursery that operates from a woodland site within Dalkeith Country park. A permanent structure referred to as the "Cow shed" is the meeting point for children before and after their time in the woods. It is also used in extreme weather.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 1 August 2023 between 9:00am and 17:15pm. 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:
- spoke with children during their play
- received fourteen responses to our online questionnaire
- spoke with four staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing care and support.

- Children were happy and confident about approaching staff for help, support and reassurance.

- The outdoor setting provided a calm and welcoming environment for children with natural opportunities to explore and investigate.

- Further consideration should be given to providing resources that offered children high quality play, learning and development opportunities.

- Children should be provided with cosy, calm spaces to allow them to rest, relax and recuperate during their time at the service.

- Self evaluation and monitoring of the service should be implemented to ensure improvements are sustained.

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.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, confident and having fun, whilst exploring and engaging in play. Staff were nurturing, respectful, caring and they knew the children well. This secure relationship meant that children were comfortable at approaching staff for support and help when required. Staff enabled children to develop social skills, confidence and self esteem by discussing situations in a calm, understanding manner. This helped children to feel valued, safe and listened to.

To support children's overall wellbeing, personal plans contained relevant registration information and staff knew which children required additional support. However, the system for recording these needs was being updated from paper to online and we found information was missing. To ensure children receive the right care and support, improvements should be made to personal planning approaches and effective strategies should be put in place. These strategies should be regularly reviewed and a system devised to ensure all staff know about children's individual needs.

Children were kept safe because the service had a range of policies and procedures in place and these were implemented well by staff. The manager and staff were confident in their safeguarding responsibilities towards children. Medication was stored appropriately and relevant permission sheets were in place. Sachets of children's paracetamol were available and only to be used in case of an emergency. We advised that this should be removed immediately and the medication policy reviewed and updated in line with best practice. This would contribute towards children's health, safety and wellbeing.

Lunch time was a sociable experience, with children and staff sitting to enjoy a meal together. Tables and chairs were set up under a shelter and a hot meal was provided for both children and staff. Staff had evaluated the lunch time experience and were making changes to improve this for children. We have asked that the manager begin to monitor aspects of the service as a whole and include the lunch time experience. This would help to support more reflective practice and improved outcomes for children. A child commented that they liked "pasta and sweetcorn for lunch".

Children could access a sleep tent to rest after lunch or they used the hammock. Procedures were in place that outlined how to keep children safe when they were sleeping. We have asked the service to review how children rest and recuperate throughout the day and ensure they provide sufficient spaces and resources to create a cosy, nurturing areas throughout the setting.

Most parents were happy with the level of communication from the staff at the nursery. However, some commented that they would like more observations of their children. Some also stated that they only receive negative feedback. The management team have agreed to review this and ensure parents are receiving feedback that is appropriate.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were happy and confident in the setting and most were having fun, and involved in their play. We

could see that friendships were being formed. Children commented that "I love the hammock, bikes, tyres going up and down the hill" and "sometimes I like to come to nursery and sometimes I do not. I think it is fun, sometimes it's not. I thought bears would be here, but they are not. Some trees are strong, and some are not. I have lots of friends at treetops".

Children were encouraged to lead their own play, they used their imagination and were supported by good interactions from staff. However, staff's knowledge and understanding of high quality play and learning experiences varied according to confidence and experience. For example, we saw some staff who naturally engaged well with the children during their play, supported their interests, which extended their learning. We also observed staff who showed much less confidence and adopted a more supervisory role. The manager was keen to use effective modelling to ensure all staff were offering high quality play and learning opportunities for children.

A review of all resources should ensure that children have access to a range of learning experiences that challenge and support children's stage of development. Staff could make better use of natural resources and loose part play to support children's curiosity, imagination and creativity. For example, small stones, pebbles, natural materials sticks, wooden blocks would promote and develop children's early numeracy and maths skills.

Planning was both intentional and responsive and took account of children's development needs and interests. Floor book's and children's learning plans, were used to outline the progression in children's learning and systems were in place to allow staff to track children's progress. Some parents have stated that observations of children are infrequent and lacked details. The service had already identified this as an area for improvement and provided staff with additional support and time to create good quality observations. The manager should now begin to monitor the quality of planning, next steps and observations to ensure children are progressing appropriately.

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.

2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities.

Children experienced a natural environment in which to explore and be physically active. The large established woodland site was calm, peaceful and supported children's overall wellbeing. Th environment offered a range of surfaces and areas for the children to explore and they were aware of the rules of the outdoor setting and told us how to keep safe. Effective procedures were in place to prepare the area before the children arrived. A parent commented "My child loves the outdoor nursery setting".

Children could access an area that was stocked with natural materials to play and learn with. For example, trees, shrubs, stones and sticks. Further resources were available and included a mud kitchen, a hammock swing and some loose parts. We discussed with management, that the environment should be reviewed to ensure children have access to a range of loose parts and objects of interest. This would further encourage children's creativity, curiosity and imagination. Appropriate shelter should be in place to align with changing weathers to maximise the opportunities for children to access these resources and provide shelter from the elements.

Children were protected from harm by a number of safety measures. This included a play space that had

natural boundaries, a secure meeting point, risk assessments of spaces and experiences, and appropriate infection prevention and control measures. Daily risk assessments of the environment helped to ensure risks were identified and actions taken to minimise these and keep children safe.

The environment was well cared for and children were kept safe due to the good working relationship between the setting and landlord. The management of the woodland was reviewed by the forest rangers and adjustments made to the environment to ensure the impact on the land was kept to a minimum.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place. Children understood and were familiar with the routine of hand washing. Composting toilets and nappy changing facilities were available in individual pop-up tents and staff wore appropriate PPE. Resources were clean and cleaning schedules were in place. The service had invested in thermal sleeves to keep the handwashing water warm. We have asked the service to evaluate this system to ensure children can access warm water throughout the session. Staff should respect children's dignity by encouraging good personal care for example wiping children's noses and tissues should be available around camp for easy access.

An additional structure (called the cow shed) provided a space for children to be dropped off, collected and used in poor weather. This consisted of a playroom which was set up with a story corner, a home area and construction resources. Some loose parts were available outdoor. Comments from parents stated the cow shed was not attractive, lacked resources and their child was bored when playing there. We have asked management to ensure children experience an environment that promoted imagination and curiosity throughout the setting. To ensure children are cared for in a clean and pleasant environment attention should be paid to the carpet and improvements made to the number of toilets available for both staff and children.

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.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The management and staff team were committed to delivering a quality service for children and families. Their shared vision and values were evident in the kind, nurturing and respectful interactions we witnessed. The management team should continue to implement effective quality assurance processes to ensure improvements become embedded into practice. The manager should develop monitoring and evaluation processes throughout the service and pay attention to children's personal planning and effective use of strategies, along with meaningful observations of children's play and learning.

A programme of training was in place, which ensured staff were supported as practitioners. Management could further develop this by recording staff's reflections on training and how it has impacted on creating positive experiences for children. Staff should be supported to reflect on their practice through monitoring, observations, and engagement of children play and learning. This would enable the manager to monitor change and support sustained and continuous development for staff as individuals and the service as a whole.

Regular team meetings provided staff with opportunities to discuss, identify and take forward areas for improvement. This would encourage staff to learn and share new skills that help improve experiences for children and families. Staff were beginning to evaluate aspects of the service for example the lunch routine.

This meant that continuous improvement to children's experiences promoted and further secure positive for children.

Robust safer recruitment processes were in place to help ensure the right people were caring for children. The use of the national induction resource supported staff in their role and regular performance reviews offered them opportunities to discuss their practice with management. Staff commented positively on this and shared they had follow up meetings to discuss their progress and any supports that may be needed.

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, ensuring positive outcomes for children.

Parents were positive about the leadership within the setting and comments included "leadership are very communicative and make sure we are well informed" and "I have confidence in the leadership of the service".

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.

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff spoke positively about their work, and we observed that they worked well together to create a caring, welcoming environment for children. They were caring and nurturing in their interactions with the children. Parents complimented the team telling us "Wonderful caring staff team", they are all amazing! So nurturing and enthusiastic. My child has built up good relationships with all the staff which has been a key part of him successfully settling in at Treetops, "Staff are fantastic, so supportive and they really get to know individual kids and their personalities, likes and dislikes" and "staff seem to get on well together. They seem to have great relationships with the children. My child loves the staff and gives them lots of hugs".

Staff were deployed flexibly to ensure that children were supervised and supported appropriately. They worked well as a team to communicate and care for children's individual needs.

Recruitment and retention of staff was currently an issue with some key staff leaving the service. The management team were reviewing ways in which to support staff wellbeing and encourage staff to work in the outdoor setting. The area manager shared with us the arrangements that were planned to ensure the setting was appropriately staffed. This included the manager working alongside the staff team to provide support and stability. We have asked that a system is put in place to ensure that experiences and outcomes for children are not affected by these changes in the management structure.

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?	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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