Little Acorns Childcare
Day Care of Children

East Craigs Church Centre
Bughtlin Market
East Criags
Edinburgh
EH12 8XP

Telephone: 07784974297

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Julie-Ann Kazakov

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About the service

Little Acorns Childcare is a family run service that operates from East Craigs Church Centre in the East Craigs area of Edinburgh. The service provides a playgroup in the morning from 09:00 until 12:00 Monday to Thursday for children aged between two and three years old, and an out of school care from 14:45 until 18:00 Monday to Thursday for children attending primary school. The service currently operates during term time caring for up to 35 children.

The service is located in a residential area, close to local shops, a park and schools. Children attend the after school care from two local schools. One is in walking distance, and public transport is used to collect children from the other.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 2 April 2025 from 09:00 until 12:30 returning at 13:15 until 18:00. 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. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with people using the service and five parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- reviewed feedback surveys from 14 parents and two staff.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing, warm and kind interactions from staff, which supported their wellbeing.
- Children had access to indoors and outdoors throughout the session, enabling them to make choices in their play.
- Staff were committed to their role, ensuring children reached their full potential.
- Children were engaged in their play and interested in the experiences and resources available to them.

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.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children had positive relationships with staff and were happy and settled in the service. They were welcomed on arrival with their families, and staff said goodbye at the end of their day. Staff spoke to children and their families about daily life experiences and conversations were relaxed. A parent commented that 'staff treated the children like their own'. As a result, children and their families felt cared for and valued.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable, where children and staff sat together. Snack was served from the table, allowing children in the playgroup easy access to make choices about what they ate. For children attending the after school care, a buffet style snack was available for them to make similar choices about what and when they ate. This provided children with the freedom to make their own decisions. Children contributed to menu planning through a consultation mind map activity about healthy options and variety in the menus. This informed future menu plans. Water and fresh fruit were available throughout the sessions enabling children to stay hydrated.

Systems were in place to effectively manage, review and update medication with parents. The storage of medication was organised and easily accessible to staff. As a result, children were cared for in response to their current medical needs.

Children's wellbeing was supported by effective personal plans. Information was gathered from parents and used to inform children's care. A parent told us that "I review their plan and let the manager know if there's any changes". Templates had been developed for children to complete and contribute to their own plans. Staff knew children well and could talk through the supports that were in place for children. For example allowing a child time and space to engage in play as they often found sustained play challenging. To further support children effectively, strategies of support should be clear and monitored over time to secure progress.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children benefited from a mixture of planned and spontaneous play experiences. Areas were set up for children and were reflective of their interests. For example, a selection of dinosaurs were available for a child who had a particular interest. A well resourced home area allowed younger children to role play and have first hand experiences. This area was also available to children attending the out of school care. For example, a few children said to each other "lets play mums" before creating imaginative play. As a result, older children could revisit stages of development through play.

Children were engaged in their play and interests were catered for, through a variety of activities available. There were opportunities for literacy and numeracy skills to be developed through everyday experiences. Including aspects of snack routines, mark making and core resources including sand and painting. Children enjoyed books with an adult or in a group with other children. Creative art activities for children in the out of school care were engaging and held children's interests. There were opportunities for physical play including football and dodge ball, in a separate large room. Children were invested in the competitive aspects of football, asking staff how teams had done through the week. There were opportunities for children to relax and play on the x box. This gave a home from home feel after school, and children were being responsible while managing the time limits attached to the use of video games.

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.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The service was delivered from a spacious church hall that required resources to be set up and cleared away at each session. Mindful approaches were used to create designated areas with the use of furniture and display boards, and cosy areas were available with cushions, rugs and throws. An additional room was used for larger physical play for children attending the out of school care. As a result, children were comfortable in their play spaces that provided enough room for them to have fun and explore.

Children were kept safe with the effective use of registers at arrival and collection times. Staff made regular head counts throughout the session and ensured children were signed out when they left early. The outdoor gates had locks to ensure security for children, and staff had knowledge of the Care Inspectorate's campaign on keeping children safe in settings.

The outdoors was accessible to children throughout the session and provided additional ventilation into the hall without minimising the warmth. The outdoor space was continuing to be developed to offer further opportunities to children's play and was a priority on the improvement plan for the year ahead.

Children were familiar with the infection prevention and control measures in place. For example, washing their hands on arrival and at key points throughout the session. The portable hand washing unit enabled children to wash their hands independently within the play space. As a result, this promoted children's autonomy and independence skills through daily experiences.

Systems were in place to review risk assessments and to report any building maintenance issues. This meant that children were kept safe, and any issues were managed effectively.

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.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children were cared for in a service with a clear vision, values and aims. These included 'to provide a safe, creative, stimulating and high quality environment where every child's right will be promoted.' Older children led a project focussing on children's rights and presented this to younger children, sharing the values of the service and how to treat each other. Photographs of the event were displayed and shared with parents, which helped them to understand what to expect from the service.

The service recognised the importance of children and families involvement. Parental views were sought through informal conversations, questionnaires and asking a question of the month on a display board. Management had identified that although responses were received, they would like to increase feedback from parents. Additional methods were being explored including floor books and a 'what you said what we did' display.

Children's views were sought through mind maps and discussions. For example, children were consulted with as the service reviewed healthy snacks. Comments from children included "I just like apples" and "I like carrots and strawberries." As a result, children contributed to the menu planning. The mind maps and menus were attractively displayed and this enabled children to know that their contributions were valued.

An established children's council was in place in the out of school care. Children had the opportunity to apply for a position in the council, including the roles of chairperson, treasurer, photographer and x-box president. This allowed children to develop their leadership skills and work as part of a team. The council contributed to the development of the service through budgeting and purchasing new equipment and gathering the views of their peers. Children spoke positively about the council and the responsibilities of its members.

An improvement plan had been developed that focussed on areas identified through self evaluation processes. For example, a self evaluation of the garden and outdoor play had highlighted aspects of nature play that could be further developed. This meant that children experienced an environment that was responsive to their play and interests.

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.

Quality indicator 4.3 Staff deployment

Children benefitted from staff being deployed effectively across the play spaces and outdoors. A rota system ensured that areas were covered and planned for, with flexibility that allowed staff to adjust in response to where children chose to play. Staff communicated well with each other, particularly when circumstances took them away from their task. For example, moving to outdoors to support where most of the children were playing. Regular head counts were made throughout the session. This meant that children were accounted for at all times.

Staff were enthusiastic about the service and their roles; they were respectful to each other through their interactions and worked well together. This created a positive environment that allowed children to feel safe and secure, with adults who cared for them.

Professional development and learning was valued and mandatory training was up to date, including child protection and first aid. All staff were in the process of completing professional qualifications. Staff spoke positively about their learning and were reflective on the impact it had on their practice. For example, feeling more confident in their knowledge of theory-based practice to support play. As a result, children's experiences were supported by staff who were open to new ideas that promoted their wellbeing and learning.

Established inductions were in place that enabled new staff to become familiar with policies and procedures. A mentoring approach allowed staff to observe policies and procedures in practice. Staff shared that they found this beneficial as they could ask questions and gain confidence in their role. Annual appraisals created an opportunity for staff to reflect and plan their professional development in partnership with their manager. As a result children were cared for by staff who understood their role and the expectations of the service.

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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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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