

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten Day Care of Children

Auchlone Lodge
Abercairny Estate
Crieff
PH7 3QZ

Telephone: 01764 683656

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 July 2018

Service provided by:
Mindstretchers Ltd.

Service provider number:
SP2008009541

Service no:
CS2008168440

About the service

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten registered with the Care Inspectorate on 2 May 2008. It provides a day care of children service to a maximum of 25 children, of whom no more than five will be between two and three years and 20 children aged three and over. The service may operate between 08:30 and 17:30, Monday to Friday, 49 weeks of the year.

The service is based within Auchlone Lodge, part of Abercairney Estate situated to the East of Crieff. Children have access to the lodge, a large garden area and extensive woodland beyond the garden.

The service aims include 'to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which children can feel happy and secure. Provide children with a very naturalistic environment indoors, in the garden and in the wild woods where they are encouraged and supported to take risks and become the risk assessors. Encourage the emotional, social, physical, creative and intellectual development of children both indoors and out.'

The service is part of the Mindstretchers Ltd, an organisation that provides training in early learning and childcare across Scotland and in other parts of the world. The service was opened to show the implementation of the Nature Kindergarten philosophy and the impact this can have on children's development.

We check services are meeting the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (also known as GIRFEC), Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes and wellbeing for children by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them and their parent(s) to work with the services that can help them. There are eight wellbeing indicators at the heart of Getting it Right for Every Child: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included. They are often referred to as the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

What people told us

There were 10 children present during the inspection. We observed and talked to the children throughout the day and found them to be happy, confident, relaxed and fully engaged in a wide range of learning experiences.

Children talked very positively about their time in the service. Comments from children included:

- 'I'm going to be a fairy princess. Look! I can flap my wings.'
- 'I like the tadpoles in the pond.'
- 'Can you hold the paper so I can cut it? I am making a picture.'
- 'I am making an aeroplane. This is going to be the tail. I've put these nails in with this. It is a screwdriver.'
- 'I went walking up a mountain once but I was really tired and I have a jelly baby drink.'
- 'If you put this here, it makes a sound. Listen!'

We provided the service with 10 Care Standards Questionnaires (CSQs) to distribute to parents/carers. We received seven completed questionnaires before the inspection. One hundred percent of parents/carers strongly agreed that they were happy with the quality of care their child receives. We also spoke to three parents during the inspection who also spoke very highly of the service. Comments from parents included:

'I am extremely happy with Auchlone Nursery. It is an amazing place for children. My child loves it and will ask me seven days a week if he can go in. Staff are patient with the kids and very motivated in each child's learning. They update me on how his day has gone and the educational needs of that day. I feel there is a warm personal touch and that they know everything about the likes and interests of the children. Communication is excellent. I cannot recommend them enough. My child is far advanced in his knowledge for his age. I would give them 100%.'

'Auchlone Nature Kindergarten is a delightful setting that staff take full advantage of for my children. The relationship based practice and professional love shown by all staff has been the cornerstone of my children's experiences. There are few other settings in Scotland to offer such high quality profession. The only improvement we can think of is an extension to the age range of children from two to five years to two to seven years.'

'Auchlone is a magical environment to learn and grow... the staff have been professional and attentive to our needs. Auchlone is full of wonder and my child loves it. The staff are truly wonderful, kind, caring and professional.'

'The nature kindergarten is a fantastic place for young children. They enjoy a far wider range of activities than most nurseries can provide, spend the vast majority of their time out and about on their feet and are allowed and assisted in developing their own interests. I cannot praise it highly enough.'

Self assessment

The service had not been asked to complete a self assessment in advance of the inspection. We looked at the service's improvement plan. This demonstrated the service's priorities for developing the service further.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	6 - Excellent
Quality of environment	not assessed
Quality of staffing	5 - Very Good
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

What the service does well

Children had opportunities to play and learn within the lodge, the garden and the wider natural environment. Children chose to spend the vast majority of time outdoors engaged in a range of quality learning experiences of their own choice. Creativity was supported extremely well across all areas of the service, with a clear focus on the use of natural and open-ended resources. These supported and encouraged children to work collaboratively to solve problems and make decisions.

Children enthusiastically engaged in activities that provided them with challenge. We observed a small group of children exploring a range of tools and construction resources such as hand drills, saws, hammers and nails. It was clear that children had a range of abilities and knowledge in using these tools. Staff supported children well to think about safety and discussed the correct uses for each of the tools. Where children were more confident or experienced staff took a step back only becoming involved when they could positively contribute or to prevent an accident.

Children's learning and development was recorded using large floor books that focused on the group's thoughts, ideas and discussions. Each child had a smaller learning journal that recorded their individual learning and achievements. We found that these books held very clear records of the activities and experiences children had undertaken as well as how their learning was to be developed further. The staff were very good at revisiting children's learning to continue to monitor their development and achievements.

Children had been focusing on planting, growing and living things. This included planting and harvesting fruit and vegetables in their small allotment area of the garden. Children confidently talked to us about what they had been planting and we observed as they harvested some of the vegetables to try at snack time. Children had also been observing the tadpoles that were in their pond to identify how they developed as they grew. These activities were then recorded in the large floor books for children to revisit at a later date.

Children were cared for by staff who were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach. We observed staff and children to be very respectful as they talked to and listened to each other. One child became upset as they were dropped off at the beginning of their session. Staff identified this very quickly and used their training and experience to settle the child in a calm and caring way. This resulted in a very happy child soon after.

Staff had access to a very thorough programme of training, most of which was delivered in-house. This was complimented by training provided by Perth and Kinross Council. All staff had a good commitment to their training, learning and development. The in-house training programme focused on providing staff with the key skills required to work in an outdoor based service with specific focus on safely managing risk.

Staff were about to take part in a training week which enabled the manager to spend time with the whole staff group. This week focused on meeting the staff training needs. We reviewed the programme planned and found that it took account of the new staff who had joined Auchlone over the past year.

What the service could do better

Through our review of individual learning journals, we found that some observations and next steps could be more specific to each child. We discussed this with the provider and manager who agreed this was an area that they could support staff to develop further.

Children had very good opportunities to share their opinions throughout their session, which was documented in the large floor books and individual family books. We would like to see conversations recorded within the family books to show the process of children evaluating their learning and next steps.

The service was reviewing how they engage with parents/carers with a specific focus on gaining feedback. The depute manager shared some of the plans in place to improve this. We suggested that voting is a popular way used in other service, which is not only easy for the parents/carers but gives a quick response to a specific question.

The service had identified that staff could better reflect on their learning and development opportunities. We highlighted the post registration training and learning information produced by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), who regulate the social care workforce in Scotland. This would support staff to consistently reflect and record any impact of their learning with a specific focus on how this improved the service for children.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
27 Feb 2017	Unannounced	Care and support 6 - Excellent Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership 5 - Very good
10 Dec 2014	Unannounced	Care and support 6 - Excellent Environment 6 - Excellent Staffing 6 - Excellent Management and leadership 5 - Very good
14 Dec 2012	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment 6 - Excellent Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
28 Sep 2010	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership 5 - Very good
20 Oct 2009	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment 5 - Very good Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good

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