

Drumfork Forest School and Out of School Day Care of Children

Churchill Square
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 December 2021

Service provided by:
Drumfork Family Centre Limited

Service provider number:
SP2018013242

Service no:
CS2020381172

About the service

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services can be found on our website at www.careinspectorate.com

This service registered with the Care Inspectorate on 19 March 2021.

Drumfork Forest School and Out of School is provided by Drumfork Family Centre Limited and works in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council to provide early learning and childcare. The service is registered to provide a fully outdoor care service to a maximum of 28 children aged two years to primary school age.

As a result of our inspection findings, the forest school has temporarily closed and a variation has been granted stating that from 13 December 2021 until 4 April 2022 the out of school service can operate indoors.

The outdoor service is based within a local wooded area a short walk from the local community centre, where a large room has been allocated for use in inclement weather. We visited both the wooded area and the local community centre as part of our inspection.

What people told us

We asked for parents/carers to contact us as part of the inspection process. However, despite several requests we did not receive any responses.

During the inspection, older children told us about their favourite games and activities.

Self assessment

We did not request a self assessment as part of the inspection process.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	2 - Weak
Quality of environment	2 - Weak
Quality of staffing	2 - Weak
Quality of management and leadership	2 - Weak

Quality of care and support

Findings from the inspection

We made an evaluation of weak for this quality theme. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

At our first visit to the forest school staff did not demonstrate an ability to provide high quality care and play experiences for children in their care, in particular there was a lack of awareness of children's wellbeing and

safety needs. During our visit we had to intervene on three occasions to ensure children were safe. Staff did not ensure consistency in meeting children's care needs.

We discussed our concerns with the manager and service provider and subsequently issued a letter of serious concern detailing four requirements for improvement (see requirements 1-4 below). The service provider had previously discussed closing the forest school service and, as a result of our findings, we agreed that a temporary suspension of the service would enable the manager to ensure all underpinning procedures were sufficiently clear and comprehensive and ensure staff were upskilled and worked in compliance with these procedures at all times.

Subsequently, we were satisfied that good progress had been made in taking these requirements forward. We were reassured that the relevant actions had been taken but we cannot formally assess the impact of these actions until the forest school reopens. Therefore, we have extended the timescales for these requirements to allow time for staff to embed these improvements into their practice and management to measure the impact of these improvements on outcomes for children.

As a result of concerns raised at the forest school visit around Covid-19 mitigations, particularly around hand washing, social distancing and ventilation, the manager asked all staff to complete an additional Scottish Government Covid-19 module to underpin previous training done. The manager confirmed that this had been completed and mitigations were now being checked daily to ensure compliance. We stressed the importance of good handwashing practices overall, as a way of minimising the spread of infection across the service. We found that handwashing practices and Covid-19 mitigations were good at the out of school service.

While personal plans were in place for each child, staff were not able to access these fully online. In some instances, this led to staff having insufficient information about children's individual care needs and routines. The manager advised that going forward, personal plans would be fully accessible on the online portal and an additional summary sheet would be added to ensure staff could support consistency and continuity in children's care routines and development.

We raised some concerns about arrangements for checking and changing children's nappies both within the forest school site and in the community centre. Staff needed to ensure that nappy changing was carried out in line with the relevant Health Protection Scotland and Care Inspectorate guidance on changing nappies and ensure good practice for manual handling procedures.

www.hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1558/nappy-changing-guidance-for-early-years-and-childcare-services.pdf

www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/infection-prevention-and-control-in-childcare-settings-day-care-and-childminding-settings/

While good arrangements were in place to ensure the safe storage and administration of medication to children when needed, the procedures needed to be amended to ensure they reflected any procedures specific to the woodland environment.

We carried out a separate visit to the out of school service as part of our inspection. We observed that children were happy, settled and well cared for. Children enjoyed a calm and sociable snack on arrival then chose from a range of play activities. Children chatted to us and discussed the activities they enjoyed after school. During our visit, staff responded to children's need for physical activity by carrying out a visit to the adjacent play park. Children enjoyed the opportunities to run, climb and explore the outdoor setting.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 4

1. By 15 March 2022, the provider must ensure children are safe when experiencing outdoor play. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) Undertake a risk assessment of the outdoor areas children access and implement any safety measures identified as a result.
- b) Ensure staff receive appropriate instruction in their responsibility to be alert to where children are at all times to prevent children leaving the premises or outdoors areas unseen by staff.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) and (d) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that "My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event" (HSCS 4.14), "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14) and "My environment is safe and secure" (HSCS 5.17).

2. By 15 March 2022, the provider must ensure that children enjoy a positive, safe and social experience when receiving meals or snacks. To do this, the provider must at a minimum:

- a) Review the lunch/snack-time procedure to ensure that it reflects the importance of providing a safe experience for children.
- b) Ensure the deployment of staff reflects the needs of children at snack and mealtimes.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) and (d) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that "My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event" (HSCS 4.14), "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14) and "My environment is safe and secure" (HSCS 5.17).

3. By 15 March 2022, the provider must ensure that children's personal care needs are met in line with their personal plans. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) Review the personal plans of children and ensure their needs are met across the whole day, including arrangements for one-to-one support where identified as needed.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that "My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event" (HSCS 4.14), "My care and support meets my needs and is right for me" (HSCS 1.19), "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their

practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14) and "I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency and continuity" (HSCS 4.16).

4. By 15 March 2022, the provider must ensure that provision is made for children to access a safe, cosy and comfortable space to rest and or sleep.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that "My care and support meets my needs and is right for me" (HSCS 1.19), "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14) and "I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency and continuity" (HSCS 4.16).

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 2 - weak

Quality of environment

Findings from the inspection

We made an evaluation of weak for this quality theme. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

We observed that on the day of our inspection the forest area had been poorly set up to empower children to actively experience play and learning challenges centred on their needs and interests. When children were moved to the community centre, we noted that children became much more engaged with the resources supplied.

At registration, the woodland site was visited by the local authority Environmental Health team and a range of measures was outlined to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and regulations. We found that the facilities in the site did not fully comply with these measures, for example, there were insufficient numbers of handwashing and toilet facilities. Following our visit, the manager contacted the local authority to ascertain whether there could be any flexibility in these measures. We stressed the importance of ensuring compliance with the existing measures at all times unless new measures were negotiated. (See recommendation 1.)

The out of school base was set up to enable children to be independent and make choices and this worked well. Children experienced an environment that was well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment. We noted that this base was to be used more permanently and the manager was aware that there was a need to improve the environment to make it more homely and give children greater ownership of the space.

We raised some concerns around the risk assessment covering the walk to and from the forest site. We observed staff were overlaid with bags and equipment and were not able to respond promptly to any accidents or incidents. This had been factored into new procedures done since our inspection visit.

There were no specific risk assessments in place for staff to refer to when accompanying children to the community centre from school. These needed to be put in place to ensure potential hazards and control measures were identified to ensure all children's safety. The manager agreed that this had been an omission and risk assessments were completed by the end of the inspection.

Appropriate arrangements were in place for recording any accidents and incidents and reporting these to parents/carers. These were monitored to ensure children were protected from any hazards or patterns highlighted in the completed forms. All staff were trained in paediatric first aid.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To support the wellbeing and safety of staff and children, the provider should ensure compliance with the local authority environmental health report completed after the site visit on 18 March 2021.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that "I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice" (HSCS 3.14).

Grade: 2 - weak

Quality of staffing

Findings from the inspection

We made an evaluation of weak for this quality theme. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

Staff were not confident in their roles. There was no clear system of leadership or delegation of tasks within the team. This resulted in staff becoming distracted by housekeeping tasks at the expense of meeting children's wellbeing and safety needs. (See Quality of care and support, requirements 1(b) and 2(a)(b)).

The manager had recognised that there were issues within the team around confidence, teamworking and communication. They had recently contracted an external provider to provide support to staff in the service around these themes. While we recognised that this work was scheduled to continue over the new few months, we would suggest that as part of this process consideration be given to the experience and capacity of the team to make the necessary improvements within required timescales.

As a result of our inspection findings, the manager had asked all staff to read or re-read the Health and Social Care Standards document, then write a reflective account about it. These accounts were to be assessed and would be used to inform the one-to-one supervision process to ensure staff understood their roles and responsibilities.

Staff were supported to access training and best practice documents. Staff had undertaken qualifications relevant to their role and engaged in continuous professional learning. However, the impact of this was not translating into improved practice and good outcomes for children. Staff needed additional support to recognise their learning and development needs, use this learning to improve their practice and consider the impact of the learning on improving outcomes for children. (See recommendation 1.)

Staff were able to discuss the relevant policies and procedures in place to support them in their roles. However, we did not always see that their practice reflected this knowledge. Following the inspection, the manager had devised a support system to ensure staff participation in the review of policies and procedures and to ensure and measure the application of these in practice.

As a result of concerns around the safety of children during our visit, the manager had asked staff to review the first aid risk assessment and to consider good practice guidance on prevention and management of choking.

We checked that recruitment had been carried out in accordance with best practice guidance to protect the welfare and safety of children. There were some minor issues around receipt and recording of references, which were corrected following the inspection. The service provider should ensure compliance with the company's recruitment and selection procedures at all times.

The induction process was planned to take account of staff who were new to their role and their ongoing learning and development. We discussed the induction with staff who agreed they had time to consider their role and reflect on the impact of their practice on outcomes for children.

During the inspection, we could see that children had positive relationships with staff. Staff responded considerably and patiently to their conversations and questions. Although staff were able to tell us about children's individual needs, they did not take the necessary action to recognise and meet these needs during our inspection. (See Quality of care and support, requirement 3(a)).

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To support the wellbeing and safety of children, the provider should ensure that staff:

- a) receive additional support to recognise their learning and development needs
- b) are encouraged to use this learning to improve their practice
- c) consider the impact of their learning on improving outcomes for children.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which

state that "My care and support meets my needs and is right for me" (HSCS 1.19) and "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes" (HSCS 3.14).

Grade: 2 - weak

Quality of management and leadership

Findings from the inspection

We made an evaluation of weak for this quality theme. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

It was clear from our inspection findings that the current arrangements for management and leadership within the service needed to be reviewed. A peripatetic management arrangement was in place that permitted the manager to support both this service and the service provider's nursery and family centre. However, due to the complexity of issues within this service and the size of the nursery and family centre, further supports needed to be put in place to ensure both services could be managed effectively. (See requirement 1.)

The service provider and manager were aware that the arrangements for leadership across both services was not effective. Staff were not deployed in the best way to ensure good team working and the right mix of experience and depth of knowledge. This resulted in gaps and inconsistent approaches to identifying children's needs.

The service provider and manager had introduced a full range of policies and procedures to support staff in their roles. However, as mentioned earlier, the application of these was inconsistent. The manager needed to arrange for staff to participate fully in meaningful discussions about these policies and procedures to ensure they understand the implications for their practice and their responsibilities for compliance with them at all times.

As this was a newly registered service, an improvement plan had not yet been developed. Although there were appropriate self-evaluation processes ready for implementation, the culture of self-evaluation for improvement was at an early stage and had resulted in limited improvements within this service.

The service provider and manager had an accurate and realistic view of many of the weaknesses we highlighted at inspection. Despite awareness of these shortcomings and a range of targeted interventions put in place, we were concerned that the forest school had continued to operate without significant improvement. The service provider and manager were fully committed to working with us to ensure improvements in staff practice resulted in better outcomes for children. A number of steps were taken to address the issues we identified to ensure improvements in practice across the setting. Appropriate quality assurance processes needed to be implemented to ensure this work continued. (See requirement 2.)

Requirements

Number of requirements: 2

1. By 15 March 2022, children experience a service that is well led and managed. To do this, the provider must at a minimum:

- a) ensure that existing management arrangements are reviewed
- b) take identified action to address gaps in management and leadership across the service.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) and (d) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed" (HSCS 4.23).

2. By 15 March 2022, the provider must ensure that staff provide improved outcomes for children in a way that reflects their individual needs. To do this, the provider must at a minimum:

- a) ensure improvements made as a result of this inspection are embedded into practice and sustained
- b) ensure a robust approach to quality assurance, including self-evaluation, is in place and leads to continuous improvement.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) and (d) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes" (HSCS 4.19).

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 2 - weak

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the service registered. Details of any upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this service since it registered.

Inspection and grading history

This service does not have any prior inspection history or grades.

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