

## Off Grid After School – Kirkhill Day Care of Children

Maxwell Mearns Castle Church  
Waterfoot Road  
Newton Mearns  
Glasgow  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
22 June 2022

**Service provided by:**  
Off Grid After School Ltd

**Service provider number:**  
SP2019013441

**Service no:**  
CS2020379059

## About the service

Off Grid After School - Kirkhill is a daycare of children service based within a woodland area on ground adjacent to Maxwell Mearns Castle Church in Newton Mearns, Glasgow. The service provides an after school care to a maximum of 40 children attending primary school where, of those 40 children, up to 16 children can be cared for in the church hall at Maxwell Mearns Castle Church.

The outdoor site is used in all weather conditions during term time. There is a number of areas that are accessible to children including a space where children could gather for a fire and a quiet area where children could take part in gymnastics and climb trees. There is also a hill where the children enjoyed playing. Children had access to the church hall to change into outdoor clothing. They also made use of the toilet facilities within the church hall which is close to the woodland site. Children had access to warm water for hand washing on site. In the church hall, the service had access to various rooms including changing rooms. They had access to toilets and the kitchen facilities. Children walked from two local primary schools after school. There was parking close to the woodland site and easily accessible paths ensured parents could collect the children from the woodland.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 6 June 2022 and 22 June 2022. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with 8 people using the service
- spoke with 3 staff and management
- received feedback electronically from 10 families
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Relationships between children, and between staff and children were a key strength within the service.
- The nature based setting supported the health and wellbeing of children and helped to build confidence and resilience.
- There were exciting, fun and challenging play and learning experiences.
- Key areas of improvement had been developing the woodland site and establishing strong links with families.
- Reviewing and developing systems for recording key information in relation to personal plans continues to develop.
- The manager should review safer recruitment and induction procedures.

## 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 care provided for children and how these promoted positive outcomes. We evaluated this key question as very good.

### 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Off Grid After School - Kirkhill was an inclusive and nurturing environment for children to play and explore after school. Children were well supported by staff who were approachable and relatable for the children. We saw positive interactions that contributed to a nurturing approach to children's wellbeing. This resulted in children being confident in their play and developing strong relationships with others.

Children played outdoors in all weathers and through the changing seasons. They were given the skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe and protect themselves from the elements, using shelters, using fire to cook and as a source of heat and wearing appropriate clothing.

Children's personal plans were in place. They had key information about the health and wellbeing of children. These were updated regularly. Staff had regular wellbeing discussions with children and parents to ensure the information was relevant and up to date. One parent commented, "There is always feedback on how each day has gone and what my child has been doing." An easily accessible app was being used to ensure easy access to key information from each child's personal plan when in the woodland site. This ensured a consistent approach from all staff when interacting with children. The manager and staff were continuing to test and improve the way they recorded children's personal plans and any relevant chronologies to ensure information is relevant and consistent.

There were very good relationships between staff and families. They linked up each day to discuss the needs of children and an open door policy with regular dialogue meant very good partnership working to support the individual needs of children. We saw these connections when children were being collected from the woodland area, where face to face discussions took place outdoors. We were able to observe strong working relationships between staff, children and parents which resulted in happy children who were comfortable and safe in the care of staff.

Children ate and drank in the outdoor space; they enjoyed fruit for snack daily and they showed us where they composted all their rubbish. The children cooked outdoors with staff and the fire area was a meeting point where children could enjoy a social meal or snack and be involved in preparing and cleaning up. There was access to hand washing facilities in the woodland area and children were able to walk back to base for use of an indoor toilet. Staff were aware of infection control procedures and adapted these to the outdoor setting. This resulted in children learning about recycling and how they could be involved, as well strengthening their friendships with others during fun social occasions.

### 1.2 Play and learning

Play opportunities were very good, this was a fully outdoor setting and children were well equipped to play and explore within the woodland setting. Play and learning experiences were all nature based. Staff were on hand to support children in their play, however children had space and trust to follow the rules and explore the woodland within the identified boundaries. This taught children to be responsible and built resilience and confidence.

We saw very good connections between staff and children during the sessions. The nature based setting allowed staff to be very present with children. This was evident in conversations between staff and children, the depth of play opportunities the children had and the level of engagement.

The children told us about the key strengths the adults brought to the service and where the staff strength was art or building dens, they linked with them to play and have fun. This meant that children were leading and identifying their own learning in a fun and enjoyable way.

Play and learning experiences were based on best practice guidance in relation to nature based experiences and staff worked well as a team to demonstrate to children the way to play and use the woodland safely. Children particularly enjoyed den building, loose parts and imaginative experiences outdoors. They had really taken ownership of the various play spaces and made the woodland site an exciting and interesting place to play and explore.

### How good is our setting?

### 5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good. We found significant aspects of strength and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

#### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Off Grid After School - Kirkhill is an outdoor after school care setting. Children benefited from access to a natural outdoor environment where they had very good play opportunities with natural resources in a dedicated woodland area. Children enjoyed a hill area where they used their imagination to create stories and games. Children also enjoyed an area they called the quiet area; it had a good tree they liked to climb and they could practice gymnastics there. They also spent time making obstacles and dens and groups of children enjoyed the nature based art and craft activities led by staff.

Children adapted their play to the natural environment and the seasonal changes. Children and staff were well equipped with suitable clothing and shelter to manage the weather. The site was adaptable and they made use of the natural resources available to them. Part of the preparing for play was the children getting ready for outdoor play. All children had appropriate clothing and footwear to access the woodland area. There was allocated time and space before the start of the outdoor session for children to change. Parents worked with the service to ensure children were ready for outdoor play in all weathers.

A big part of the children's experience at an outdoor setting is risk assessment. Children were given the tools to keep themselves safe while exploring the woodland and joining in with a range of activities. Children gave us a tour of the site and the woodland and shared risks and hazards and what they do to minimise them. Parents also shared positive feedback about the way the children were supported to keep themselves safe. Comments included:

"He's learned so much about staying safe in the outdoors and by the campfire etc, dangerous plants, edible plants. He always comes home excited to tell us what he's learned or show us what he's made."

## How good is our leadership?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good. We found significant aspects of strength and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

### 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

This was the first inspection of the service and they had developed the outdoor site from an overgrown woodland area to an accessible play space for children. The manager commented that this development had taken a lot of effort and involvement from all people involved. One parent shared "Over the past nearly 2 years the 'site' has been developed and improved whilst still keeping the outdoor natural environment at the forefront."

The service aims and objectives were linked to the principles of outdoor play for children, and this was evident through the range of experiences for children. Children's wellbeing and connection with nature was a key area within the service and it was evident that this was impacting positively on outcomes for children. Children shared their views and we observed children happy and relaxed in the outdoor environment.

A key area for improvement had been building strong relationships with families. This was evident through the feedback we received from families. Parents commented that there was good communication with staff. A sample of what parents told us included:

"Excellent communication. Regular updates and prompt responses if I ever need to query anything."

"The staff are all caring and friendly and know the children well. There is always feedback on how each day has gone and what my child has been doing etc."

"Communication from Off grid is great - and they always reply promptly to any queries/messages etc."

As a new service they were continuing to develop and improve the way they recorded information. We asked the manager to ensure that they are making use of the Care Inspectorate website including The Hub to ensure they have the most up to date guidance. This will result in up to date best practice being used to continue to provide positive outcomes for children.

## How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good. We found significant aspects of strength and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

### 4.3 Staff deployment

The staff team was present with children in their play. We observed rich engagement in the outdoor area between staff and children. Staff were scaffolding the children's play and were also mindful of when to give children space to play and explore. Staff skills and knowledge were crucial in supporting children with risk assessment and to learn about keeping themselves safe in the woodland. Staff demonstrated a very good

knowledge of meeting children's needs in the outdoor environment and this contributed to safe, happy children who were enjoying their time at after school care.

We saw warm, friendly interactions between staff and children. There were good opportunities for conversations and supporting children's wellbeing. Children were happy and relaxed in the care of the staff. They shared positive feedback about being at the after school care.

Staff brought a range of skills and experience to the service. They had various experience and interests and linked this to the way they were deployed across the service. It was recognised by the team that there were staff that brought imaginative play and crafts, other staff had key strengths of storytelling along with fairness and helping children to resolve disputes. The team worked well together to offer an inclusive environment where children could play and have fun.

Staff had taken part in a range of training and were keen to take forward aspects of training and development. These were particularly related to offering children an outdoor play experience. As well as developing leadership skills and further enhancing practice in taking forward personal plans.

We signposted the manager to safer recruitment resources and the Early Learning and Childcare - National Induction Resource. This will support them with ensuring they are following correct General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when storing staff documents. This will also ensure that where risk assessments regarding individual staff need to be created, they have a clear framework to follow that is in line with current best practice guidance.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the service registered. Details of any upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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



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