

# Kinder Croft CIC Outdoor Nursery Day Care of Children

Leckmelm Wood  
Leckmelm  
Ullapool  
IV23 2RH

Telephone: 07845 232 776

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
15 December 2022

**Service provided by:**  
Kinder Croft CIC

**Service provider number:**  
SP2019013305

**Service no:**  
CS2019374867

## About the service

Kinder Croft CIC Outdoor Nursery is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 18 children from age 2 years to 14 years old, of whom no more than 6 are aged 2 years to under 3 years.

Kinder Croft CIC Outdoor Nursery is located within Leckmelm Woods on the outskirts of Ullapool, Wester Ross. There is a small parking and drop off area next to the nursery site. The large site offers the children a very wide range of opportunities for outdoor exploration and learning. There is a large wooden shelter used for a range of activities, including the kitchen area and a separate building for toilets and changing facilities. A further wooden building is being built, which will predominantly be used by the youngest children attending the service.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 7 December 2022 between 10:15 and 13:30 and Thursday 15 December 2022 between 10:30 and 13:15. 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 since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

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

## Key messages

- Children benefitted from a nurturing, inspiring environment.
- Children were developing their curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills through high quality play experiences.
- Staff were all extremely committed and motivated to provide children with a service of a very high standard.
- The staff worked very well as a team.
- Quality assurance systems involving children, families and staff should continue to be developed to plan for improvement.

## 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?	4 - 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

### 1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

We evaluated this key quality indicator as very good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were all very happy, settled and having fun as they played alongside or with friends. We observed that positive relationships had been formed between staff and the children who had fun together. Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. This contributed to children feeling happy and secure. There was a great deal of chatter and laughter between the children and the staff. We saw staff being very nurturing, taking time to listen to and respond to children, and offering comfort, cuddles and reassurance when needed. This contributed to positive attachments being formed and children having a sense of belonging and feeling valued.

Staff were welcoming and friendly with an enabling attitude and knew children very well. To support children to be happy and confident, staff had effectively used personal plans to enhance individualised care, support and learning opportunities. Personal plans provided information to support individual children and were used consistently by staff. We reminded the manager to ensure plans were routinely reviewed at least every six months, or sooner whenever a change had been identified. We signposted the manager to 'A guide for providers on personal planning: early learning and childcare' to support the development of personal plans.

Staff recognised children as individuals and provided them with sensitive and responsive care. When speaking with staff, it was clear that they knew the children well and were able to discuss their personalities, likes/dislikes and what they were supporting the children to achieve. Activities and experiences were responsive and personalised to meet children's needs and interests. This meant that all children were respected and valued as individuals.

There was a strong commitment to work in partnership with families when developing personal plans and support strategies. This ensured that children received consistent and appropriate levels of care and support. There was daily communication with families at drop off and collection time. The service were introducing a new parent portal on their website which would increase the opportunities for communication and information sharing between families and the service. Parents were very positive about the level of information they received at collection time and stated that they were actively encouraged to give feedback and ask questions. Parents described staff as very approachable, "super friendly", attentive and one parent stated "the staff are so in tune with all the children".

Children experienced calm, relaxed and sociable lunch and snack times where they were encouraged to be independent. Staff were focused on the children during this time and provided appropriate levels of individualised support and supervision. Staff were aware of any allergies or dietary needs which helped them to keep children safe. Staff had their meals with children, chatting and positively role modelling social skills. This contributed to creating a homely, relaxed and enjoyable mealtime experience for children.

### 1.3 Play and Learning

We evaluated this key quality indicator as very good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Kinder Croft provided children with a nurturing and exciting space to grow and develop through nature-based play and learning. This allowed children to develop self confidence, independence and self esteem. Children played happily and purposefully together engaging in real life experiences which enhanced their resilience and impacted positively on their development, health, wellbeing and happiness. They had fun and were very comfortable within their natural surroundings. Parents described how attending the outdoor nursery had provided opportunities for physical challenges and had allowed children to learn practical skills.

Children were supported to learn and develop through their play. They experienced both spontaneous and planned play experiences and were supported in leading their play and learning and were able to make choices. Children were offered stimulating and interesting experiences which included exploring, experimenting, being creative, taking risks and problem solving. These rich learning experiences promoted curiosity and imagination. We observed children being very happy, engaged and leading their play and learning throughout the session.

Staff were skilful in their interactions, which supported children to develop their play and learning. Staff demonstrated a genuine interest when interacting with children. They engaged effectively with children to extend discussion and facilitate learning. There were opportunities for children to experiment and explore. Staff were adding further value to children's play and learning through their carefully considered interactions. Questioning by staff encouraged children to think independently and to reflect, as a result children were respected, valued and achieving.

Planning approaches were child led and responsive to children's interests which supported children to feel involved and empowered. Children were given ownership of their play and encouraged to be independent. Staff supported children very well, allowing children to plan, lead their play and make choices at their own pace. This helped children to feel secure and settled. Children's successes and achievements were recognised and celebrated, helping them develop a sense of pride, build resilience and support their self-esteem.

#### How good is our setting?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key quality indicator as very good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Kinder Croft was a fully outdoor service which offered children a rich and diverse natural environment where they could be adventurous, explore, be independent and develop a range of physical skills in peaceful and calm surroundings.

The nursery site was very well designed, with areas extremely well thought out and provided a stimulating space where children comfortably engaged with nature. There were very good opportunities for children to be imaginative and creative in their explorative play and investigative learning while developing new skills. Positive approaches to supporting risky and adventurous play were fully embedded within practice. There were opportunities for the children to assess and manage risk and build self confidence.

They had access to a wealth of engaging and challenging resources and activities; for example, open-ended and natural resources, mud kitchen, digging area, extensive loose parts, den building, water play, fire skills and wood skills. Staff routinely reviewed children's use of resources and areas to make sure that children were engaged and challenged.

We found children enthusiastically engaged in activities. They were able to direct their own play and activities in a way that they chose and had the time and space to develop their own interests. We observed the children moving comfortably and confidently around the site and selecting various activities, either on their own or in small groups. Their natural environment continuously challenged and developed their physical confidence.

Children attending the service were kept safe through the various robust risk assessment and safety checks which were in place to ensure hazards were minimised. Staff explained that they completed daily visual checks before the children arrived as well as at the end of the day.

Staff fully involved the children in risk assessments and problem-solving to build their confidence and skills in assessing risk and safe decision-making. Children explored the site with ease, aware of their boundaries and how far they could go to keep safe. We saw children were aware of their environment and were confident in recognising potential risks and ensuring their own safety and the safety of others.

Children were enabled to rest and have quiet time. A large covered area by the fire provided a warm and cosy environment for children to relax, draw and read books. A new wooden cabin was being constructed to offer an indoor space predominantly for the younger children who attended the service.

Robust infection prevention and control practices were in place to support a safe environment. For example, children washed their hands with warm running water and robust cleaning routines had been established with products that did not harm the natural environment.

The service had put in place a system for the safe drop off and collection of children. Parents had to wait at the collection point while staff accompanied children to and from the site. This arrangement also allowed for staff to safely provide parents with feedback each day.

## How good is our leadership?

**4 - Good**

We evaluated this quality indicator 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

There were identified vision, values and aims for the service which recognised the importance of the ongoing development of the service and the promotion of positive outcomes for children.

The vision, values and aims included:

- Providing a service that is responsive to the needs of the local communities.
- Embracing an ethos where children are valued, trusted and supported to lead their own nature-based learning journeys.
- Creating a safe forest setting with dynamic spaces to fulfil children's daily needs.
- Encouraging children to learn to place themselves in nature as a connected part of it.
- Placing sustainability at its core and maintain a strong transparency of practices.

The manager promoted a positive attitude to change and recognised the importance of including others in developing a shared vision. Staff felt well supported by the manager and found her to be open, approachable, and very hands on. This resulted in a strong ethos across the team and service which clearly demonstrated the service's aims and objectives for children to reach their full potential.

There was some evidence of children and their families being asked for their views in relation to service improvements. The manager and staff should continue to invite and encourage feedback to support children and their families to feel included and to influence positive change within the service. The manager explained that they had developed a new parent portal on their website which would be launched in the new year. The manager and staff were confident that this would significantly increase the opportunities for parental engagement.

There was an improvement plan in place which identified the key priorities and action points for the service. The plan was linked to the document, 'How good is our learning and childcare.' To ensure continued improved outcomes for children and families, the service should also make use of best practice guidance 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare.' We signposted the manager to the Care Inspectorate Hub where they would find useful information and bitesize videos in relation to self-evaluation.

## How good is our staff team?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key quality indicator as very good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### 4.3 Staff deployment

There was a strong positive ethos within the service where children were valued, trusted and supported through supervised child led play. The staff were extremely skilled, dedicated and nurturing. They were all enthusiastic and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. Staff were respectful and supportive of each other. They were very warm, caring and sensitive in their approach and demonstrated positive team working, which promoted a happy and secure environment for children. They were responsive and respectful of children during interactions and play, which supported children to feel safe and secure.

Effective arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day. The location and nature of the outdoor area used by the service were taken into account when staffing levels and deployment of staff were considered by the manager. There was a good staff to child ratio which allowed for the effective supervision and quality engagement. Staff were flexible in their deployment, which supported children to lead their play and engage in free flow opportunities whilst remaining safe.

Staff worked very well together as a team and their differing skills, knowledge and experience contributed to positive interactions and play and learning experiences for children. They communicated well with each other and worked together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with children across the day. Transitions were seamless and well planned, with children being comfortable about what was happening next.

The staff knew the families and worked to ensure every family was welcomed and valued. Staff had regular communication with parents and had established positive relationships which enhanced children's experiences and promoted a partnership approach.

Staff had completed a range of training. Two were qualified Forest School leaders and had a number of years of forest school experience and two further staff were currently undertaking this training. Staff had also completed other relevant outdoor training including risk assessment, outdoor first aid, fire and tool training.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older 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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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