

Forest Foxes Kindergarten Day Care of Children

Redhall View entrance to Colinton Dell
Edinburgh
EH12 2NA

Telephone: 07941815151

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
9 October 2025

Service provided by:
Forest Foxes Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2022000186

Service no:
CS2022000278

About the service

Forest Foxes Kindergarten is registered to provide a fully outdoor care service to a maximum of 15 children aged from 2 years to not yet attending primary school at any one time. No more than 8 are aged 2 years to under 3 years.

The service delivers three sessions each week from two outdoor learning spaces. On Tuesday and Thursday it delivers from Redford Woods, in a quiet residential area in Redford. On Wednesday it operates from Redhall Walled Garden woodland, adjacent to Redhall Walled Garden. Both locations are located within the City of Edinburgh and car parking is available close to both sites.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 7 October 2025 between 08:45 and 15:15, and Wednesday 8 October 2025 between 08:45 and 13:45. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

The service registered in September 2022. This was the first inspection since registration. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered. To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children, staff, and parents;
- observed interactions, routines, practice and daily life;
- reviewed planning, assessment, and personal planning documents;
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment; and
- considered feedback from families and staff.

As part of this inspection, we assessed core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary throughout the report and have made areas for improvement within 'Leadership', 'Children thrive and develop in quality spaces' and 'Children are supported to achieve.'

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment;
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors;
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met; and
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work.

Key messages

Children benefited from being given space and time to engage in play because adults valued the importance of this to foster creativity and independence.

Children and families were warmly welcomed into the service and were treated with kindness and respect, helping them to feel valued and supported.

Children naturally congregated to staff, seeking them out to engage with them. They trusted staff and invited them into their play.

An enriching outdoor environment supported children to develop knowledge, respect, and understanding of their community and wider world.

Staff prioritised children's safety, whilst also embracing a positive, balanced approach to risk in children's play.

This was the first inspection since the service registered. There were important strengths within the setting's work. Some aspects which could benefit from improvement included, developing children's personal plans, management of medication and handwashing 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

Leadership	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children benefited from being given space and time to engage in play because adults valued the importance of this to foster creativity and independence. Management planned to review and update their vision, values and aims as a team and with children and families to fully reflect their aspirations and their role to enhance outcomes for children.

Staff demonstrated a clear commitment to continuous improvement. Examples included, using best practice guidance and research effectively to support thoughtful changes, such as the Care Inspectorate improvement webinars to improve the service. They promoted a collaborative approach to self-evaluation, with staff confident in sharing ideas and reflections. Regular meetings also enabled staff to reflect and contribute to service improvements.

During the inspection, staff demonstrated responsiveness and openness to suggestions, highlighting respectful relationships and a shared commitment to growth. Moving forward, improved monitoring and data gathering through audits would help to identify gaps and inconsistencies in standards. This should also support all staff to understand agreed standards and expectations in specific areas of practice (**see area for improvement 1**).

There was a commitment to ensuring that the views of children and families informed improvement and were central to the self-evaluation process. Children's views were sought on a daily basis and informed planning. Families were included in the standards and expectations of the service. They were kept informed and included through parent-friendly policies and improvement plan, and invited to contribute their views through surveys and an online messaging platform.

We received positive feedback from families who told us:

"The Forest Foxes team are always receptive to, and encouraging of, any feedback or suggestions for developing the service."

There were clear processes for mentoring and supporting staff through one-to-one supervision meetings which identified goals to enhance practice. Staff showed commitment to continuing professional development in line with their own and service aspirations. Recent training included learning about a teaching approach called slow pedagogy, which allows children to learn and explore at their own pace.

Management prioritised values-based recruitment and recruited staff whose values, beliefs and experience are in line with the ethos of outdoor learning. However, there were gaps in aspects of safer recruitment practices in relation to undertaking required checks for specific roles (**see area for improvement 2**).

Areas for improvement

1. For children to experience high quality care and support, the provider should audit areas of practice to identify gaps, reinforce best practices, and ensure compliance with updated standards.

This should include but not be limited to, effective monitoring and auditing of:

- children's personal plans
- management of medication reviews
- accidents and incidents to identify emerging patterns
- staff registration with the relevant professional body.

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

2. For children to be cared for by staff who have been appropriately and safely recruited for their role, the provider should ensure that staff recruitment practice is in line with safe staffing procedures.

This should include but not be limited to:

- a minimum of two references should be received, one of whom should be previous employer, before staff start working
- new references being sought specific to the role when staff move roles within the service.

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

'I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

An enriching outdoor environment supported children to develop knowledge, respect, and understanding of their community and wider world. Base camps provided a variety of resources to support children's development across well-defined play spaces. These took account of children's interests and stages of development. For example, books, crafts, and exploring natural items.

The Redford Woods base camp had a natural clearing with well-marked boundaries. This meant that all children could be seen easily. Children showed that they understood the boundaries and rules about where they were allowed to play. The service could further consider developing the Redhall base camp in relation to use of space and clearer boundaries. This would help staff to be able to easily see children at all times to keep them safe.

After spending time in the base camp, children went on adventures. These were exciting walks through the woods and in the walled garden, practising a range of skills including climbing, exploring, and investigating. Children paddled in the small stream in the woods. They had a deep relationship with nature which was skilfully guided by staff. Exploring and discussing fungi, types of plants and trees, birds, and seasonal changes helped them to develop knowledgeable and learn to respect nature. A parent said, "It is a beautiful outdoor setting, and the children love seeing the changes in the natural environment, week by week."

Staff prioritised children's safety, whilst also embracing a positive, balanced approach to risk in children's play. Procedures and risk assessments in place ensured children's health and safety. Additional shelters and blankets were used in the winter to keep children warm. Staff used the guidance, Keeping children safe: Look, Think, Act campaign (Care Inspectorate, 2021) to raise awareness of children's safety. SIMOA the elephant mascot supported children to understand the importance of staying within the boundaries of the site, or within view of Simoa when out on adventures.

Effective handwashing with warm running water and soap was carried out at some key times, such as, before snack and after toileting. Children and adults should also consistently wash hands after eating and doing tasks such as nose blowing to reduce infection risk **(see area for improvement 1)**.

Children's personal information was collected and used appropriately to support the delivery of safe, effective, and compassionate care. Staff personal mobile phones were used to take photographs to support communication with families or for observation purposes. Clear procedures were in place to ensure that photographs were deleted once processing. Management should clearly state procedures in place in relevant policies and keep parents fully informed about how data is processed **(see area for improvement 2)**.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's health and wellbeing, the provider should ensure that effective handwashing practice is consistency in place at key times for both children and staff.

This should include but is not limited to, consistently washing hands after eating and when doing tasks such as nose blowing to reduce infection risk.

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

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (4.11).

2. For parents to be fully informed about how personal information is collected and used, the provider should update data management and safeguarding policies and procedures. These should be included in parents' information pack and permissions sought when families start using the service.

This should include but is not limited to the use of staff personal mobile phones.

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

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (4.11).

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement therefore; we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

All staff created a rich and enabling environment where children's right to play is fully realised. Children were having fun throughout the session, they were given freedom, space, and time to explore and discover. Sessions were child-centred following their interests, curiosities offered and seasons. Some examples of experiences offered included, wildlife exploration, natural art and craft, tree and log climbing, campfires and cooking, and foraging.

Children set up some of their own play experiences, for example, putting up the rope swing. This gave them ownership and exposure to new skills such as rope tying. They also learned through discussion about safety and how to assess risk as they set up this resource.

Staff interactions were warm and respectful, and staff were aware of the interests and developmental needs of the younger two-year-old children attending. They skilfully extended children's learning. For example, responding to their interests in animals, implementing this into planned opportunities, and introducing books that reflected this interest. Children were challenged in their learning through questioning about bugs that they could find to develop thinking skills, and through using real tools to hammer conkers to make conker soap.

Children led their play by making choices about where they would like to play. There were opportunities to enhance this by introducing a broader range of resources. For example, malleable materials, such as clay or play dough to be available for children to independently access.

An abundance of different play types were offered and encouraged, offering challenge and supporting children's developing confidence and self-esteem. For example, risk benefit play, energetic play, science, and children finding out about the world around them. A broad range of skills, including language, literacy and numeracy were enhanced through a balance of child and adult led interactions and experiences. For example, rich conversations supporting language development and early reading and counting using fact finding books and natural resources. Staff could consider ways to enhance these opportunities through adding materials such as more writing, drawing and measuring resources. Similarly, staff self-reflected on how children could deepen their learning through digital technology.

We received positive feedback from families who told us:

"Activities include picking and painting with brambles, hammock relaxing, story times, talks about animals, nature walks, mud pie making, and net fishing in the river."

Planning was highly responsive to children's interests and to the natural changes occurring within the outdoor environment. Staff were committed to planning to enhance outcomes for children. As a result, planning and evaluating processes for observing children's learning and considering next steps had developed. Responsive planning was shared with parents on a daily basis through an online messaging platform. This kept parents informed of the experiences offered, helping them to feel valued and included. Children's progress was recorded in annual progress reports. Moving forward, children's next steps in learning could be more specific to further enhance progression in learning.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children and families were warmly welcomed and treated with kindness and respect, helping them to feel valued and supported. This gave them a strong message that they mattered through positive relationships and connections. Children naturally congregated to staff seeking them out to engage with them, inviting them into their play. For example, when children were following their interests role-playing baby tigers, they were climbing on the mummy tiger (staff member) who was lying in the grass. As a result, children developed social and language communication, imagination and confidence.

Care provided was deeply influenced by the insights gained from their family. Strong connections with families enhanced engagement. Some parents chose to stay and join in sessions. Parents highly valued the service and engaged well with activities on offer such as stay and play sessions. One parent told us, "My child is developing confidence and resilience in an environment where I am confident they are well cared for."

Families were given helpful important information about policy and procedures, and experiences on offer before children started. Settling in progress reports were shared after six weeks of starting to show progress children made when settling in.

Staff proactively researched national and local policy and best practice guidance. For example, researching the updated best practice guidance, *Setting the Table* (Scottish Government, 2025) to ensure that food served was nutritionally balanced. Staff knew and supported children's food allergies and intolerances well. This positively contributed to children's health and wellbeing.

Snack times were sociable experiences where children and staff sat together. In line with food safety standard requirements for outdoor services, snack was pre-prepared. Children were given opportunities to develop independence through collecting and clearing away plates. To keep children safe and included, all children should be supported to sit on the snack rug when eating.

All children had a personal plan which included important information about children's interests, preferences, and health care needs. The service should consider ways to strengthen opportunities to review plans with children and families every six months or sooner. This would ensure that information is up to date and relevant. Support plans with clear strategies should be introduced for some children to help aid their development and show how individual needs will be supported (**see area for improvement 1**).

Medication was stored sufficiently and was readily accessible if needed. There was an informative policy in place, in line with management of medication best practice guidance. However, this was not fully reflected in practice. Improvements should be made to management of medication practice (**see area for improvement 2**).

Areas for improvement

1. To fully support children's health, welfare and development needs, the provider should ensure that information in personal plans is up to date and relevant, reflecting children's progress and development.

This should include, but is not limited to,

- improving opportunities to review plans with children and families every six months or sooner
- introducing support plans with clear strategies to show how individual needs will be supported.

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

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This is to ensure staff skills and knowledge is consistent with best practice guidance, Guide for Providers on Personal Planning Early Learning and Childcare (Care Inspectorate 2021).

2. For children's health and medical needs to be fully supported, the provider should improve management of medication procedures in line with guidance.

This should include, but is not limited to,

- introducing consent forms for administering medication, in line with guidance
- reviewing health needs and medication every three months with parents to inform of changes to child's health or medication needs, and to check medication is in date
- introducing health care plans for children who have emergency medication, clearly stating steps to take and what to do in case of emergency.

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

My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

This is to ensure staff skills and knowledge is consistent with best practice guidance, Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services (Care Inspectorate, 2025).

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

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	4 - Good
Children experience high quality spaces	4 - Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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