

Mucky Boots Day Care of Children

Maryculter Scout Hut or Maryculter Woods
Kirkton of Maryculter
Maryculter
AB12 5GZ

Telephone: 07939 547 016

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
23 June 2022

Service provided by:
Mucky Boots Education a Company
limited by guarantee

Service provider number:
SP2016012768

Service no:
CS2016349631

About the service

Mucky Boots Kindergarten is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a fully outdoor care service to a maximum of 20 children aged from three years to seven years during term time; three years to 16 years during school holidays.

Mucky Boots nature kindergarten is an outdoor nursery based in Maryculter Woods. It has written permission to use Maryculter Woods from Maryculter Woodlands Trust - the organisation that manages the woods on behalf of the community. The service also has the use of the Maryculter scout hut as a meeting point and for use in severe weather conditions. The scout hut provides toilet facilities and a small kitchen area and a large hall.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 June 2022 between 08:30 and 16:30. Two inspectors carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year .

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with a children using the service and made contact with seven parents of children who attend
- spoke with the staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach with children.
- Staff knew the children very well and supported their individual needs.
- Staff had developed very good relationships with parents, they felt included within the service and were well informed about their child's experience and development.
- Children led their learning and were free to explore the natural environment developing a range of lifelong skills .
- Staff were good at reflecting together to ensure positive outcomes for children.
- The manager was supportive and placed a high importance on the wellbeing of her staff team.

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 the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

We found the staff to be very warm, caring and nurturing towards the children. Staff took time to listen to the children, getting down to their level to show they were interested. Language was carefully used to support the children to think and make decisions. This resulted in the children feeling safe and secure within the setting.

It was clear when speaking to staff and from their approach with the children that they knew them well. They spoke knowledgeably to us about the children, describing their individual characteristics and any sensitivities they may have had. We saw staff responding throughout the day, with kindness and sensitivity. Parents also commented on how well the staff knew the children and supported them well. This contributed positively to children's self-esteem and sense of wellbeing. As a result they were confident in approaching staff for help or reassurance.

Children's wellbeing was supported through effective personal planning. These captured the likes, personalities and backgrounds of the children. The setting worked proactively with families and other professionals to support the individual needs of the children. This information was used to create care plans for children where appropriate to ensure positive outcomes.

Staff were currently working on introducing a system, taking account of the wellbeing indicators, which would contain children's information in one document. This will make it easier for staff to access information, to track and review children's progress going forward.

Although no children were given medication during our visit the manager discussed how this was managed in a safe and sensitive manner. We noted that both families and children were involved in the decision making. Appropriate records and plans were in place which meant all staff could administer medication effectively. This ensured the safety and wellbeing of the children.

Holistic assessments were in place which supported the children to reach their full potential. Under the different areas of learning and development strengths, challenges and vulnerabilities were recognised. Staff took time to regularly discuss children progress and identify suitable next steps in their learning.

1.3 Play and Learning

During our visit all children were fully engaged with their environment and were leading their own learning. They spent time playing within the natural environment available to them. They enjoyed exploring, climbing trees and jumping from rocks. Children readily accepted ideas from staff to extend their learning. This included items such as dressing up clothes and materials and spades for digging. This promoted their imagination, curiosity and problem solving skills.

A seasonal and responsive calendar was in place where staff had given consideration to possible experiences and activities suitable for the children to become involved in throughout the year. This took account of the importance of understanding each season and supported the free play approach while deepening children's connection with nature.

Staff had a very good understanding of child development and relevant theory. They spoke confidently about how they had used this to support the children's experiences and wellbeing. Effective use of open questions helped extend the children's thinking and enriched their play and learning.

The staff made observations of the children's experiences which were recorded in children's learning journals. Staff referred to and reflected on these observations during staff meetings. Staff were working on ensuring these observations were all high quality and linked to the holistic assessments. This reflected the broad range of lifelong learning skills the children were developing. Parents spoke about the wide range of learning and skills their children had developed during their time at Mucky Boots.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Mucky Boots is situated in large woodland within the Maryculter Woods. Within the setting the children had ample space to meet their needs safely. They were able to freely explore the woodlands, shelters including tables and seating areas to sit at if they wished. There were quieter spaces identified and the hammock for relaxing.

Space reflected current interests and curiosities with resources provided to support learning. The health and physical development of the children was supported by activities such as digging, trees for climbing, swings on trees, ropes for balancing and woodwork opportunities. Children spent time dressing up and making beds for themselves using rocks and reels. Others enjoyed digging and making ramps for the vehicles. Parents spoke about the setting adding vehicles following the children's particular interests.

Children were provided with a sense of ownership in their setting. Staff carried out planning sessions with the children which enabled them to actively take part in designing their space and how it was used. As a result, children were proud of their setting and were fully involved in it.

Risk assessments were in place and staff checked the site before the children arrived. They involved children in assessing risk which started with a song as they entered the woods encouraging them to be aware of their surroundings. Children were aware of the boundaries within the woodland and knew if they wanted to go outwith the boundaries they had to take an adult.

All staff had walkie talkies and regular head counts were done. The staff were effectively deployed throughout the woodland area to supervise and support the children. Staff made good use of their radios to communicate with each other to ask for help or raise awareness of where children were playing.

Policies and procedures were in place to ensure consistent approaches across the setting. New staff had also had time to become familiar with these.

Infection, prevention and control practices were effectively embedded which ensured the safety of the children. The camping toilets within the camping tents were regularly checked and cleaned by the staff. Children were comfortable and confident using the toilets. They had established good hand washing routines using soap, water and paper towels.

How good is our leadership? **5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Staff were clear on what was important for the setting to meet the needs of children and families. They had recently developed a new vision, with a set of values and aims which reflected the aspirations of the setting. Families were involved in shaping the vision and children had been supported to understand this through the daily mantra. This created a calming ethos from the beginning of the day.

Children and families' views were actively sought to inform the development of the setting. Staff consulted with children often using mind maps to gather their thoughts on things such as snack and their environment. They regularly asked parents for their views and feedback on aspects of the setting which was used to inform future plans and the development of the service. Families shared that communication was very good and they felt included. Mucky Boots have a parent council which supports them and provides opportunities for the parents to get involved in the setting.

Self evaluation allowed the service to deliver high quality care and support for children and families. Their self evaluation document outlined their three year plan and clearly demonstrated what they were working towards achieving. Through discussions it was evident that the staff were reflecting on the outcomes for children, however, they should now make sure this information is documented.

The manager placed high importance on allowing the staff time to reflect together. Regular staff meetings, in-service days and staff weekends away were carefully planned with a clear agenda set out. These have brought about positive changes to outcomes for children and families.

Robust monthly quality assurance calendars were in place to ensure audits and reviews were taking place. Planned tasks and observations were included within this to lead continuous development.

Staff monitoring was in place. These planned observations had clear focus areas. Follow up discussions took which supported the settings values and next steps were identified. These supported continuous professional development which meant children benefited from staff awareness of most recent guidance and research.

How good is our staff team?**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

4.3 Staff Deployment

Deployment of staff supported a continuity of care across the day. This allowed staff to support the children appropriately and communicate with families. The manager recognised the importance of high levels of interactions and support to promote wellbeing and safety. Staff breaks were planned to minimise impact on children while allowing staff to be refreshed.

Arrangements for absence were in place and were well managed to support minimum disruption to children's routines. Where possible and when necessary staff prepared families in advance if a member of staff was going to be absent to ensure children's care and wellbeing was not compromised.

Staff communicated very well with each other throughout the day. The use of the walkie talkies supported this. Staff worked together to ensure there was effective supervision and quality engagement with the children through out the day.

Busier times of the day were well managed and staff remained engaged with children while others focused on essential tasks. Staff took time to sit and talk to children at snack and lunchtime and the manager read a story with the group while others got ready to leave the site. This ensured that staff fully met the needs of the children at all times.

The manager had good knowledge of staff skills and their differing experience and knowledge. These were used to ensure children's experiences were positive and they were safe throughout the day.

We noted that there were enough staff to meet the needs of the children which allowed staff to be very flexible in their approach. This enabled individual and group requests to be accommodated. For example: staff supported some children who wanted to go on an adventure and take their lunch.

The manager recognised that a happy, healthy staff team meant positive outcomes for children. She put the children and staff at the heart of the service and staff felt supported by her caring and nurturing approach.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To ensure the safety of children the provider must:

- a) improve communication with parents to ensure children's safety during induction
- b) improve systems for staff communication in relation to children's attendance.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: "I am supported and cared for sensitively by people who anticipate issues and are aware of and plan for any known vulnerability or frailty" (HSCS 3.18).

This area for improvement was made on 26 October 2018.

Action taken since then

The staff took responsibility for walking the children to the woods from the field where they met. This was a relaxed, unhurried experience for the children. They were well supervised and showed an awareness of road safety.

Previous area for improvement 2

The provider and management should improve quality assurance systems to ensure children receive high quality care and early learning experiences.

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

This area for improvement was made on 26 October 2018.

Action taken since then

The setting had quality assurance calendars in place to ensure audits and reviews were taking place. Planned tasks and observations were included within this to lead continuous development.

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

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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