

Tots & Teens @ Knox Academy Day Care of Children

Knox Academy
Pencaitland Road
Haddington
EH41 4DT

Telephone: 07864948806

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 June 2024

Service provided by:
East Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002600

Service no:
CS2022000385

About the service

Tots & Teens @ Knox Academy is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 12 children at any one time aged from 2 years to under 4 years.

The setting operates term time only.

The setting operates from rooms within Knox Academy in Haddington. The setting has a playroom, outdoor space, food preparation area and toilet/nappy changing facilities. Access to the premises is through the main school building.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 June 2024 between 9:00 and 15:00. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the registration of the service.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children during their play
- reviewed comments from three parents who responded to our MS questionnaire
- spoke with three staff and management
- observed staff practice and experiences for children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children received very good care and support from staff who knew them well.
- Staff used their knowledge of nurture to provide children with a caring and secure environment.
- Children have access to a very good range of play and learning opportunities to support their development.
- Further consideration of how to supervise children during fire drills would enhance children's safety.
- Leaders in the setting needed to formalise the self-evaluation processes.
- The deployment of skilled and experienced staff ensured high quality outcomes for children.

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?	4 - 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

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.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children and their families were warmly welcomed into the setting by staff who provided nurturing and responsive care. Staff supported children well at this time of transition, which helped children to feel safe and secure in the setting. One parent commented "I love this setting and the staff did an amazing job helping us through an initial tricky transition for our child. They were caring and supportive."

Staff were calm, fun and friendly, they affectionately told us of children's personalities, interests and preferences. They had a very good understanding of child development, valued the children's individuality and had high aspirations for them. This resulted in children who were happy, settled and confident in their routines and experiences.

Effective information sharing with families supported personal planning. The keyworker system enabled staff to establish positive relationships with families and helped to gather key information from families and children. Children's personal plans were informative, with information which gave a very good overview of each child. Recording was very well maintained to give a holistic overview of each child.

Children requiring additional support had individualised strategies in place. Staff could discuss the progress of these strategies but it was not always noted in the personal plan. Additional recording would enable staff to have an overview of progress or if adjustments to the support plans were needed.

Snack and mealtimes provided children with a positive social experience. Lunch was provided by the setting and delivered to the playroom by kitchen staff. There were limited opportunities for serving food at lunch time but this was addressed through snack time and opportunities for helping prepare snack. Children were well supported during their meal, where staff sat and ate with them. Staff ensured that all children had enough to eat and water was provided throughout the session. Children's food preferences and food allergies were well documented and known to staff to enable them to support health needs.

Children's health and wellbeing needs were being met as the appropriate forms and permissions were in place for the safe administration of medication. Staff were knowledgeable on how to share initial concerns on children's welfare and were confident in child protection procedures. This contributed to keeping children safe from harm.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun and enjoying the range of core activities and outdoor experiences that they were offered. These were well balanced to the developmental stage of children present. Staff responded to children's requests and used effective questioning and skilfully scaffolded learning. This enhanced children's thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as enriching their play and promoted their curiosities and sense of wonder.

Planning approaches included intentional learning promotions but were mainly responsive and in the moment which reflected children's interests. Staff were knowledgeable about each child's stage of development and confidently used this information to support high quality play and learning experiences. Observations and next steps in learning were age and stage appropriate, focused on learning and monitored well through the processes for tracking development. This resulted in children being supported to reach their full potential.

Language, literacy and numeracy opportunities were supported well indoors. Children benefitted from a vocabulary rich environment, which included a range of reference books linked to children's interests, for example butterfly life cycles. We saw children regularly and confidently practiced their early writing skills with various materials provided. Fine motor skills, sorting and matching opportunities were provided in most areas of play. There was scope to further promote children's language and literacy skills in the outdoor area.

Learning Logs were kept to share children's learning and experiences with parents. These were of very good quality and kept up to date by staff. Children shared their books with us and could clearly reflect on their photos and their learning. Parents commented on the quality of play their children took part in: "Painting, messy play, learning about caterpillars growing and turning into butterflies (they had real ones in the setting). Water play, outdoor physical," "My child now fully immerses in imaginative/roleplay at home!" and " There's a lot to do that everyone is always busy and constantly changing."

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

Children were made to feel like they belonged because staff had created a warm, inviting and calm environment. Children were confident in their surroundings, knew where things they needed were kept and were familiar with the routines and pace of the day. The environment was enhanced by attractive displays of children's work and information for parents.

The space for play indoors was limited by the size of the room. Staff had given this thought and arranged the room to maximise space for children's play. The outdoor area was accessible for most of the session, which enabled children a choice of where to play but also eased the space issue indoors. Although there was no dedicated space for children to sleep, there was a good routine for rest and relaxation after lunch and resources for sleeping if a child did need to nap during session. Staff also ensured that there was a comfy, cosy area for children to rest at any time during the session.

Children benefitted from the use of good quality furniture and play and learning resources. We have asked staff to ensure that resources such as dolls and some of the soft furnishings are cleaned regularly to ensure that they are always attractively presented to children. There was good use of loose parts, indoors and outdoors. Children were familiar with them and used them to develop their imagination, creativity and problem solving.

The day of our visit was very warm and sunny. The outdoor area was a courtyard and, as such, it became very hot. Staff responded well to the heat, ensuring that children had sun protection on and that drinking water was available.

There was shade from a tree but we have asked the manager to look at how additional shade might be provided outdoors during very warm and sunny weather.

During our visit the school fire alarm went off. Staff were very well organised for this and removed children from the setting quickly and safely. As it was not a drill, children were gathered outdoors for sometime and naturally became restless. This made supervision in the large open space a challenge for staff. We have asked the manager to investigate the possibility of school staff or students from the school being allocated to support staff and children at the fire drill assembly point.

The collection of data and recordings about children and their support needs was appropriate. Documents were accessible and, as such, were well maintained to ensure that staff had an overview of each child. Confidentiality was ensured through policies which reminded staff and workplace students about information sharing. Documents were kept in a safe manner to ensure that they could only be accessed by staff. This helped to ensure that children and families' rights to privacy were promoted.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

Leadership within the setting was well defined. The manager was not present in the setting on a daily basis and leadership tasks were carried out by a senior member of staff in their absence. The shared understanding of roles and responsibilities contributed positively to the morale of the staff team, who had high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children and families to reach their full potential. Families had confidence in the staff and the service provided. Their comments included, "Friendly staff, their ethics and values align with what we have at home" and "Personalised care, brilliant opportunities to play and explore, open communication and relationship."

The manager and staff had carried out self-evaluation work and made improvements to aspects of the setting. They could describe these to us and we could see some of the impact of self-evaluation. However, there needed to be a more cohesive approach to self-evaluation to ensure that it was evidenced and included staff, children and families. The local authority were planning the roll out of a quality assurance model for all services which would help the establishment of setting appropriate self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Policies and procedures, which were needed for the smooth running of the setting, were in place and were currently under review to update them in line with current good practice. Systems such as the administration of medication, accidents, incidents and risk assessment were audited regularly to ensure that they were up to date and accurate. This helped staff support children's safety and wellbeing.

Families had opportunities to come into the setting both in the morning and after the session. There were also informal opportunities for staying to play and managers and staff were working on further developing the relationships with families to include them in the self-evaluation process. A family newsletter had been started and the senior was actively working on methods to provide families with opportunities to involve them in the life of the setting.

Leaders and staff were passionate and enthusiastic about their roles and responsibilities. They participated in discussions on an informal basis as time for meeting together outwith childcare times was not currently possible. The addition of a communication book enabled all staff to know what was going on in the setting. However, there needed to be further opportunities for staff to get together to enable professional discussions and allowed them to reflect on their practice and the service they provided. This would enable staff to be fully involved in reviewing and evaluating developments within service provision.

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.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment.

Children were cared for by a staff team who were compassionate, friendly and responsive to children's needs. There was a good mix of skills and knowledge within the staff team who were committed to providing quality play and learning for children. They were a relatively new team and had worked hard to establish positive relationships with each other, the children and families. They communicated in a respectful way and spoke with enthusiasm and passion about their roles, which demonstrated positivity and commitment to their work. This supported children to have fun, achieve and feel safe in the service.

Effective staff deployment meant there were enough staff to care for children and meet their needs. There were sufficient staff to ensure that breaks were well managed. This meant children were kept safe, and their routines were not disrupted when staff were given time to eat and rest. For a period of the afternoon there were fewer staff, which could pose a challenge to enabling children to have choice of where to play. We have asked leaders in the setting to assess the impact of these times.

The setting had a role in enabling students from the school to gain some childcare experience. To ensure that student placements were appropriate, there was a student profile and a small number of procedures for students to follow. External local authority staff liaised with school support staff to ensure that placements were well monitored. Setting staff continued to assess the intergenerational opportunities of having students in the setting to ensure that it impacted positively on the outcomes for the children using the setting.

Staff had a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience to meet children's needs. They could confidently discuss their professional learning and how they used learning to improve experiences for children. We discussed with the setting leaders that further training opportunities could be accessed, on a more diverse range of subjects, to continue the professional development of staff and secure the continued very good outcomes for children.

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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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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