

# Caz's Kiddies In The Country Day Care of Children

Elwyn  
Athelstaneford  
North Berwick  
EH39 5BE

Telephone: 01620 880220

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
27 March 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Caz's Kiddies Limited

**Service provider number:**  
SP2023000241

**Service no:**  
CS2023000367

## About the service

Caz's Kiddies In The Country is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children not yet attending primary school at any one time of whom: no more than 8 children are aged under 2 years and; no more than 24 are aged from 2 years to those not yet attending primary school full time. The outdoor space has been taken into account when agreeing the maximum number of children aged 2 years and over. Children must have access to the outdoor space at all times.

The setting is located in the rural village of Athelstaneford, just a few miles from North Berwick. Children had access to a wide range of experiences within the nearby community garden, local farms, woodland and shops. The setting is divided into two age groups: babies and children aged 2-5 years. Each group has their own designated indoor playroom within the main house. A shared play/dining area is located directly beside the kitchen. All children accessed the same large, enclosed garden at the rear of the property, with a sectioned off area available for younger babies.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 25 March 2025 and Thursday 27 March 2025. 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 children attending the setting
- spoke with staff and management
- received online feedback questionnaires from 30 families and nine staff.
- reviewed documents
- observed practice and daily life in the setting.

## Key messages

- Children experienced rich and meaningful learning through play, with a strong emphasis on outdoor and community based experiences that supported their curiosity, confidence and wellbeing.
- Staff used responsive, child-led planning and skilled interactions to extend children's learning, creating a nurturing and engaging environment both indoors and out.
- The setting was warm and welcoming, with lots of creative spaces that helped children feel safe, happy and ready to explore.
- Some parts of the building would benefit from a refresh to keep things clean, comfortable and looking their best.
- Staff took ownership of champion roles across the setting, using their skills and interests to enhance children's experiences and contribute to a positive, nurturing environment.
- Supportive management and a reflective team approach helped create a positive culture of change.

## 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?	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.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring and consistent interactions from staff, which had a significant impact on their wellbeing. We observed children who were happy, confident and relaxed and who had clearly formed strong, loving relationships with those who cared for them. Staff were attentive, respectful and nurturing in their approach, which contributed to the children feeling safe, valued and secure.

Staff took time to get to know each child as an individual. They understood not only their personalities but also the important things in their lives. This deep knowledge helped staff to tailor care that was genuinely meaningful and helped build strong emotional bonds. Children were supported to be themselves and to take part in all aspects of life in the setting. This approach fostered high self-esteem and a strong sense of inclusion and belonging. The setting's emphasis on kindness and fun created an environment where children could thrive.

Children were encouraged to express how they felt through interactive ways, such as the wellbeing tree, puppets and daily conversations. This helped develop emotional literacy and awareness from a young age. At the time of the inspection, Big CAL (Care And Love), a wellbeing octopus from Start at the Beginning, was visiting the setting. CAL supported children to explore the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included, in a fun, relatable way. This helped children to better understand their rights and how to care for themselves and others.

Care was carefully planned to meet individual needs. Personal plans were used effectively and regularly reviewed, with many families sharing that they felt fully involved in this process. They appreciated the regular updates and open communication. One family shared, "We have regular reviews and interactions with our child's buddy and updates on what he's been learning. They have grown massively in independence, which has been fostered by the team". Another commented, "When there were changes in my child's behaviour, the staff responded quickly, involved me and reassured me throughout". There were some variations in family experiences of accessing personal plans. While most told us they had seen and contributed to them, others felt unsure or hadn't yet had the opportunity. Staff and management were open to improving this by increasing consistency and offering more flexible opportunities for families to engage.

Families were offered a range of opportunities to stay connected, including stay-and-play sessions, consultations and updates via email and social media. All parents told us they felt welcomed into the setting for opportunities to talk about their child's care, play and learning. However, families were not consistently welcomed into the playroom at drop-off and pick-up times. This limited opportunities to strengthen relationships and to share information in the moment. Creating space for parents to enter the playroom during these transitions would allow for more natural, meaningful conversations between staff and families, supporting continuity of care and giving families a fuller picture of their child's day. We were confident that the provider and management would address this to enhance partnership working and strengthen the home-setting connection.

Staff used a range of approaches to support communication with children, including sign, object and song

signifiers. These were used consistently and with purpose across the setting, ensuring all children could express their needs and participate fully. Daily routines were calm, unhurried and responsive to children's needs. Mealtimes were sociable and relaxed, with staff sitting with children and encouraging conversation, choice and independence. Children enjoying nutritious, home cooked meals in a relaxed atmosphere. They could see, hear and smell food being prepared in the nearby kitchen, which added to the homely feel. Children confidently served themselves and were supported to try new foods that reflected their individual cultural and dietary needs. This routine contributed positively to children's wellbeing and life skills.

Staff were highly attuned to when children needed rest or comfort. The setting's flexible approach to sleep supported children to self-regulate, with cosy spaces and familiar routines helping them settle. Staff responded gently and sensitively to individual needs, using strategies such as cuddles in a rocking chair. This approach respected individual needs and showed the depth of trust and attachment children had within the setting. Safety and comfort were prioritised, with regular checks, staff presence and thoughtful use of familiar items to support emotional security.

### **Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning**

Children experienced rich, meaningful play and learning opportunities that were rooted in their interests, the local environment and the strong relationships they had with staff. The setting had a deep connection to its surrounding community, providing a wide range of experiences that promoted curiosity, creativity and a love of learning.

A key feature of the setting was its use of the nursery's "pink party" bus, which enabled children to go on regular trips to places such as the beach, local parks and woodlands. These frequent outings were highly valued by families, with many describing them as a highlight of their child's experience. One family commented, "We chose the nursery because of the outdoor play area. Trips to the beach, park and community garden are always talked about at home". During the inspection, we joined the children as they spent the day in the woods. We observed them confidently leading their own play as they climbed rocks, built dens, searched for insects and used their imagination to invent games and stories. This reflected the setting's commitment to outdoor learning and the benefits this brought to children's wellbeing.

Indoor and outdoor play experiences helped children develop skills in language, literacy and numeracy in ways that were meaningful and engaging. For example, children created books during literacy week and acted as narrators and illustrators, while others took part in Olympic-style games to develop early maths and physical skills. The large outdoor space, which included a pirate ship, mud kitchen and a caravan used as a cosy reading spot, offered stimulating spaces that inspired role play, storytelling and creative exploration.

Planning for play and learning was responsive, flexible and focused on children's voices and interests. Staff used a mix of in the moment and intentional planning approaches. Children contributed their ideas to floor books and were actively involved in shaping what they learned. Staff told us, "Most of the time, the children come in after their days off and tell us about their adventures and we build on that". Staff also made thoughtful observations and used skilled questioning to deepen children's thinking. For example, when exploring nature, staff prompted children to reflect on what they observed, extending their vocabulary and reasoning. These approaches contributed to children's confidence and sense of ownership over their learning.

Children's learning was also enriched through seasonal topics and real life experiences, such as baking, harvesting vegetables, engaging in cultural celebrations and visits from community members including farmers and emergency services. One family said, "They do so much with the children related to seasons, holidays and topics like volcanoes or Scotland. I love how creative they are".

Staff worked together as a team to ensure the learning environment was rich and varied, both indoors and out. Families commented positively on the range and quality of play experiences offered, saying that their children often came home talking excitedly about what they had done and learned. We suggested that staff continue to reflect on planning systems to ensure they are streamlined and manageable, avoiding planning for experiences that were part of high quality everyday provision. Staff were open to this and keen to continue developing their practice.

## 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

Creating a home from home environment was central to the setting's ethos, helping children feel safe, comfortable and nurtured. The indoor areas were thoughtfully designed to avoid a clinical feel, instead using soft lighting, cosy rugs and quiet corners. These touches gave the environment a warm, inviting atmosphere where children could relax and develop a sense of emotional security and belonging. Throughout the setting, personalised touches reflected a strong sense of belonging. For example, a blossom tree display shared the origin and meaning behind each child's name, strengthening children's identity and helping families feel included. Handmade plaques, trinkets and keepsakes added warmth and homeliness, reinforcing that this was a place made for children and their families. Families told us the setting felt like "a home from home", and described the environment as "caring and comforting", reinforcing the positive impact of this approach.

The outdoor environment was a particular strength. It offered expansive space for creativity, physical development and exploration. Children were observed confidently climbing trees, balancing on beams, cycling and constructing with loose parts. Families valued this, with one parent highlighting the "educational play with a focus on outdoors" and another describing it as "a lovely, safe garden for them to play in." Support from the local community enhanced the outdoor area, with local farmers donating 'tattie boxes' that had been transformed into themed spaces such as a shop, building site, music area and chalk zone. These spaces supported rich learning experiences, including role play, problem-solving and social interaction. A planting area helped children connect with nature and learn how things grow, whilst promoting the importance of sustainable practices.

Simoa the elephant, a character from the Care Inspectorate's safety campaign, was very much part of the setting's family. This interactive toy helped children learn how to assess and manage risk in a fun, meaningful way. Children used Simoa to risk assess the playrooms, outdoor spaces and outings, encouraging them to think about how to keep themselves and others safe. Simoa also went home with families, joining them on real-life adventures including trips to the supermarket, hairdresser, a building site, local pub and even on an aeroplane. Families and staff recorded their adventures in a floor book, capturing how Simoa helped everyone stay safe in different environments.

While the setting was full of character and warmth, some areas would benefit from improvement. Such some areas of flooring and refreshing the general decoration. The provider was aware of this and already had plans in place to address it. This would help ensure the setting continues to feel welcoming and well cared for.

Staff shared that keeping children safe was a key priority. One said, "I think of nursery as my second home

and treat it with the respect I would expect at home." Another explained, "Daily risk assessments are carried out in every room and garden - if anything is broken, it's fixed or removed right away." They spoke confidently about the setting's safety measures, such as locked doors and secure gates and told us, "The children feel comfortable here because they know all of us, not just their key worker." This helped create a shared sense of responsibility contributing to a safe, welcoming environment for children to play and learn.

## 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.

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

The setting had a clear and well communicated vision for ongoing improvement, shaped by the voices of staff, children and families. This inclusive approach helped build a strong sense of belonging and ownership throughout the setting. Together, they identified the values of kindness, adventure and fun, which were clearly reflected in daily practice. These values came through in the warmth of staff interactions, experiences that encouraged curiosity and challenge, and play spaces filled with joy. This shared vision helped create a consistent, nurturing and positive environment for everyone.

The management team was a familiar and supportive presence in the playrooms. They spent time alongside staff and children each day, offering encouragement, praise and hands-on guidance. This approach helped build strong relationships and a positive, open atmosphere. Staff told us they felt comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns. One said, "My manager's door is always open. I feel like it is a comfortable environment and I am confident sharing how I feel and my experiences." Another shared, "My manager was my mentor and is always available if I need support".

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were part of everyday life in the setting. Staff used real time observations, daily conversations and informal reflections to discuss what was working well and what could be better. These discussions were recorded in floor books, on displays and in planning notes. Staff spoke positively about this process and were able to describe changes they had made as a result. For example, after reflecting on how children moved through the playroom, staff trialled a new layout to create more defined spaces with more focused, independent play. Menu planning had also been reviewed and updated in line with new nutritional guidance. Children were active participants in improvement work across the setting. From conversations with children and examples captured in floor books, there was clear evidence that their voices had influenced these changes. The friendly and familiar approach meant that reflection felt natural and achievable, helping to bring about meaningful improvements that impacted on outcomes for children.

Families were included in these processes in a way that felt genuine and respectful. In our feedback, families shared a range of views about their involvement in the setting. Many commented positively on the variety of ways they could contribute, including questionnaires, polls, events and donations for themed weeks such as literacy. They appreciated regular communication through newsletters, online and messaging platforms and noted that feedback was listened to and often acted upon. One parent said, "Management and the team always listen to feedback and new ideas we suggest for topics", while another said, "We're always sent copies of the improvement plan and know we can help support the priorities". Others felt there could be more opportunities or clarity around how involvement looked in practice. Importantly, families felt well informed and respected as partners in their child's care, even if they chose not to participate directly.

New guidance and policies were introduced gradually, giving staff the time they needed to understand them and build confidence before embedding changes into daily practice. This thoughtful approach supported staff wellbeing and contributed to the calm and steady pace of improvement. There was strong evidence that the setting had the capacity to continue improving. Everyone's contributions were welcomed and respected and improvements were led in a way that felt inclusive, well paced and meaningful.

Families shared overwhelmingly positive feedback about the setting, describing it as a warm, nurturing setting with a personal touch. Many spoke highly of the caring and enthusiastic staff, strong relationships and rich outdoor learning experiences. Comments such as, "I love this setting", "The nursery has heart" and "We're very grateful for the care they give" reflected deep trust and appreciation. Several families expressed sadness about their child moving on to school and described the setting as inclusive, child-focused and full of genuine care.

## 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

Staff were deployed effectively throughout the day, ensuring children consistently experienced warm, nurturing and well organised care. There was a calm, purposeful atmosphere and children benefited from the familiarity and confidence that came from knowing where staff were and when they would return. This approach created a positive, nurturing environment where relationships, routines and care were secure. This was supported by strong communication across the staff group, who worked closely together to ensure transitions were smooth and responsive. Children moved freely between indoors and outdoors, supported by deployment that allowed for flexibility without compromising care or supervision.

There was a clear understanding among staff about roles and responsibilities. Everyone worked together with a shared purpose, contributing to the welcoming, family feel of the setting. Staff said they felt valued, supported and confident in their daily work. They spoke positively about relationships with one another and with management. One commented, "We all know each other's strengths and we work together really well. It feels like a family here". Another said, "We're trusted to take the lead in areas we're passionate about, and that makes us stronger as a group". Leadership responsibilities were well distributed, with staff taking on champion roles in areas such as health and wellbeing, literacy, outdoor learning and family engagement. These roles helped to strengthen practice while building confidence and pride. Staff shared they were encouraged to contribute ideas and play an active part in improving outcomes for children.

There was a strong sense of pride in the work being done. Staff described being part of children's early years as a privilege and spoke of the lasting relationships they had built with families. They highlighted a range of recent achievements, including community involvement, charity events and the launch of a children's book created by the setting. Outdoor learning was viewed as a key strength and staff were enthusiastic about being able to offer children the opportunity to spend full days outside. They described the setting as a place where they were supported to be creative, responsive and nurturing.

Ongoing learning and development was well supported and staff reflected on the difference this had made to children's experiences. Forest kindergarten training, food and nutrition guidance and enhanced safeguarding knowledge were identified as areas that had a clear impact. One member of staff said, "When



we learn something new, it opens up huge potential for the children." Another added, "Training helped me better understand children's needs and how to go further with their learning and play."

Through feedback shared with us to inform the inspection, families described staff as warm, caring and knowledgeable, with a strong understanding of their child's needs. They said they felt confident their children were safe, happy and well supported. Many commented on the welcoming atmosphere and the strong bonds their children had formed with staff. Families also noted that there were always enough staff present to ensure consistent, attentive care. Several parents praised how well staff worked together and communicated. A small number mentioned that drop-offs could feel a little rushed at times and felt more formal opportunities to discuss progress would be helpful. Overall, feedback reflected a high level of trust in how staff were deployed across the setting.

## 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
1.2 Children are safe and protected	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?	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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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

0345 600 9527

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