

Cammo Forest Kindergarten Day Care of Children

Cammo Estate
61A Cammo Road
Edinburgh
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Telephone: 07704 021 251

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 May 2025

Service provided by:
City of Edinburgh Council

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2023000099

About the service

Cammo Forest Kindergarten is registered to provide a daycare of children's service to a maximum of 30 children aged between 3 years and primary school entry at any one time.

The manager is also the manager of Queensferry Forest Kindergarten Corstorphine Hill Forest Kindergarten and Lauriston Forest Kindergarten.

The service is located in the grounds of Cammo Estate where they have use of designated space outdoors for two main base camps and further use of the grounds for adventures during the day. Outdoor toilet and changing facilities are provided at the main base camp area with facilities being taken with them when they leave the base. There is also access to indoor facilities with cabins and a compost toilet near to the North car park for use in adverse weather conditions. Staff have access to the lodge house at the entrance to the Cammo Estate where further toilet facilities and a storage space are located.

At the time of the inspection, only one base camp was in use as the number of children attending the service was lower since August 2024.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 12 May 2025 between the hours of 09:15 and 15:50. We returned on Tuesday 13 May 2025 between the hours of 09:00 and 16:00 to continue with the inspection. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have 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
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

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

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

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke to and interacted with children using the service
- spoke with staff and the manager
- observed practice, daily routines and children's experiences
- reviewed documents relating to children's care and the management of the service
- reviewed further information sent to us by the manager by email
- took into account feedback from seven families via an online survey we issued.

We provided feedback to the manager, senior early years officer and the quality improvement education officer from the local authority on Friday 16 May 2025.

Key messages

- Children's health and wellbeing was supported as staff knew children in their care well. To further support this, children's personal plans were to continue to be enhanced to support a consistent approach to the reviewing of information with families and documenting changes.
- Mealtimes offered opportunities for children to learn new skills and enjoy healthy foods.
- Children's interests and confidence were supported through varied outdoor experiences and staff interactions.
- Quality assurance processes supported a continuous culture of improvement to promote positive outcomes for children. These processes should continue to help monitor any changes made and the impact of children's experiences.
- The deployment of staff supported children's care and support needs throughout the day. This should continue to be monitored by the manager to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of staff deployment.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

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 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children benefitted from a welcoming, nurturing and respectful approach from all staff. This was evident through staff interactions and their engagement with children during their play. Staff also responded to children's requests by providing additional resources and reminded children of the boundaries to keep them safe. As a result, children were confident in their environment and positive relationships had been built with staff.

Feedback we received from families included, "The staff are very friendly and approachable, they clearly care about the children. I feel very comfortable to discuss anything I need to with the staff" and "The staff are always cheerful and pleasant".

Children benefitted from staff who knew them well. Children's health and wellbeing needs were supported as staff used personal plan information which was gathered in consultation with families. For example, information about any medication needs, toilet learning, individual strategies of support and dietary requirements. Personal plans were reviewed regularly with families and this helped ensure information was kept up to date. We found this approach was not always consistent as some personal plans did not reflect changes or updates. For example, changes to days of attendance, changes to sleep routines or changes to personal care routines. Developing an overview to record this information or any meetings held or discussions with families including the action taken would support the ongoing review processes. This would ensure that children receive the planned support needed to reach their full potential.

Children experienced outdoor mealtimes that were unhurried and relaxed. At lunch times, a hot meal was provided and some staff sat with children to support social interactions, provide help when needed and to maintain safety. For example, ensuring dietary needs were met and to minimise the potential for choking. Children were supported to be independent and learn new skills as they used cutlery, served their own foods and drinks and tidied away after eating. Children also enjoyed learning new skills by helping to prepare snack for their peers in the afternoon. Children were able to give feedback about the snacks they enjoyed and as a result, hot snacks including eggy bread and hot wraps had been provided as part of the menu. Moving forward, the service planned further mealtime developments to help support a consistent approach to children's experiences. For example, staff deployment meant that at times, staff were not seated at every table at lunchtime and did not sit with children during snack time. Further support was also needed to ensure all children had drinks throughout their mealtimes. This would ensure they were suitably hydrated.

Feedback from some families, included, "Very rarely know what my child has eaten in the day and it's often difficult to find out this information. There's no weekly menus accessible for parents to view to give reassurance" and "A variety of food is offered in addition to making food on site allowing children to get involved in the making". The management team agreed to further share information about the menus with families each week. For example, displaying this at the entrance.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were confident in their environment and had fun through a variety of play, learning and development opportunities which promoted their choice, creativity and imagination. Experiences included, swinging in the hammocks, balancing, climbing, games, storytelling and loose parts play resources.

Feedback from families about what their child liked about the service included, "The joy it brings the children", "The freedom my child gets at an outdoor setting, social aspect, adventures", "I love that forest school creates and builds a sense of independence in my child, it helps with her problem solving skills and her gross motor skills. I have no worries concerning her gross motor skills and I love her sense of an appreciation for the outdoors" and "going on adventures". Some families' feedback referred to the recent turnover of staff and the reduction of adventures that had impacted on their children's enjoyment of the service. The service had restarted adventures to spaces nearby. This provided children with further experiences out of base camp and to be able to revisit some previous learning opportunities which they had enjoyed. For example, their interests in climbing and spring flowers.

Planning approaches were child centred and responsive to their current interests. This along with staff engagement helped provide an environment to support children to learn new skills and knowledge. For example, children's previous adventures in the wider grounds had included helping plant Juniper bushes, helping the stone masons with the wall, foraging safely with staff for foods to use for their snacks such as wild garlic and elderberries. Staff observations and interactions with children helped them to assess children's progress and identify development milestones and next steps for learning. Continuing with their evaluations of planning and observations of children's experiences should assist staff to consider further challenge or support for individual children. This would support children to progress and reach their full potential.

Children's language and numeracy skills were developed through staff interactions during their play. For example, problem solving together to adjust the height of the hammocks, learning how to balance on the wooden structure and learning how high to climb safely. Children also enjoyed revisiting their learning through the use of the floor books. For example, children were learning about safety and one child drew the fire safety evaluation plan and shared this with us. This was further extended the next day when staff and children practiced the evacuation procedures with a reassuring and supportive approach.

Staff observations of how children used the space supported them to plan for children's experiences and development of their skills. For example, as children were enjoying making dens and imaginative play, further resources were provided the following day. At times, some children accessed play and learning experiences only when a member of staff was deployed there. Ongoing observations of children's individual use of areas in base camp would help staff identify any support needed to promote the independent use of specific spaces.

Information was shared with families about their child's achievements, experiences and progress through parental consultations and the learning journals. Feedback from families outlined that they would like, "More updates via learning journals, newsletters. Better communication between staff and parents with learning experiences and general news surrounding the term". Other feedback received outlined that the boards at the entrance were not easy to read and there was not always time to speak to staff at the end of the session. The service should continue to expand on the visual boards to provide information about the routines of the day and children's experiences. This would be beneficial for families to have an overview of children's experiences including any adventures during the day.

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 experiences

Children benefitted from a welcoming outdoor environment which provided children with a variety of different play types and opportunities. At present only one base camp was being used. This area was set up each day and the spaces were well defined to support continuity for children. For example, specific areas for mealtimes, toilet facilities and storytelling. We discussed that children would benefit from further cosy spaces to rest or sleep during the day if needed. Children's adventures within the grounds had recently resumed. These experiences helped ensure children had access to sunlight away from the tree canopy of base camp as well as enhancing children's engagement, curiosity and learning opportunities. An indoor cabin space was available by the north car park for the service to use for contingency measures for ensuring the safety of children. For example, during high winds and lightning during the session when the base camp could not be used.

Feedback from families included, "His experience in a smaller setting, getting to explore outdoors, has increased his confidence and enriched his learning a huge amount. I love that he gets to do unique things at forest and a level of autonomy to follow his own interests".

There had been recent changes to further ensure child safety and wellbeing throughout the session. This had included ongoing risk assessments of the environment and staff carrying out more regular headcounts throughout the day. This ensured that children were accounted for at all times. Fencing had been put around the base camp to support children's understanding of the boundaries of base camp. We discussed that the fencing should continue to be assessed as some parts of this were loose. This meant that a dog was able to enter the base camp and a child toppled backwards off a log and rolled underneath the fence. We discussed that although staff were vigilant, securing the bottom of the fence would further safeguard children. Staff and children worked well together to identify and minimise potential risks. For example, children and staff gathered together each morning to discuss the boundaries of play and children placed visual markers around the base camp. This helped children to learn how to keep themselves safe.

Children's health and wellbeing was supported as robust infection control and food safety practices were in place. This included handwashing stations and children being reminded to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. We discussed that children should also be washing their hands after mealtimes in line with best practice.

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

In consultation with families and staff, there had been a recent refresh of the service's vision, values and aims. An improvement plan outlined the priorities of the service, and this was also shared with families. This along with planned opportunities for parental engagement such as stay and play opportunities, consultation meetings with staff, the visual board at the entrance and sharing online information, helped

support family engagement and provide feedback opportunities. This also helped to build on relationships and help keep families updated and informed.

Feedback from families included, "There are opportunities to provide feedback and ideas" and "As communication is uneven there isn't always enough opportunity to be involved as I do feel a little removed from it all". The management team outlined the progress that had been made to further share information about the setting since the survey had been issued to families. This was continuing to be monitored to support all families to be informed and have the option to be involved in the ongoing development of the service.

Children's views were routinely sought through daily discussions with staff which helped influence change and their experiences. For example, children were able to ask staff for additional resources during the day and these were collected from the adjacent van. Other resources such as loose parts play and den equipment were brought in for use the next day.

The manager was also the named peripatetic manager for other local authority services and a full time, senior early years officer was currently supporting this site and this helped to support consistency. Self-evaluation processes helped the service to identify what was working well in the setting and areas for improvement. This included, planned quality assurance audits carried out by the management team, training, team meetings, leadership meetings, staff individual support meetings and audits of children's experiences. These audits had highlighted some progress was needed regarding the information recorded for children's personal plans and this was shared with staff to progress. These processes provided opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and knowledge of best practice guidance to enhance children's experiences. This helped support a culture of continuous improvement. For example, a new online 'Padlet' had been piloted to share outdoor resources and information to support staff in other local authority settings. Ongoing audits of the routines of the day, documentation, observations of staff practice and children's experiences would also help the management team to measure the impact of any training. This would also help ensure that any changes to practice were consistently sustained. For example, although families, were given copies of accident records, the original record did not always have a parent signature or a note by staff to affirm the information had been shared.

Staff kept a record of the training that they had attended. The records in the service were not up to date and did not outline the impact of any staff training as a result. We were informed that staff recorded information on their own Scottish Social Services (SSSC) account. We discussed how staff could share this information with the manager to ensure an overview of training and the impact was used as part of the self evaluation processes.

A new staff handbook supported the induction process for new staff. We found that this information was held at home by staff. We discussed that this information should be accessible to the manager to support the learning for new staff and to ensure that this was completed timeously.

How good is our staff team?

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 4.3: Staff deployment

Staff's skilled interactions and their respectful approach meant that children received compassionate and responsive care. As a result, children were confident or gaining confidence in their environment with staff support. Staff worked well together as a team and communicated effectively when moving to different areas or out with the base camp. This ensured that effective support and supervision of children was maintained. Feedback from families included, "The staff are amazing and much appreciated".

Some staff had designated roles each day such as supporting mealtime routines or children's personal care routines. Moving forward, as part of the self-evaluation audits, further assessment of staff deployment throughout the day would support a consistent approach. For example, As outlined in the section 'How good is our care, play and learning?', children would benefit from further staff deployment at snack time and lunchtime to support their experiences. We also identified that some children needed enhanced nurture and support from staff during the session. This meant that at times, staff deployment and their availability for other children was reduced.

Children's wellbeing and safety were supported as the leadership team recognised the importance of the service being appropriately staffed. Recognition was given to the setting being fully outdoors, the individual needs of children and the spaces used. It was acknowledged in the service's improvement plan that there had been significant changes to staff. There was a current mix of staff skills and experience working to support children's experiences throughout the week. For example, full time staff throughout the week as well as staff working two days a week. Some families provided feedback that they and their child would benefit from having more core members of staff in the setting. Feedback included, "Given recent staff changes all the staff aren't always familiar with the site which makes adventures difficult and places extra burden on the staff that are familiar with the site". Ongoing monitoring of staff deployment should continue to ensure that children's and families' needs are met by familiar staff. This will enhance children and families relationships with staff providing their care.

A visual register and daily diary were used to document when staff were not on site. We discussed that a more formal register for staff should be developed to clearly outline who is on site at all times. For example, to outline staff being relocated to other sites, supporting the taxi journeys, attending meetings off site, having lunch or working in the cabins or lodge house. This would support the service to identify any gaps in staff deployment as a result and support a consistent approach to children's safety and experiences.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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