

# The Yard Holiday Support – Edinburgh Day Care of Children

Oaklands School  
750 Ferry Road  
Edinburgh  
EH4 4PQ

Telephone: 07808527341

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
13 August 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Scotland Yard Adventure Centre

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002793

**Service no:**  
CS2024000077

## About the service

The Yard Holiday Support - Edinburgh is registered to provide care to a maximum of 22 children of primary and secondary school age up to 16 years at any one time. Between 1 April 2025 and 1 April 2026 care may be provided to a maximum of 22 children and young people who currently attend primary and secondary school. Of those 22 a maximum of 8 children aged between 16 and 18 years may be cared for until they leave school. The service operates during school holidays only and supports children and young people with complex additional support needs.

The service is situated within Oaklands School in Edinburgh, which was purpose built to meet the needs of children significant physical and medical needs and learning disabilities.

It is close to local transport links, shops and community services, parks are within walking distance.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 5 August 2025 between 09:45 and 16:15 and Wednesday 6 August between 08:55 and 16:25. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

The service registered in March 2024. 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.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children and young people using the service
- received written feedback from 12 parents
- spoke with two parents
- spoke with staff and management, three nurses and two visiting professionals
- received written feedback from 11 staff
- observed practice and how children's care, learning and routines were supported
- reviewed documents.

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.

## Key messages

Well considered routines and skilled staff interventions supported children to be motivated and engaged in play.

Individual needs were well considered, in partnership with therapists working with each child.

A current improvement plan priority was to improve opportunities for children, young people, and families to be meaningfully involved and influence change within the setting.

Children and young people benefited from daily opportunities to play outside.

The service used the premises during school holiday periods, which was purpose built to meet the needs of children with significant physical and medical needs and learning disabilities.

Values were embedded in the ethos of the setting and in staff practice. These were, the importance of inclusion, being respectful and kind, and providing connection and community.

## 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?	5 - Very 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 different parts of this key question as very good and good, with an overall grade of good, where several strengths impacted on positive outcomes for children and young people.

### Quality Indicator: 1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children and young people experienced warm, caring, and nurturing approaches to support their overall wellbeing. Positive relationships with staff helped them to feel secure and confident which was evident through facial expressions, body language and positive interactions. As a result, children and young people were settled and content in the service. Parents told us, "It is a beautifully tailored service that is doing great work for the children. My child is safe, understood, and happy, so they look forward to going," and "I don't think the staff understand how much the service means to me, it has helped me more than they could imagine."

Mealtimes were tailored to support individual needs. All staff had received eating, drinking and swallowing training delivered by speech and language therapists. Children and young people's feeding profiles were categorised by level of risk. Some staff had been specifically trained to support individual well-planned eating and swallowing profiles. Staff provided one to one support and encouragement, and close supervision during mealtimes. This helped to keep children and young people safe while eating. Everyone was given time to eat at a pace that was right for them. As a result, mealtime experiences were consistently positive and supportive.

Children and young people's overall wellbeing was supported through effective use of personal planning. Management were committed to meeting with each child or young person's school and their assigned therapists before their holiday placement started. Therapists were also invited into the holiday club to give a handover about the child or young person's therapy needs. This was to gather important information about the child or young person's needs and preferences. For example, to ensure that they experienced consistency in their routines. This helped them to feel secure as they were able to anticipate what would happen throughout the day. Therapists that we spoke to praised the individualised support that the service provided. One therapist told us, "We appreciate the effective communication between the service, therapists and education staff to ensure that the relevant information about the children and young people is shared with the staff in the holiday club."

To support children and young people's safety and wellbeing they each had an individual risk assessment. This helped to identify, analyse, and mitigate potential hazards that they might face. As a result, they were given the support they needed to reach their full potential.

Management had identified that improvement was needed to ensure that children, young people, and parents were central to the personal planning process. They planned to introduce regular opportunities to meet with parents so that they can review and input into their child or young person's plan. This would enhance information sharing to ensure that staff can respond quickly, sensitively, and compassionately to changes in a child or young person's life.

Nurses were always onsite to manage and administer children and young people's individual medication in a safe and sensitive manner to help them to keep well.

To ensure that medication procedures are managed in line with best practice guidance, Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services (Care Inspectorate, 2025). The condition that the medication is prescribed to treat should be recorded on the medication form. Similarly, as part of the review process, parents should be asked if there are any updates regarding children and young people's medical needs. Processes should be improved to ensure that all nurses on duty have access to all children and young people's clearly detailed current medical needs (**see area for improvement 1**).

### Quality Indicator: 1.3 Play and learning

Staff interventions supported children and young people to be motivated, engaged and have fun in their learning. Some experiences were spontaneous, and others planned in consideration of children and young people's individual needs. For example, some benefited from the range of sensory play experiences offered, such as exploring messy play. Similarly, the multisensory room encouraged sensory exploration and curiosity, or to relax in a calming environment.

Play experiences helped to develop children and young people's skills in language, literacy and numeracy at a level that was right for them. For example, one child used his communication board to interact with a staff member as they were being read a story.

Staff used song signifiers to ease points of transition and to help children and young people to develop an awareness of routine. Staff gently sang familiar songs for each situation, for example, when beginning and finishing lunch. This supported them to understand and predict what was happening, helping them to feel secure. Moving forward, for children and young people to fully benefit from this approach, all staff should be encouraged to use the song signifier technique consistently.

Planned experiences and opportunities were focussed on weekly themes, which staff skilfully adapted to respond to children and young people's differing interests and life experiences. The summer programme was shared with parents at the start of the holiday period. This helped to keep them informed of what the service planned to offer. In addition to this, a daily diary was sent home to individual families to inform them of what their child had done that day and to share any relevant information around eating or personal care. Staff could continue to consider how they could enhance information sharing with families, possibly using technology. For example, pictorial information about their child's experiences. This would help families to feel included, valued and fully informed.

Children and young people benefited from daily opportunities to play outside and walks in the local community. They enjoyed exploring the well-planned different outdoor play spaces and resources. For example, willow tunnels to explore, swings and bikes. They enjoyed riding on the two person bikes along with staff. This provided opportunities for gross motor skills and sensory experiences.

There were occasions when the wider community visited the service to provide opportunities for children and young people to feel included as part of a wider community. For example, visits from musicians and circus performers. Visits from therapy dogs offered opportunities to enhance overall wellbeing.

Parents comments included,

"My child has the chance to be in a social environment and exposure to live music opportunities,"  
and

"There is always lots of activities and outdoor play, they go on bug hunts, walks, and exploring the forest."

## Areas for improvement

1. For children to be safe and well, the provider should ensure that medication procedures are managed in line with best practice guidance, Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services (Care Inspectorate, 2025).

This should include but not be limited to, recording the condition that medication is prescribed to treat, and effectively communicating with parents as part of the review process to be fully informed of updates regarding children and young people's medical needs. All information should be communicated to nurses and staff.

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

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

## 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 and young people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator: 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The setting was a school which was purpose built to meet the needs of children with significant physical and medical needs and learning disabilities. The service used the premises during school holiday periods. A parent told us, "The environment is my child's school and one they are familiar with. Some school staff are part of the care team. Their familiarity with the setting and some of the children is of great benefit."

The building was bright and spacious with direct access to outdoor spaces which helped to enhance health and wellbeing. Overhead tracking hoists, and well-equipped hygiene rooms enabled much smoother transitions for children and young people with physical needs.

Children's individualised equipment, such as walkers, standing frames and communication aids, were provided to support them during their time at the holiday club. Similarly, wheelchair services regularly visited to carry out essential repairs to children's chairs. This meant that children and young people were supported to meet their full potential.

There were opportunities to frequently access the variety of quality facilities available to support children and young people's play, learning and development. For example, a sensory room, a soft-play room, gym hall, and extensively adapted outdoor areas which included a gated woodland to explore nature and go on scavenger hunts.

The rooms offered cosy spaces to rest, this included quiet comfortable anti-rooms which could be accessed directly from the larger rooms. There were large bean bag cushions where children and young people could sit and relax should they wish to.

Staff understood that children's development and learning was influenced through thoughtful positioning of play resources. For example, resources were positioned at ground level on large soft mats. Children and young people were able to sit, lie or stretch out on the mats while playing with resources of their choice.

Sensory toys motivated and interested children and young people to explore. This helped them to develop cognitive and physical movement skills, supporting them to reach their full potential.

The service provided a safe and secure environment, and the cleanliness of the setting was of a high standard. Walkie talkies were used for staff to communicate with colleagues to ask for assistance and to alert nurses to attend should medical assistance be required. All children and young people had an individual risk assessment with measures in place to help keep them safe. Similarly, daily environmental safety checks were carried out. Management told us that, in line with an improvement plan focus, they planned to add more detail to daily checks. This was to enhance clarity around standards and expectations to ensure that the safety of the setting was maintained to a high standard.

## How good is our leadership?

**4 - Good**

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted on positive outcomes for children and young people.

### Quality Indicator: 3.1 Quality assurance and improvements are led well

The service had developed values which underpinned their practice. They valued the importance of inclusion, being respectful and kind, and providing connection and community. These were embedded in the ethos and culture, in children and young people's experiences, and staff practice. For example, offering the same experience in different ways to meet individual needs, such as supporting children and young people to move to quieter spaces. This helped to reduce anxiety or feeling overwhelmed.

Management were implementing well planned quality assurance processes. The improvement plan focussed on four areas to be addressed throughout the year. These were values, families, staff, and safety of the building and play spaces. Moving forward, processes could be further developed by revisiting planned actions to review and show the improvements made. This should support staff to reflect on successes and help them to plan future improvements to enhance outcomes for children, young people, and families.

Management were creating conditions where all people felt confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for the process. Staff were included in the self-evaluation process. For example, debriefs were held at the end of every day to encourage staff, room leads and management to reflect on what went well, and what could improve. Plans were in place to continue to build on this approach with increased focus on improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

Parents who provided feedback felt that were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. They told us, "We get a lot of information before holiday hub starts, Padlets with all information and updates every day from the person looking after my child," and "we have the opportunity to discuss issues with the yard before, during, and after the holiday period through questionnaires." A current improvement plan priority was to continue to enhance opportunities for children, young people, and families to be meaningfully involved and influence change within the setting.

Monitoring of staff practice, children and young people's experiences, and staff meetings were carried out regularly. Management should improve the recording of these quality assurance approaches to be able to revisit actions planned. This would ensure that improvements have been made to enhance outcomes for children and young people. Similarly, staff appraisal processes had recently improved. Moving forward, these need to be established, and actions recorded to enhance staff practice and outcomes for children.

## How good is our staff team?

## 4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted on positive outcomes for children and young people.

### Quality Indicator: 4.3 Staff deployment

Management valued the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed. There was one-to-one adult to child ratio to support the wellbeing of children in the service. In addition to this, room leaders and management did not have to be counted in the ratio numbers for most of the day. This meant that children and young people's needs were met by the right number of people who had time to support and care for them.

Some seasonal staff had other employment across a variety of occupations, for example, teachers, early years practitioners, nurses and support workers. Similarly, students who were employed as seasonal workers were studying in various fields such as therapy, medical, education, theatre and music. As a result, core and seasonal workers brought differing experience, knowledge, and skills to ensure children's experience across the whole day was positive.

Staff members were generally deployed to support a child or young person for a period of one week. This meant that they had the opportunity to meet new staff and to benefit from their skills. This also helped staff to develop their experience, and skills in supporting children and young people's individual health and learning needs.

Staff were committed to improving outcomes for all children and young people in their care. Good levels of interaction and support were embedded in staff practice. Arrangements were in place to promote continuity of care across the day and to ensure positive transitions and communication. Staff had opportunities to meet to plan for children and young people's care, play and learning. As a result, consistent care was provided which positively impacted on them making continuous progress.

Staff were flexible and supported each other to work as a team to help children and young people and asked for assistance when needed. Room leaders showed good leadership skills. For example, guiding staff when further support was needed to help child or young people.

Staff felt well supported by management and appreciated the range of appropriate training opportunities that were available to them. Their comments included, "The senior staff are very supportive. We are always given the opportunity to better our skill set," and "I recently completed eating, drinking, and swallowing, and moving and handling training. This gives more consistency for the children I work with because I am able to support them myself rather than needing another member of staff to support."

The management team were striving to ensure that staff working within promoted posts held a recognised childcare practitioner or teaching qualification in line with Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements. Similarly, they agreed to improve procedures to effectively monitor staff professional registration. This would support them to ensure that all staff maintained their professional registration with the appropriate regulatory body for their role (**see area for improvement 1**).



## Areas for improvement

1. For children and young people to be continually cared for by trained, competent and skilled staff, the provider should deploy staff appropriate to the role they are employed in line with Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements.

This should include but not be limited to ensuring that staff hold the right qualification for their role, and effective monitoring to ensure staff maintain their professional registration with the appropriate regulatory body for their role.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

## 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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - 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?	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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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

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

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