

# Care service inspection report

## Auchlone Nature Kindergarten

### Day Care of Children

Auchlone Lodge  
Abercairny Estate  
Crieff  
PH7 3QZ

Inspected by: Fiona Smart

Type of inspection: Unannounced

Inspection completed on: 14 December 2012



## Contents

	Page No
Summary	3
1 About the service we inspected	5
2 How we inspected this service	6
3 The inspection	10
4 Other information	23
5 Summary of grades	24
6 Inspection and grading history	24

### **Service provided by:**

Mindstretchers Ltd.

### **Service provider number:**

SP2008009541

### **Care service number:**

CS2008168440

### **Contact details for the inspector who inspected this service:**

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## Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

### We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	5	Very Good
Quality of Environment	6	Excellent
Quality of Staffing	5	Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	5	Very Good

### What the service does well

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten provides children with high quality learning experiences. Interaction between the manager, staff and children on the day of inspection was observed to be of a high quality and used successfully to promote confidence, self esteem and independence.

The management team and staff work very well together ensuring positive outcomes for children.

Excellent use is made of the nursery environment and the surrounding area, providing children with an extensive range of learning experiences.

### What the service could do better

The provider should ensure that policies and procedures are accurate and up-to-date. Care should be taken to ensure they refer to Scottish legislation and the name of the regulatory body is accurate.

### What the service has done since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the sister nursery in Dunblane has closed. The manager previously had the post of practitioner at the service in Dunblane and took up her post as manager of Auchlone Nature Kindergarten in August 2012.

The service continues to provide a wide range of experiences which children find stimulating. These are tailored to meet children and families individual needs.

### **Conclusion**

The inspection evidenced the service was performing at a very good level with some areas of excellent practice.

During the inspection we saw children who were happy to be at Auchlone Nature Kindergarten and staff who were enthusiastic about their work. The management team and staff continue to work extremely well together to maintain and improve the service; ensuring children have access to an extensive range of high quality experiences.

### **Who did this inspection**

Fiona Smart

# 1 About the service we inspected

This was a joint inspection involving Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

**Quality of Care and Support - Grade 5 - Very Good**

**Quality of Environment - Grade 6 - Excellent**

**Quality of Staffing - Grade 5 - Very Good**

**Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 5 - Very Good**

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com) or by calling us on 0845 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

## 2 How we inspected this service

### The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

### What we did during the inspection

We wrote this report after an unannounced inspection that took place between 9:00am and 1:30 pm on 21 November 2012. We made another visit on 14th December 2012. The purpose of the second visit was to gather further information and to deliver feedback. At the time of the inspection 34 children attended the service on a full and part time basis.

As requested by us, the provider sent us an annual return. They also sent us a self assessment form.

We sent 8 questionnaires to the service for distribution to the parents and families of children who attend Auchlone Outdoor Kindergarten. 5 were completed and returned to us.

In this inspection we gathered evidence from various sources, including the relevant sections of policies, procedures, records and other documents:

- \* Evidence from the service's most recent self assessment
- \* Personal plans of children who use the service
- \* Medication forms
- \* Risk assessments
- \* Accident and incident records
- \* Parents Books
- \* Communication books

During the inspection process we spoke to the Director, Education Development Co-ordinator, manager, staff and children. We observed staff in their interaction with children and parents. We took note of the general environment and the range of resources and play equipment available for children.

### Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under

each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

### **Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)**

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

### **Fire safety issues**

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at [www.firelawscotland.org](http://www.firelawscotland.org)

## The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

**Annual Return Received:** Yes - Electronic

## Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

The Care Inspectorate received a fully completed self assessment document from the service provider. We were satisfied with the way the service provider had completed this and with the relevant information they had given us for each of the headings that we grade them under. The service provider identified what they thought they did well, some areas for development and any changes they planned.

## Taking the views of people using the care service into account

During the inspection we saw children who were busy, who persevered and were happy to be at Auchlone Nature Kindergarten. One child showed us her Personal Learning Plan. She was able to recall the activities, tell us about friends past and present and share her knowledge with us.

## Taking carers' views into account

We sent 8 questionnaires to the service for distribution to parents and families whose children attend Auchlone Nature Kindergarten. 5 completed questionnaires were returned to us. These indicated all parents/families strongly agreed with the statement:

Overall, I am happy with the quality of care my child receives in this service.

The following comments were included in the returned questionnaires:

"The hardest thing for a parent to do is to hand over care of one's child to a stranger, for whatever reason. I have never had a moment's hesitation leaving my child because I know she is cared for, entertained, enriched and so happy at Auchlone. I think it is as good a nursery as is possible for any nursery to be and probably better at looking after my children than me! - I'm forever trying to emulate them."



"My child is very happy at Auchlone Kindergarten. He is making friends and learning many skills from cooking to woodworking. He loves the toys there and the mud and the staff."

"Auchlone is a unique nursery and the ethos of "free exploration of nature" within safe boundaries of supervision has been a perfect environment for my two children. The staff create a safe place for the children teach them respect for themselves, their peers and nature whilst letting the kids be kids. Any concerns I have ever raised have been met with a compassionate and open attitude to help. From what my 4 year tells me, the teachers work hard to remove anxiety and foster confidence. My favourite example was the day I showed up, ready to hear that that day's thunderstorm had been scary - when in actuality, my daughter gave me a science lesson about how she had been told that thunder was just warm and cold air meeting! Now she loves storms - and sharing her knowledge.

The individual books of pictures and quotes they keep on each child are amazing and a great reflection, I feel, on the level of "buy in" the teachers have to working with this age group. I've now sent my 2nd daughter as my 1st has gotten so much out of it. If there's one are the schools fall short in, it's administrative paperwork from head office!"

During the inspection we spoke to parents. This is what they told us:

"We feel so lucky to have this place nearby. It's giving our child a lot of confidence when mixing with other children. She is flourishing. We have had a newsletter and an open evening."

"What they (the children) say is followed up."

"The outdoor aspect is just what they want to do. They are given the right sort of encouragement."

## 3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

### Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

#### Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

#### Service strengths

For this Quality Statement we:

- \* Spoke to the children and their parents and families
- \* Spoke to the management team and staff and observed them in their interaction with children
- \* Took account of the information given to us by parents and families in the returned questionnaires, and
- \* Looked at the consultation processes the service used.

We found the service was performing at an outstanding level in the areas covered by this statement. We gave the service a grade 6 - excellent for this quality statement.

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten provides parents with a wide range of written material. This includes:

- \* An information booklet and leaflets
- \* Annual summary report
- \* Newsletters and letters
- \* Children's Personal Learning Plans (PLPs)
- \* Informative website.

Parents have opportunities to be involved with and learn about their children's experience through:

- \* Open days
- \* The excellent use of Parents Books and Communication Books to provide up-to-date information about the life and work of the service
- \* Newsletters
- \* Parent - staff interviews

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\* Coming into the service to share their skills and knowledge. For example a parent who was a dentist came in to the service to talk about dental hygiene and healthy foods and snacks.

Staff observed children and provided a rich learning environment which reflected their interests and stage of development well. They listened to the children and observed their play and learning. This was used to determine the planning of future learning experiences.

The management team and staff understood the benefits of using regular consultation processes as a means of maintaining the high quality of the service. They regularly spoke to parents and children about the activities and learning experiences available. This helped them to assess what they were doing and to consider whether they needed to make any changes.

As part of the inspection process we issued questionnaires to the nursery for distribution to parents/carers asking about their child's experience at Auchlone Nature Kindergarten. This is what they told us:

"The hardest thing for a parent to do is to hand over care of one's child to a stranger, for whatever reason. I have never had a moment hesitation leaving my child because I know she is cared for entertained, enriched, and so happy at Auchlone...."

"My child is very happy at Auchlone Kindergarten. He is making friends and learning many skills from cooking to woodworking. He loves the toys there and the mud and the staff."

"Auchlone is a unique nursery and the ethos of "free exploration of nature" within safe boundaries of supervision has been a perfect environment for my children..."

To summarise: This commitment to open communication by the management team and staff meant that children were involved in day to day decisions about activities and in the overall planning of each session. As a result, children were happy and actively engaged in their chosen activity and parents and families were kept well informed about their child's nursery experiences.

### **Areas for improvement**

In the Self Assessment, which the service submitted as part of the inspection process, they identified the following area for improvement:

"Communication is a continual development and we look for ways to better this regularly, through evaluating and analysing its impact on our setting."

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## Statement 3

We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met.

### Service strengths

For this Quality Statement we:

- \* Spoke to the management team and staff
- \* Looked at the recording systems used by the service
- \* Observed staff in their interaction with the children
- \* Observed children in their play
- \* Took account of the information given to us by parents and families in the returned questionnaires.

We found the service was performing at a very good level in the areas covered by this statement. We gave the service a grade 5 - very good for this quality statement.

The management team and staff ensured children had a positive Kindergarten experience. Prior to starting the Kindergarten, children had the opportunity to visit to spend time exploring and playing with the resources and materials. This ensured children and families felt secure and confident during the transition between nursery and kindergarten .

Staff worked with key groups of children. This enabled them to focus on individual children's learning and development and build positive relationships with children and their parents/carers. Each child had a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) which was used by staff and families to detail their progress, development and to celebrate their achievements. The PLPs contained a wide range of information evidencing children's learning and participation in an extensive range of activities. Using PLPs in this way meant that the children and their parents/carers could see the progression in their learning and development.

During the inspection, children were observed to be happy and confident when approaching staff. Staff were responsive in their interaction with children and supported them in their chosen activities. Praise was used successfully to develop children's self esteem, confidence and independence. Children were supported by staff in forming positive relationships with their peer group - friendships had been established and others were developing.

Through discussion staff demonstrated their understanding of the importance of promoting healthy eating whilst respecting dietary choices and requirements. The variety of snacks provided encouraged children to develop healthy tastes and choices. Fruit and/or vegetables were available on a daily basis. Children visited the organic fruit/vegetable van with staff each week. They were able to choose from a range of seasonal fruits and vegetables. Children were familiar with the snack routine and clearly enjoyed the opportunity of sitting with their friends. When they had finished their snack they were encouraged to tidy up and recycle any food waste. By taking responsibility in this way, children learned about caring for and respecting their environment.

All of the above meant that parents/families had a number of opportunities to discuss their child's needs with the management team and staff. We were able to see that children's health and wellbeing needs were met very well.

### **Areas for improvement**

The provider should review the medication policy to ensure it takes account of the guidance as detailed in 'Health Guidance: The Management of Medication in Daycare and Childminding Services'.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## Quality Theme 2: Quality of Environment

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

### Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the environment within the service.

### Service strengths

The evidence for the grade awarded in this statement is included in Quality Statement 1.1.

### Areas for improvement

See Area for Improvement in Quality Statement 1.1.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## Statement 2

We make sure that the environment is safe and service users are protected.

### Service strengths

For this Quality Statement we:

- \* We took account of the general environment
- \* We looked at resources and how these were used
- \* We spoke to the management team and staff
- \* Took account of the information given to us by parents and families in the returned questionnaires

We found the service was performing at an excellent level in the areas covered by this statement. We gave the service a grade 6 - excellent for this quality statement.

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten operates in Crieff and is based in a large wooded area with a lodge house and wooden shelters. The children spend the majority of their time outdoors. The different outdoor areas provide children with an extensive range of experiences, enabling them to explore experiment and investigate. The lodge house is used a central meeting place where children can extend their knowledge and understanding of different topics through the development and use of floor books, talking and thinking books, 3d mind maps and other reference material. Whilst at the Kindergarten, children are encouraged to be aware of the changing seasons and how to care for their environment. They can learn about: making shelters, lighting fires and cooking on them and recycling.

The provider, management team and staff had an excellent understanding of risk and promoted the benefits of exposing children to risk within a safe environment.

In the self assessment, submitted by the service as part of the inspection process, it stated:

"We believe that children should be allowed to be their own risk assessors so we remove hazards that are not obvious to children but allow many opportunities for children to risk assess."

An example of this was that children had been given small knives to cut sticks which could be used for fire making. By allowing children to handle small tools in this way they were able to gain an understanding of the use of tools in a functional way.

All of the above ensured children's health and wellbeing minimised the risks to their safety whilst promoting positive outcomes.

### Areas for improvement

The service identified the following area for improvement:

"Continue to support staff in appropriate benefit risk assessment."

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0



## Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

### Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

### Service strengths

The evidence for the grade awarded in this statement is included in Quality Statement 1.1.

### Areas for improvement

See Area for Improvement in Quality Statement 1.1.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 6 - Excellent

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Statement 3

We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.

### Service strengths

For this Quality Statement we:

- \* Spoke to the management team and staff
- \* Looked at the minutes of staff meetings and other documentation
- \* Took account of the information given to us by parents and families in the returned questionnaires.

We found the service was performing at a good level in the areas covered by this statement. We gave the service a grade 4 - good for this quality statement.

The management team and staff had a wide range of qualifications, skills and experience. This enabled them to provide the high quality interactions with children we saw during the inspection process. We spoke to staff and they told us they enjoyed their work and were committed to providing the very best experiences for children.

There were regular opportunities for staff to update and refresh their knowledge and understanding of childcare, education, and outdoor provision. They were able to recognise each other's strengths and worked well as a team. Staff met together regularly. Minutes of the meetings were kept. This promoted consistency in practice and a shared understanding of new initiatives and developments.

There was a programme for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which was used successfully to identify staff strengths, training needs and wishes.

We spoke to the manager and staff about their responsibility in relation to child protection. Where there were concerns relating to children's safety and well-being, they confirmed these would be shared with the relevant agencies. In the returned questionnaires, 100% of respondents indicated staff treated their children with respect and were confident that staff would protect their children from harm, abuse, bullying and neglect.

All of the above evidenced that staff were professional, trained and motivated and ensured that the wellbeing of children was of the highest importance.

### Areas for improvement

The provider should ensure all staff attend Nature Kindergarten Training.

As part of the inspection process we looked at the Recruitment policy and procedure. We found that:

The recruitment policy and procedure referred to English legislation eg Criminal Records Bureau and not the Protection of Vulnerable Groups.

Although staff employed at the time of the inspection were registered with the appropriate regulatory body candidates were not asked about their registration status as part of the recruitment process. The recruitment procedure should be reviewed and improved to ensure it includes a process to check and record candidates registration status.

A requirement is made.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 4 - Good

**Number of requirements:** 1

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## Requirements

1. The provider must review and improve the recruitment policy and procedure and develop a system for checking and recording candidates registration status.

This is in order to comply with:

SSI 2011/210 7(2)(d) Fitness of employees.

Timescale for implementation: With immediate effect.

## Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

### Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

### Service strengths

The evidence for the grade awarded in this statement is included in Quality Statement 1.1.

### Areas for improvement

See Area for Improvement in Quality Statement 1.1.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 6 - Excellent

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

### Service strengths

For this Quality Statement we:

- \* Spoke to the management team and staff
- \* Looked at the service's Standards & Quality Report 2011 - 2012 and Improvement Plan 2012 - 2013
- \* Took account of the information given to us by parents and families in the returned questionnaires.

We found the service was performing at a very good level in the areas covered by this statement. We gave the service a grade 5 - very good for this quality statement.

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten works in partnership with Perth and Kinross Council to provide education to children aged 3 - 5. As part of the partnership with the local authority a Standards and Quality Report and an Improvement plan is required to be submitted each year. This provides an additional evaluation tool and identifies priorities linked to the Curriculum for Excellence.

In 2012 Auchlone Nature Kindergarten achieved the Investing in Children Award.

Investing in Children look at ways in which services consult and listen to children and how they promote children's rights.

The management team and staff met regularly to discuss and evaluate the provision within the Kindergarten and to identify next steps for individual children. They have worked together to evaluate practice, continually monitoring and reviewing procedures. For example daily activities were evaluated and adapted, as necessary, to ensure all children were able to participate fully and gain most from their experience. They were committed to providing a child led service and were continuing the process of involving children and their families in the evaluation of the service.

As previously stated there were regular opportunities for the management team and staff to meet. The meetings were used to share information relating to staff practice, training, and reviewing and up-dating policies and procedures. All of which promoted consistency in practice and a shared understanding of the aims of the service.

The comprehensive systems in place to review the quality of the service involved the children, their parents/carers and the staff team. This meant that the service identified areas for improvement on an ongoing basis. The result was a service committed to following best practice guidance and achieving positive outcomes for children and their families.

### **Areas for improvement**

The service should ensure all policies reflect the change of regulatory body. For example the complaints policy and procedure should identify the Care Inspectorate as the regulatory body.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## 4 Other information

### Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

### Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

### Additional Information

#### Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in SCSWIS re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).

## 5 Summary of grades

<b>Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good</b>	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
<b>Quality of Environment - 6 - Excellent</b>	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 2	6 - Excellent
<b>Quality of Staffing - 5 - Very Good</b>	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	4 - Good
<b>Quality of Management and Leadership - 5 - Very Good</b>	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 4	5 - Very Good

## 6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
28 Sep 2010	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Environment Not Assessed Staffing Not Assessed Management and Leadership 5 - Very Good
20 Oct 2009	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Environment 5 - Very Good Staffing 5 - Very Good Management and Leadership 5 - Very Good

All inspections and grades before 1 April 2011 are those reported by the former regulator of care services, the Care Commission.



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## Translations and alternative formats

This inspection report is available in other languages and formats on request.

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