

Sarah's Childminding Service

Child Minding

Alford

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
14 February 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2016988466

Service no:
CS2016350790

About the service

Sarah's childminding service provides a childminding service from their property in a quiet residential area of Alford. The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16 of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

From 21 August 2023 up to 21 August 2024 between the hours of 3pm - 5pm on Monday to Friday the childminder may care for a maximum of seven children at any one time under the age of 16; of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months.

The service is close to a local primary school, shops, parks and other amenities. The children are cared for in the living room, playroom, kitchen/diner and upstairs toilet. Children also have access to an enclosed rear garden.

About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection which took place on 14 February 2024 between 09:15 and 13:45. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- made contact with five parents of children who attended
- spoke with the child and children
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefitted from positive, nurturing relationships with the childminder, who knew them well and was responsive to their needs.
- Children had regular access to outdoor play either in the local community or the childminder's garden.
- Training could be formally evaluated to identify ongoing improvements within the service.
- The childminder should develop self-evaluation processes to formalise the continuous improvement of the service using best practice documentation.

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?	3 - Adequate
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 were happy and relaxed in the childminder's company. Positive relationships had been built between all children and the childminder, which helped children feel safe and secure in the service. Parents commented that their children were very happy attending the service. One parent said, "they are a truly fantastic childminder; they are so welcoming, friendly and have a beautiful nature with both my children who adore them."

The childminder spoke confidently about each child that they cared for and knew them well. The childminder discussed individual needs of the children with parents on a regular basis. This approach helped to support effective communication and consistency and continuity of care. As a result parents shared they were very happy with the level of care and support their child received: "the childminder keeps me up to date with any learning and developments my child makes during their time with them as well as daily feedback on how they have got on."

Children's personal plans detailed children's routines, likes and dislikes along with information to keep them safe and well. Plans were in place for all children who attended the service and were updated regularly with parents. This ensured the childminder had the most up-to-date information, routines, and strategies in place to support children's individual development. All parents strongly agreed that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan.

We discussed implementing chronologies for children within the personal plans. These should clearly capture significant events in children's lives. This would highlight that the childminder's awareness of potential safeguarding and wellbeing issues which may arise and that appropriate actions have been carried out.

Snack provided opportunities for older children to develop independence. We saw them wash and chop fruit for everyone and spread their own pancakes. It was a lovely, unhurried experience for the children and childminder to enjoy their food together sitting at the table. This ensured children's health and wellbeing needs were being met.

Nappy changing was a relaxed, nurturing experience for children. The childminder took a respectful approach to children's personal care and chatted to the children as they changed their nappy. Appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) was used and good hand washing routines were in place. This contributed to children being kept healthy, safe and well.

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted by the availability of homely, comfortable spaces to rest and relax. When children required a nap, safe sleeping spaces were available, including a travel cot for the younger children. Children's routines from home were followed which took account of parents' preferences, providing a continuity of care. All parents strongly agreed that their child was able to rest or sleep when they needed to within an area that was comfortable and cosy.

There were no children within the service requiring medication. We noted that the childminder had a clear medication policy in place which highlighted how they would effectively manage the safe administration of medication to ensure children's health and wellbeing.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

The childminder's warm and friendly interactions supported children to feel relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings and as a result they played happily throughout our visit. One parent said, "always very warm and welcoming atmosphere during drop off and pick up." Another parent said, "the childminder is so easy to get along with and they have a great relationship with my child; they're friendly and welcoming."

We saw older children support younger children's play, creating games for them around their interests. They used their creative and problem-solving skills well to plan and make games for example; a car park with numbered parking spaces which children had to match to numbered cars. A younger child was well supported by the childminder to develop their numeracy skills by recognising and matching numbers. We also observed younger and older children cuddled on the sofa, enjoying books together. This promoted a love of stories and supported age appropriate language and literacy skills.

Toys and resources were easily accessible from the playroom and boxes in the living room. As a result children were able to choose what they wanted to play with and shape their own learning experiences. They were familiar with the toys and activities available such as arts and crafts, books, small world toys and construction. Resources were clean, in good condition and appropriate for children's individual needs and interests. One parent said, "the childminder provides plenty fun and age appropriate activities for my child within the setting." Another said, "all care, play and learning is excellent."

Daily diaries and discussions with families supported the childminder to identify children's interests, next steps and strategies based on individual needs. The childminder should continue this approach and document observations in order to evaluate children's progress and achievements. This responsive approach will ensure children are developing a broad range of lifelong learning skills.

Children's opportunities were enhanced through connections with the local community. Children attended toddler groups, book bug sessions at the library and enjoyed visits to the parks, woods and shops in the local area. This supported children to become familiar with their community and have a sense of belonging. One parent said, "the childminder takes my child to activities within the community which is fantastic for their socialisation and development." A second parent said, "the childminder is always keeping my child occupied and I love that they are out and about at the park and going for walks in the woods no matter what the weather may throw at them." Another said, "the childminder takes my children to the parks, play areas, book bug and clubs. They have a very active day which they love."

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; therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

A very warm and welcoming environment was provided for children. Children had access to a playroom, living room and kitchen/dining area which meant they had ample space to safely move around the childminder's home. We saw children use this space confidently, moving resources around to support their play. Areas accessed by children benefitted from natural light and were well ventilated. All parents strongly agreed that the setting was well furnished, comfortable and homely.

The childminder had a very good understanding about the importance of children having opportunities to play outdoors and a strong emphasis was placed on outdoor play. The children had access to a large, enclosed rear garden area. The childminder told us about children being able to access a wide range of outdoor play resources to support their play and learning experiences. During our visit we did not see the children play outdoors, however, they told us that they enjoyed playing with the mud kitchen and utensils, on the swings and slide and with water play. It was clear that children benefitted from lots of fresh air and exercise, playing outdoors in the childminder's garden which was a safe and secure play space. Parents strongly agreed that their children had the opportunity to play outdoors every day.

The environment was very comfortable, clean, and maintained to a high standard. Appropriate infection control measures were in place and the childminder followed best practice guidance. This supported a safe and healthy environment for the children in her service.

Risk benefit assessments were in place for indoor, outdoor and outings in the community. These were reviewed regularly and supported the childminder to give thought to the importance of fresh air, exercise, socialising and learning. This took account of children's experiences and ensured their health and safety.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key questions as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality Assurance and improvement are well led

A clear vision, values and aims were in place which reflected the service provided. The childminder commented that these were shared with families within a welcome pack when they joined the service. We discussed the benefits of reviewing and developing values, vision and aims involving children and families. This would ensure they captured what was important to everyone involved with the service.

The childminder had a range of policies which supported their service and helped inform parents about what they could expect. Some policies required updating to reflect the most current guidance. The childminder took immediate action to review and update the service policies.

The childminder recognised the importance of effective communication with parents and used a variety of methods to communicate with families including verbally, 'WhatsApp' and daily diaries. This supported parents to feel valued and included. This approach also helped the childminder to support children's current interests and needs, enabling the children to feel happy and secure. The feedback we received from parents highlighted that they all strongly agreed they received good quality information about their child's day. The childminder should now consider how they could gather parents' and children's thoughts and ideas in order to influence change. This would support families to share their views and contribute to improvements within the setting (**see area for improvement 1**).

The childminder took an informal approach to self-evaluation. They were able to discuss how working to gain a recognised qualification had encouraged them to reflect on practice and make improvements to the service, for example encouraging independence with the children. To help formalise their self-evaluation process the childminder should familiarise themselves with the Care Inspectorate guidance: 'A quality framework for day care of children, childminding and school aged children.' We highlighted how they could use this as a self evaluation tool to develop how they evaluated their performance in delivering high quality care and learning for children (**see area for improvement 1**).

Areas for improvement

1. To support improvement to the service and ensure good outcomes for children, the childminder should:

- a) consider ways of supporting families to share their views and contribute to improvements within the setting.
- b) ensure quality assurance systems, including the use of quality audit tools, are fully embedded into practice.

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

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 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge, and values

The childminder recognised the importance of positive attachments and interactions with families. Regular communication with parents meant that the childminder was able to respond to children's individual needs and preferences. This enabled them to build relationships and provide appropriate care and support. As a result, children's emotional wellbeing benefitted from strong, positive attachments. One parent said, "a fantastic childminder and is so friendly, welcoming and loving to both children. We consider ourselves very lucky to have them as a childminder." Another parent said, "we are very grateful to the childminder and the care they have provided so far for both of our children. The childminder is a very caring and nurturing and I could not imagine my children going anywhere else."

The childminder demonstrated a commitment to their professional development. The childminder was a funded provider and was working towards gaining a recognised childcare qualification. The childminder discussed how this was supporting their practice and further developing their knowledge and understanding of child development. The childminder had attended core training including first aid, food hygiene and child protection. This demonstrated a commitment to ensuring children experienced good quality care and support.

We suggested that use of a reflective journal would help to identify the benefit and impact of training and learning and any gaps in knowledge. We discussed how accessing a variety of other training and reviewing best practice guidance documents on the Care Inspectorate 'Hub' could also support practice and individual learning.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

We recommend the childminder ensures all information regarding minded children and their care needs is reviewed at least once every six months. This will help to ensure that an appropriate personal plan is in place and remains up to date.

This is to ensure the childminder meets current legislation and care and support remains relevant to children's individual needs.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16
Standard 6: Support and Development.

This area for improvement was made on 21 December 2017.

Action taken since then

Personal plans were in place for all children who attended the service and were updated regularly with parents. This ensured the childminder had the most up-to-date information, routines, and strategies in place to support children's individual development.

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?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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