

Maggie's Childminding at Old Mill Farm Child Minding

Auchterarder

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
28 February 2024

Service provided by:
Margaret Gallacher

Service provider number:
SP2014986151

Service no:
CS2014328823

About the service

Margaret Gallacher provides a childminding service from her property in a quiet rural area between Dunning and Auchterarder. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children up to 16 years of age. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's own children.

The children are cared for in a building converted into the 'play shed' which offers indoor play experiences, a small kitchen and toilet facilities. The children have access to vast outdoor space which includes a garden and woodland area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 1 February 2024 between 10:50 and 13:30 and on 28 February 2024 between 09:00 and 10:45. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with four children using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, kind and caring interactions. They had developed positive attachments with the childminder.
- The childminder knew each child's individual needs and interests well. However, some personal plans did not reflect children's current needs.
- Extensive outdoor spaces surrounding the 'play shed' provided interesting and exciting experiences.
- Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections with their local and wider community.
- The childminder had made improvements since the last inspection such as infection prevention and control measures. However, some aspects had not been fully addressed or were in the early stages.
- Children experienced fun play and learning experiences. They benefitted from the childminder's knowledge and value of outdoor play.

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?	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.

1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, kind, and caring interactions. For example, during personal care, the childminder chatted with children which created a positive and relaxing experience. Children sought comfort and were offered cuddles and reassurance which supported their emotional wellbeing. This demonstrated positive attachments between the children and childminder.

Children were sensitively supported to sleep and were given physical comfort to help them to settle. A calm and relaxing environment was created which helped them to feel safe and secure. Sleep routines were reflective of children and families' individual needs and wishes, for example ensuring that children had their comforters. As a result, children experienced a peaceful and comfortable sleep.

The childminder knew each child's individual needs and interests well. As a result, children were happy and relaxed. Some personal plans were up to date; however, others did not reflect children's current needs. Children would benefit from the childminder reviewing personal plans with families to ensure they have current information to meet children's changing needs (**see area for improvement 1**).

Children experienced a relaxed and sociable snack. They were encouraged to be independent, for example preparing the table and clearing away their plates. This supported them to be responsible and develop life skills. Children were offered a selection of nutritious foods for snack and sat together when eating. This meant they experienced a healthy and safe mealtime.

1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun and were engaged in their play. The childminder was responsive to children's interests and cues enabling them to lead their own play and learning. Children were supported to develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. Opportunities were naturally woven into everyday experiences such as counting when collecting pinecones, repeating words and extending vocabulary when looking at nature. As a result, children were happy and progressing.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections with their local and wider community. They benefitted from daily outdoor play in the surrounding woodland. These experiences provided them with opportunities to explore, be adventurous, curious and take risks. They were encouraged to learn about the world around them and develop an understanding of how to care for the environment. For example, they were involved in looking after chickens and ducks. These experiences had a positive impact on children's wellbeing and development and supported them to learn about nature.

The childminder was knowledgeable about children's individual development. However, they were in the very early stages of recording this to evaluate children's progress and next steps (**see area for improvement 1**). Children's achievements and photographs of their experiences were shared with families. This provided an opportunity for them to be involved in their child's learning.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children are supported to reach their full potential, the childminder should develop personal planning which captures children's developmental progress and identify next steps in learning. This is to ensure that children's needs are planned and met. To achieve this, plans should include, but not limited to:

- set out how children's needs will be met
- record how children have progressed
- be put in place within 28 days of a child starting at the service
- be reviewed every six months or more often if the child's needs change
- be shared and updated with children, parents and carers.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'As child, my personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

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.

2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced an environment which was cosy and homely. The children spent their time in the 'play shed' which was welcoming, comfortable and well maintained. They had plenty of space to play, rest and relax. Children's choice was promoted as they independently accessed a selection of toys, books, and jigsaws.

Extensive outdoor spaces surrounding the 'play shed' provided interesting and exciting experiences. Children had opportunities to experience risky play, for example, climbing trees and going down a mud slide. The childminder confidently discussed how she supported children to keep safe whilst enabling them to make choices and have fun. Risk assessments were in place which demonstrated some measures the childminder considered to minimise risks. We suggested these could be further developed, for example, to take account of changing weather conditions or different groups of children. This would support families to have a clearer understanding of the actions the childminder has taken to promote children's safety.

Infection prevention and control measures had improved since the last inspection. For example, children were well supported by the childminder to wash their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. This helped to minimise potential spread of infection.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

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

3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The vision, values and aims reflected the service with a focus on valuing outdoor play. The childminder had created a positive ethos promoting the benefits of children exploring a natural play and learning environment.

Children and families feedback was welcomed by the childminder. Communication with families was generally through informal chats at drop off and pick up times and text messaging. This approach supported open communication that enabled continuity in children's care and provided opportunities for families to be involved in their child's daily experiences. For example, a parent had informed the childminder about a child's new interest and the childminder had begun to gather resources to support their play and learning. This method gave children and families some opportunity to influence improvements and service development. We discussed how the childminder could develop their approach to actively seek children and families' views to evaluate all aspects of the service **(see area for improvement 1)**.

The childminder had made improvements since the last inspection; however some aspects had not been fully addressed or were in the early stages. The childminder would benefit from evaluating key aspects of the service such as personal plans to reflect on their effectiveness and make changes to improve practice **(see area for improvement 1)**.

The childminder's registration certificate was not up to date, as the assistant was no longer working at the service. We advised them to submit a variation to amend this.

Areas for improvement

1. To continue to improve outcomes for children, quality assurance and self-evaluation should be developed, including meaningfully involving children and families. The childminder should become familiar with best practice guidance and use this to support her to reflect and plan for continuous improvement.

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.

4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

Children experienced warmth, kindness and compassion. The childminder understood each child's individual needs and was responsive to their cues. As a result, they had developed positive relationships.

The childminder had begun to use support and feedback from the last inspection to develop and improve practice. For example, they had improved infection prevention and control measures and were in the early stages of recording children's development and progress. This supported improved outcomes for children.

Children benefitted from the childminder's engagement with some continuous professional learning such as child protection training. As a result, the childminder was knowledgeable in keeping children safe. The childminder demonstrated a good knowledge about how children develop and learn. For example, the childminder recognised the benefits of outdoor play experiences and how this supported children's physical, social and emotional wellbeing and development. This meant children experienced fun play and learning experiences.

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

To ensure children experience a mealtime which is safe and promotes opportunities for choice and social engagement, the childminder should review and improve the mealtime provision.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I can choose suitably presented and healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables, and participate in menu planning..' (HSCS) and also; 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible.' (HSCS 1.35).

This area for improvement was made on 23 January 2023.

Action taken since then

Children experienced a positive and relaxed mealtime. They were offered a choice of snacks and sat together when eating. This created a safe and sociable experience.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children are supported to reach their full potential, the childminder should develop personal planning which captures children's developmental progress and identify next steps in learning. This is to ensure that children's needs are planned and met. To achieve this, plans should include, but not limited to:

- set out how children's needs will be met
- record how children have progressed
- be put in place within 28 days of a child starting at the service
- be reviewed every six months or more often if the child's needs change
- be shared and updated with children, parents and carers.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that; 'as child, my personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 23 January 2023.

Action taken since then

Whilst the childminder was knowledgeable about each child as an individual, not all personal plans were up to date to reflect children's current needs. Children's development was in the very early stages of being recorded to evaluate their progress and next steps.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's health and wellbeing, the childminder should ensure that effective infection prevention and control practices are in place for children. This should include but not limited to:

- ensuring effective hand washing routines are implemented and established for all children
- ensuring all waste is appropriately managed
- ensuring children experience an environment that is free from intrusive smells

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 23 January 2023.

Action taken since then

Effective infection prevention and control measures were in place. Hand washing took place at key times throughout the day, waste was appropriately managed, and children experienced a clean environment. This helped to minimise the potential risk of spread of infection.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To continue to improve outcomes for children, quality assurance and self-evaluation should be developed, including meaningfully involving children and families. The childminder should become familiar with best practice guidance and use this to support her to reflect and plan for continuous improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standard (HSCS) which states that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 23 January 2023.

Action taken since then

The childminder had begun to reflect on their practice and make some improvements. However, there were some aspects which had not been fully addressed or were in the early stages. Children and families had some opportunities to inform the development of the service, however, there was scope for this to be enhanced.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 5

To promote positive outcomes for children, the childminder should develop their knowledge and understanding of their role and responsibilities. This should include, but not limited to, becoming familiar with best practice documents to support high quality play experiences and outcomes for children.

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' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 23 January 2023.

Action taken since then

Children benefitted from a childminder who was familiar with best practice and implemented this into practice. For example, the childminder was aware of infection prevention and control measures and as a result, children experienced an environment which supported their health and wellbeing.

This area for improvement has been met.

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?	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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