

Gauld, Kathleen Child Minding

Inverurie

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 March 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2014986305

Service no:
CS2014330974

About the service

Kathleen Gauld provides a childminding service from their property in the countryside just outside of Oldmeldrum. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to 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.

The children are cared for in the playroom, living/dining/kitchen area and downstairs toilet. When outdoors children also have access to an enclosed garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 04 March 2024 between 09:45 and 14:45. 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 three parents of children who attended
- spoke with the childminder 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.
- A range of training supported the childminder's knowledge and understanding of child development, having a positive impact on outcomes for children.
- The childminder should use their self reflection to put improvement plans in place to support ongoing improvement with the service.

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

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|--|---------------|
| How good is our care, play and learning? | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our setting? | 5 - Very Good |
| How good is our leadership? | 4 - Good |
| How good is our staff team? | 5 - Very Good |

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

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 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were very happy and relaxed in the childminder's company. Positive relationships had been established between 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, "Children are always happy at the thought of going. We are extremely happy with the care, play and learning the kids receive".

The childminder spoke confidently about each child that they cared for and clearly knew them very 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.

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 about care and support needs and routines. Taking account of this information strategies were put in place to support children's individual development. Parents strongly agreed that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan.

Snack and mealtimes were a very positive experience for the children. We observed them to be unhurried and relaxed which allowed children to eat at a pace which suited them. Snacks provided were healthy and nutritious offering children a choice of fruit. The childminder recognised the importance of developing life skills at mealtimes and encouraged independence, supporting children to pour their own drinks and serve their fruit. The childminder sat with the children, chatting to them, providing a lovely social experience. Parents strongly agreed that their child could choose from a range of healthy snacks everyday. One child said, "I love her because she gives me nice snack to eat that she's made for me".

Nappy changing was a very 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. This contributed to children being kept healthy, safe and well.

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

The setting's policy detailed how the childminder would safely manage the administration of medication. Medication was brought with the child daily and a medication plan was in place to ensure the childminder could manage this effectively in line with current best practice. This contributed to keeping children safe and well.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

The childminder's warm and friendly interactions supported children to feel very relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings. As a result they played happily throughout our visit. Children were very engaged, confident and having fun. Toys and resources were easily accessible from boxes, a tough tray and a small table in the playroom. Children were therefore, able to lead their own play, choose what they wanted to do and shape their own learning experiences. They were very familiar with the toys and activities available such as construction materials, books, songs, small world items and open ended toys and resources. These were clean, in good condition and appropriate for children's individual needs and interests. One parent said, "The children get involved in a wide range of activities such as outdoor trips and walks and indoor crafting and play. They are taught a lot of useful things and encouraged to be independent".

Due to the childminder living in a rural setting, the children were very keen to share what they knew about the sheep in a near by field. This led to everyone going on a walk in the country side to see the animals. The children were clearly familiar with the environment, the animals and people living close by. They were able to point out what interested them and share their knowledge about the flowers, animals and tractors. The childminder used this as a learning experience for the children. Open questions such as 'how do you know?' was used when exploring large tyre tracks extended thinking. Curiosity was promoted as children used sticks to dig in the mud and threw stones into water. They clearly enjoyed the cause and effect aspect of this experience, repeating this many times. Numeracy was promoted comparing the size of tyres on tractors and counting the arms on the monkey puzzle tree. The children enjoyed role play and used their imagination as they pretended there was a monster on the 'trip trap' bridge. This experience not only contributed to children getting fresh air and exercise but was also a valuable learning experience with children exploring the sense of wonder in their surroundings.

We saw that the childminder had consulted with children about what they would like to do. This meant that they were actively involved in their play and learning through a range of quality experiences promoting their choice and independence. Parents strongly agreed that their children have opportunities to be involved in meaningful, interesting and fun play experiences.

Daily diaries, observations and discussions with families supported the childminder to identify children's interests, next steps and strategies based on individual needs. Linking these to the wellbeing indicators supported the childminder to evaluate the children's progress and achievements. This approach ensured that children were developing a broad range of lifelong learning skills.

Children's opportunities were also enhanced through connections with the local community near the childminder's home. Children attended toddler groups, book bug sessions at the library and enjoyed visiting parks, woods and the beach with other childminders. This supported children to become familiar with their wider community and have a sense of belonging. One child said, "I like her because she takes me on trips out. She takes me on nice walks".

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 and a kitchen/dining/family area which meant they had ample space to move around safely. We saw children use this space confidently. Areas accessed by children benefited from natural light and were well ventilated. Parents strongly agreed that setting was well furnished, comfortable and homely. A parent said, "Lovely, clean, well maintained environment with ample opportunity for outdoor activities".

The childminder had a very good understanding about the importance of children having opportunities to play outdoors and a strong emphasis was placed on this. The children had access to an enclosed garden and the surrounding countryside was used for regular walks. It was clear that children benefited from lots of fresh air and exercise. Parents strongly agreed that their children had the opportunity to play outdoors every day. One parent said "Lovely house and garden in a great area for getting out and about. The kids enjoy the selection of toys and crafting materials that are provided each day".

We saw the childminder involve children in assessing risks during our walk. This was done naturally through conversations such as talking about the 'spikey' fence and listening out for vehicles. The children clearly knew what to do and showed an understanding about keeping themselves safe. Risk assessments were in place for indoor, outdoor and outings in the community. These were reviewed regularly and took account of potential hazards and helped ensure children's safety. We discussed using benefit-risk assessment to further support children's risky play opportunities. While taking into account the risks, this would recognise the benefits of more challenging play experiences for children.

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. Parents strongly agreed that their children were safe in a setting which was clean and well maintained.

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 well led.

A clear set of vision, values and aims were in place which reflected the service provided. The childminder commented that these were shared with families when they joined the service and parents had been asked for their thoughts on the service. We discussed the benefits of reviewing and developing the service values, vision and aims involving children also, to 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. We asked the childminder to review and update the service policies to reflect the most current guidance.

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 used '3 stars and a wish' and exit questionnaires to gather parent's and children's thoughts and ideas. We saw that the feedback was positive and some suggestions were made for example; chapter books to read and more arts and crafts which had been purchased. Providing lunches had been suggested. This had been discussed verbally with parents including the reasons why they don't provide lunches. We could see families thoughts and ideas were influencing change and their views were contributing to improvements within the setting. Parents strongly agreed that they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the setting and their ideas and suggestions are used to influence change.

We saw that the childminder had been engaging with quality audit tools such as 'Quality Framework for the day care of children, childminding and school aged children'. The childminder had taken time to explore outcomes and reflect on their service, in order to identify improvements. We discussed the benefits of creating improvement plans which would support the childminder to break down improvements, making them manageable and more easily measured. This would contribute to continued improvement within the service and positive outcomes for children.

How good is our staff team?

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 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge, and values.

The childminder recognised the importance of positive attachments with children and effective 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 benefited from very strong, positive attachments. One parent said, "The childminder takes great care of the children, they love her. She is very flexible and accommodating".

The childminder demonstrated a very good commitment to their professional development. The childminder was a funded provider and had recognised childcare qualifications. We could see this supported their practice and their knowledge and understanding of child development. This was apparent when the childminder told us how they supported children with additional support needs. The childminder had attended core training and additional courses including; communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and Physical in 2024. This demonstrated a commitment to ensuring children experienced very good quality care and support.

Parents strongly agreed that the childminder has the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to care for and support their children. One parent said the childminder was 'excellent with their child who has additional support needs, they are kind and patient'.

We saw that the childminder used a reflective journal to help identify the benefit and impact of training, learning and any gaps in knowledge. We suggested reviewing this on a regular basis to measure the impact on outcomes for children. We discussed how accessing and reviewing best practice guidance documents and 'quick win' sessions on the Care Inspectorate 'Hub' could further support practice and individual learning.

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

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| How good is our care, play and learning? | 5 - Very Good |
| 1.1 Nurturing care and support | 5 - Very 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? | 5 - Very Good |
| 4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values | 5 - Very Good |

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