

# Helen Crawford Childminding Child Minding

THURSO

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
15 March 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Helen Crawford

**Service provider number:**  
SP2022000035

**Service no:**  
CS2022000054

## About the service

Helen Crawford provides a childminding service from her property in a quiet residential area in Thurso, Caithness. 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 service is close to the local primary school, shops, parks and other amenities. The children use the kitchen and dining area, living room and bathroom. Children also have access to a garden to the front of the property.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 and 15 March 2024. 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 children using the service
- reviewed online questionnaires from four parents
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children experienced warm, kind and caring interactions which helped them to feel happy and relaxed and supported their emotional wellbeing.
- Children were well supported to achieve and develop through fun play and learning experiences.
- Children experienced exciting opportunities in the local community which followed their interests.
- Effective self evaluation enabled the childminder to reflect and continuously improve the experiences and outcomes for children.

## 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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very 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 experienced loving, kind and nurturing care and attention through highly effective interactions by the childminder. The home was a calm and inviting space for children. We observed children to be confident, comfortable and happy. Their needs, preferences and cues were responded to without delay. The childminder was consistently down at children's level, supporting them in their play. This helped them to feel valued, safe and secure.

Very effective use of personal planning information supported children's overall wellbeing. The childminder communicated with parents using a variety of methods, to suit all families, such as using WhatsApp to share messages and through daily conversation at drop off and pick up times. The childminder regularly reviewed each child's personal information, recognising that younger children's needs would change frequently. Older children were involved in sharing their own likes and preferences, for example, favourite activities and favourite snacks. This information enabled the childminder to anticipate children's needs. One parent commented, "I am confident that my child is happy and well cared for whilst in the care of Helen, she sends me regular updates of my child partaking in activities".

The childminder refreshed her knowledge of child protection and was confident to follow her procedures should she have any concerns about children.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were provided with a range of activities that supported their play and learning. They were able to choose from a selection of play resources that met their stage of development and interests. For example, children had access to various resources which supported their curiosity and problem solving skills. These included, role play resources, a selection of loose parts as well as other open ended objects and books of interest. As a result, children were engaged and having fun in a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences.

Skilled interactions from the childminder supported the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy. For example, the childminder scaffolded learning sensitively by singing, modelling and repeating new words while sharing stories and when supporting play experiences. This helped children to develop their understanding of language.

The childminder had a very good understanding of children's development and provided effective support to meet their needs and to help them flourish. For example, the childminder responded effectively to children's schematic play types and extended their learning by adding resources. As a result, children experienced high quality play and learning.

Effective use of observation supported the childminder to plan and extend play experiences to support children's development. As a result, children were effectively supported to grow and develop and their achievements celebrated. Children's development was recorded and shared with families. We suggested that dating the achievements would support the childminder to track their progress over time.

## 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

Children benefitted from a service that was homely, warm and welcoming. The childminders home was clean, tidy and furnished to a good standard. There was ample space for children to play, rest and explore. This demonstrated to children that they were valued. This was highlighted as a strength by a parent who told us the service is, "Friendly, clean and my child is comfortable and happy to be there."

Children were able to direct their own play and activities, choosing and freely accessing age appropriate and interesting resources to support their learning. There was a very good selection of resources which captured the children's interests and supported their play and learning experiences. The childminder recognised the benefits of having open ended and natural resources to extend the children's learning through play. These provided very good opportunities for children to develop curiosity, enquiry and problem solving skills.

Children's interests were extended by using community resources. Going to local parks and Dunnet Forest, meant they benefitted from exploring their abilities and the natural environment. This contributed to children having opportunities to be active and lead a healthy lifestyle.

Arrangements for safety and security were well functioning and supported keeping children safe. For example, to ensure a safe environment for children parental permission was sought for trips and outings and risk assessments were in place.

## How good is our leadership?

**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 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

The vision, values and aims of the service were shared with families, which helped them to have clear expectations of the service and how their child's needs would be met. The vision, values and aims reflected the service provided.

Clear policies and procedures were in place that supported the childminder to deliver a very good service. Policies were reviewed and updated regularly and reflected current legislation and best practice documents. Families were made aware of policies when they joined the setting. This meant that children and families benefitted from a service that demonstrated a commitment to offer high quality care and support.

The childminder recognised the value and importance of positive relationships with families. The views of parents and children were sought to support improvements, using both informal conversations and formal methods. Consultations with children through discussions, informed planning experiences. Parents shared that the childminder regularly provided updates and actively asked them and their children for their feedback. This demonstrated that children and their families were at the heart of the childminder's service.

Children were benefitting from a service that reflected current best practice. The childminder had used self-evaluation effectively to recognise what was working well and identify areas for development. This continuous cycle of self-evaluation and improvement planning enabled the childminder to be reflective and responsive to the changing needs of their children and service.

The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of their role, a professional approach and a strong commitment to providing 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 had developed very strong relationships with the children and families using their service. We observed caring and supportive interactions that acknowledged children's feelings. The childminder was committed to providing positive outcomes for children and enjoyed the important role they played in children's lives. Parents told us, "I am very happy with the service" and "(child) is happy and always comes away smiling".

The childminder had a very good understanding of how children develop and learn. Skilful interactions supported children to grow, develop and achieve. The childminder was knowledgeable about current best practice guidance and reflected on this to improve her practice, which supported children to receive high quality interactions and experiences. For example, children's emotional resilience and wellbeing needs were met well through developing secure attachments, promoting choice and enabling independence.

The childminder's professionalism and commitment to ongoing professional development and learning was a key strength. They undertook additional training to further their own knowledge, to develop their understanding of how to support children. The childminder kept a record of continuing professional development, reflecting on what they had learnt. As a result, children received very high quality care and support that was based on best practice and national guidance.

## 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?	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?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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