

# The Treehouse Child Minding

Cowdenbeath

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
8 April 2024

**Service provided by:**

**Service provider number:**  
SP2023000109

**Service no:**  
CS2023000166

## About the service

The Treehouse is a childminding service provided by Sarah Keenan from the town of Cowdenbeath, Fife. The childminder is registered to provide care for a maximum of 6 children at any one time, up to 16 years of age. No more than three children can be of an age not yet attending primary school and no more than one child can be under 12 months. These numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

Children have access to a split level living and dining space, a downstairs toilet and a terraced garden to the rear. Minded children must be supervised at all times when using the rear garden. The service is located close to local primary schools, parks and the town high street for shops and other amenities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 8 April 2024 between 12:45 and 15:00. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. This was the childminder's first inspection since they registered as a care service.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since registration.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with two minded children
- received feedback from five family members
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children were happy, confident, safe and secure and families were very happy with the care, play and learning their children experienced.
- Children enjoyed individualised routines which met their needs, rights and choices because the childminder worked closely with families to understand children's unique needs.
- The home was clean, safe and well-maintained, offering children and families a warm and welcoming space.
- The childminder's professional experience helped them to offer children good quality care, play and learning.
- Children's personal plans could be improved to show children's progress and record important observations of children's play that support planning.
- The childminder could develop better risk assessments to show how children are kept safe when on outings.
- As the service develops, the childminder could use relevant quality frameworks and best practice to self-evaluate their work and plan for improvement.

## 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?	4 - Good
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, confident and well cared for because the childminder was kind, caring and nurturing. The childminder had built strong and trusting relationships with children so they felt safe, secure and loved. All families were very happy with the care and support their children experienced. One parent told us, "Sarah is a great childminder... Our child is always excited to go to Sarah's as he knows he is safe and in a loving environment." Children enjoyed individualised routines that met their needs, rights and choices. The childminder had worked closely with parents and carers to implement a routine that respected the families' wishes while also respecting children's right to be heard. The childminder responded quickly and sensitively to children's actions, emotions and words, recognising their unique ways of communicating their needs, wishes and choices. For example, sleep routines were planned to positively respond to children's health and wellbeing. We encouraged the childminder to revisit relevant safe sleeping guidance so they are fully confident children's sleep routines are in line with best practice.

Each child had a personal plan that detailed their needs; for example, any medical, dietary or health needs. The childminder used these plans to take notes on any changes to children's routines and interests. This helped them change children's experiences to meet their needs, rights and choices. Families told us they felt included in planning their child's care and support and the childminder recorded conversations they had in each child's plan. One parent said, "Sarah involves me in my child's personal plan by informing me of my child's interests while with her and advising me of her next steps within her learning and development." The childminder also provided families with advice and guidance which was valued and appreciated in promoting positive outcomes for children. Most personal plans were in the early stages because children were relatively new to the service. We discussed with the childminder how they could improve the personal plans to show how they plan to meet children's needs and support their development. We also encouraged them to use relevant personal planning guidance to review and evaluate the plans as they develop. This will ensure that children experience high quality care, play and learning that responds sensitively to changes in children's lives.

A few children needed medication in the childminder's care. Families had given consent for the childminder to administer the medication as well as some guidance on how to support their child. The childminder recorded the medication they gave to the child and shared this with parents. This meant children received the right support at the right time to meet their medical needs. The childminder could improve the medication procedure to have more specific information on the medication children are taking. We encouraged the childminder to review best practice guidance on managing medication so they consistently record accurate information about children's medication.

Children and the childminder sat together at mealtimes, creating a positive experience for everyone. There was a social, relaxed and unhurried atmosphere which supported the home from home atmosphere the childminder aimed to achieve. Children chose what they wanted to eat each day from a selection of mostly healthy and nutritious foods. The childminder discussed their choices with them so they felt included and respected. This was helping them to build positive relationships with food from an early age.

The childminder should continue to review and update the food choices so these are consistently in line with relevant guidance on nutrition.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun as they played together in a nurturing and stimulating play environment. Children spent lots of time in the local community, enjoying a range of play experiences in a range of spaces. They enjoyed active play in parks and woodlands. They also enjoyed imaginative and co-operative play with others at local toddler groups and singing sessions. The childminder told us that they used their experience as a teacher and a parent to plan play and learning that helped children to feel like a part of the family. This was valued by parents and carers who wanted their child to experience a family orientated approach. One parent said, "Often when I pick my child up, she is so busy playing, she does not want to come home." The childminder was encouraging and supportive when children wanted to try new things or when they felt unsure. This helped children to feel safe and secure so they could take risks and enjoy new experiences. As a result, we were confident that children experienced good quality play that supported their learning and development appropriately and sensitively.

The childminder knew each child's individual interests and planned play which respected these choices. They also asked other important people in children's lives what they saw and heard in their play. This helped them to respect the views of families and other professionals so they could meet children's needs, wishes and interests. The childminder responded to children sensitively and helped them to choose play which was fun, exciting and creative. This included real life experiences such as visiting shops and walking in the local community. As a result, children were encouraged to develop skills for life. The childminder's observations of children's play and learning could be improved. This would support them to reflect on children's development and plan play that continues their learning in a broad range of lifelong learning skills.

## How good is our setting?

## 4 - Good

We made an evaluation of **good** for this key question where we identified strengths and some improvements would maximise children's wellbeing.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children enjoyed their care, play and learning in a clean, safe and well-maintained setting. The childminder took pride in their home and they continually changed and improved spaces to meet children's needs. For example, since the childminder had registered as a care service, new doors had been fitted which made the home more secure. The home was very well-presented and organised which helped children to make choices independently. Toys were stored in boxes at children's level which allowed them to see what was available. The outdoor play space was also fun and offered children opportunities for more messy play. One parent told us, "Sarah has the most amazing outdoor area for the kids. My little boy loves playing outdoors in the mud." The childminder understood that play resources should be matched to children's needs, rights and choices and regularly refreshed what was available to them to extend their play. We encouraged the childminder to build on the range of interesting, unusual and imaginative resources available to encourage children to solve problems and think creatively.

The childminder reduced the risk of the spread of infection because they had effective cleaning procedures in place. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times and surfaces were cleaned regularly. The home was clean and welcoming throughout. We were confident that children were experiencing good quality facilities that kept them safe and healthy.

The childminder was developing their understanding of risk assessment. There was a clear risk assessment in place for the home and garden which recognised most hazards and identified appropriate measures to reduce risk for children and families. The childminder was committed to promoting a safe environment. For example, they had registered as a food business with the local authority to ensure that their practice was safe and protected children from harm. Their food inspection had been positive and this showed the childminder took their responsibilities as a care provider seriously. The childminder should continue developing their understanding of assessing risk, including by developing specific risk assessments for spending time in the local community. This will ensure everyone involved in the service understands how to keep children safe.

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We found important strengths that clearly outweighed areas for improvement in this key question. This contributed to positive outcomes for children and, therefore, we made an evaluation of **good**.

### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children and families felt included and respected by the childminder. Families told us they felt welcomed in a warm and supportive way which created a positive and caring space for them to enjoy. One parent said, "I am always updated on my child's care, play and learning on pick-ups", and another said, "I have filled out questionnaires which keep myself as a parent involved in the development in the service." The childminder had close relationships with children and families so they could respond quickly, sensitively and appropriately to their needs. The childminder shared their vision and values with families when they started which helped everyone to have a clear expectation of children's care, play and learning experiences. As a result, there was an inclusive, respectful and positive ethos for children to thrive and flourish.

The childminder had a good understanding of how to evaluate their work and plan for future improvements because of their professional experience as a teacher. They had an action plan in place that had identified some areas they hoped to improve over time. This meant children benefitted from continuous improvements that enhanced their experiences. We discussed how the childminder could improve their approach to quality assurance and self-evaluation by using relevant quality frameworks to understand national expectations. In addition, we encouraged them to use best practice guidance when planning improvements so they can understand how to promote positive outcomes for children from an informed perspective.

## How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as **good** where performance impacted positively on children's outcomes and this outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

Children were treated with warmth, kindness and compassion in their daily experiences. The childminder was nurturing, supportive and responsive to children in a sensitive way. They spoke warmly and respectfully about children, showing children they were valued and loved. As a result, children were settled and comfortable in the childminder's care. It was clear that children trusted the childminder and they sought reassurance when they needed it while exploring new experiences. Children were given cuddles, offered smiles and encouraged to laugh together and enjoy each other's company.

Families were very happy with the childminder's approach. One parent said, "Sarah is a great childminder. She has been exceptional in delivering the care our child needs. As parents we both feel extremely lucky to have found Sarah as she exceeds our expectations." The relationships, experiences and interactions between the childminder, children and families created a nurturing, warm and welcoming space for all.

The childminder was currently working as a teacher in a local primary school, which offered them a range of learning and development opportunities relevant to their childminding. This also meant they had opportunities for professional discussion that helped them to reflect on their own practice. This helped them to make well-informed changes when this was needed. Children's care, play and learning was planned using the childminder's strong knowledge of child development and other best practice. As a result, children were supported to experience positive outcomes. Families also valued the childminder's relevant experience and recognised this was one of their strengths. One parent told us, "Sarah is so professional and I know when my little boy is in her care, he's safe." As the childminder develops their experience in this new role, we encouraged them to target some of their training to learn more about the unique experience of a childminding setting. This will support them in developing routines and experiences for children that fully meet their needs, rights and choices.

## 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?	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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

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



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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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