

Steph's House Child Minding

Montrose

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
31 May 2024

Service provided by:
Stephanie Strachan

Service provider number:
SP2022000179

Service no:
CS2022000267

About the service

Steph's House provides a childminding service from their property in a quiet residential area of St Cyrus. The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than six are under 12 years, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and, of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

The service is close to local primary school, parks and other local amenities. Children have access to a dedicated playroom, dining kitchen, downstairs bathroom and a fully enclosed garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 May 2024 between 09:15 and 12:30. 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 and information submitted by the service.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- gathered feedback about the service from families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and relaxed in the childminder's care. The childminder was responsive to children, providing caring interactions.
- Children were able to direct their own play and activities, choosing and freely accessing appropriate materials and resources to support their play and learning.
- Trusting and positive relationships were formed with families and effective communication supported families to be involved in their child's care.
- A range of mandatory training courses and other professional development opportunities had been accessed, supporting the childminder to develop their skills and knowledge.
- The childminder should continue to carry out regular self-evaluation that includes gathering the views of children and families to support improvements.

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?	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 experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from the childminder who supported their care needs well. The childminder knew the children very well and was responsive to their emotional and wellbeing needs. Comfort and cuddles were offered when needed, which gave them reassurance. This supported children to feel safe and secure during their time at the service. Children were confident in approaching the childminder, asking for resources and inviting them into their play which showed children were confident in their care. A child commented, "She is always funny and nice. She always gives us a choice of what we want to do after school. She makes really good snacks. Her house is like a wood theme and their last name is wood." Another commented, "Steph is very welcoming and makes us feel like part of the family. We feel very relaxed there."

Children's care and support was agreed in consultation with families. Their overall health and wellbeing was supported by consistent care that met their individual needs. The childminder had considered the routines of the day and made changes to this depending on the needs of children. The childminder knew the children as individuals and how to meet their needs. Personal plans were developed for each child and detailed their routines, progress, and possible next steps in their development. We suggested these could be more detailed to reflect the childminder's knowledge of individual children's needs. Personal plans were being updated regularly which helped ensure they received the right care at the right time. A parent commented, "Steph has been amazing, she really knows my child well. Particularly during a change in home circumstance, she has been supportive and kind." Another told us, "Steph is always welcoming, has a very approachable nature, she's always willing to work with me when figuring out my child's needs whilst at work, and really puts me at ease when discussing any anxieties I have over my child being away for any length of time. It's like we co care when she's with them as she's always in touch with me."

Children enjoyed relaxed and unhurried mealtimes. Parents provided snacks whilst the childminder provided lunch. Lunch options were healthy and varied which supported children to try a variety of new and interesting foods. We saw evidence of children helping to prepare the evening meal offering opportunities for independence. We discussed how these could be further extended to the snack time experience.

Children were well supported in their personal care. The childminder was kind in their interactions and children's dignity and privacy was respected. Children's sleep routines were well considered, and the childminder had a very good knowledge of safe sleep practices, helping to ensure children were safe and healthy.

Clear policies and procedures were in place to protect children from harm. The childminder understood the role they played in keeping children safe. The childminder had undertaken child protection training and were confident in the procedures they would follow should they have any concerns about a child.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were observed to be happy and enjoying their time with the childminder. They had a variety of

opportunities which met their developmental needs, interests, and curiosities. These experiences offered children play and learning which included exploring, being creative, and problem solving. As a result, children were engaged in their play. A child commented, "There is always something to do. There is lots of fun activities. She sets up good activities. She's quite funny and crazy. We go to the park in Summer. There are kids my age. I like that she's not too bossy. She draws with us and plays games with us a lot." A parent told us, "Lots of outdoor and creative play. It seems they are doing something different every day and as such is never bored."

Children benefitted from opportunities to develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. Experiences were enhanced naturally through play. For example, the childminder was skilled at using MAKATON signs with children and was seen to be using these naturally throughout the day. Whilst playing with children, the childminder encouraged them to count, name shapes and colours and she repeated words back to them. As a result, children were engaged in their play whilst developing literacy and numeracy skills.

The childminder listened to ideas and suggestions from children and parents. This helped them to provide a good range of activities, toys and games. Experiences were child-centred and responsive to the children's wishes and choices. They linked to children's current interests and were challenging and exciting. Floorbooks were used to record children's experiences and support with planning. This allowed children to revisit learning and talk about their experiences. The childminder was knowledgeable about each child's stage of development and identified appropriate next steps in learning to support them to reach their full potential. As a result, children were happy, confident and progressing well. A parent told us, "Steph came and spent an hour with us before the children started discussing their needs. She regularly checks in to discuss how they are doing."

Children's opportunities were enhanced through the strong community connections. For example, attending local groups, use of playparks and garden centre supported children to be included and created a sense of belonging. A parent commented, "Steph has a good garden for the children. She also takes them to the local parks or to the beach in good weather."

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.

Children were cared for in a safe, welcoming and homely environment contributing to children feeling happy and secure. The environment had been organised to allow children to move around freely with space to play on the floor, choose their toys or relax using soft furnishings. Children appeared confident in the space and were leading their own play and learning. A parent told us, "Steph has always welcomed me in and shown me a private space I can feed my baby if needed as they were still feeding when initially starting with Steph. I was made to feel extremely welcome at any point, even if Steph had plans, she would consult me first to make sure we could coordinate times to feed if needed."

Children's stages of development, interests and curiosities were well considered and reflected in the selection of resources on offer. The toys and resources were easily accessible which promoted choice and enabled children to be independent in their play and learning. A varied range of resources ensured that children had access to a variety of learning experiences. Children were seen to be utilising these freely leading their play.

Children benefitted from a large, fully enclosed garden area offering a range of different types of play, for

example, ride on toys, mud kitchen, tuff tray experiences and physical games. The childminder understood and valued the importance of outdoor play and explained children use the garden daily. Children were supported to assess risk for themselves, for example, some children were climbing up a tyre and splashing on the tuff tray on the tyre. The childminder ensured they were safe without impacting on their play and learning experience.

The childminder was alert to potential risks in their setting, outdoors, and in the local community. This protected and supported children's wellbeing and safety. The childminder identified and minimised potential risks through the use of risk assessment. Infection prevention and control measures included cleaning and hand washing routines that were effective.

Children and families personal information was securely stored. The childminder understood their responsibilities regarding storing and processing children's personal information.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The aims and objectives of the service were in place to promote a shared vision between the childminder and families. These were shared with families as children enter the service. The childminder discussed how these would be meaningfully reviewed with families as the need arises. This meant children and families benefitted from a childminder that was reflecting on the delivery of their service, ensuring everyone's needs are met.

Families were welcomed into the home and had daily opportunities for discussions, which helped build meaningful relationships. The childminder shared that they had not sought formal feedback from parents, and we discussed how this could be done to support meaningful engagement and improvement. Consultation with children was a key strength of the service. Children benefitted from lots of opportunities to offer feedback and suggestions. It was clear that these were used to plan meaningful improvements to the service. For example, children were participating in a fundraising event where they had been involved in making pom poms to sell and had voted on how the money was to be spent. This ensured children felt valued and listened to.

The childminder was using a daily diary to record and reflect on their practice. This highlighted what was going well and what they might do differently. They were not currently engaging with tools to support reflection such as 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare'. This would support the childminder to target and reflect on the key aspects of service delivery.

Children and families benefitted from a childminder that was dedicated to offering a high-quality service. We discussed planned improvements and the childminder had a clear vision for future developments. Documenting these plans would support the childminder to monitor the pace of change and evaluate the impact of changes on outcomes for children and families.

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.

The childminder was nurturing, kind and compassionate. They knew each family and their circumstances well and described positive relationships. Children were secure in the childminder's care and were seen to be relaxed and chatty. Interactions were loving and supported children to develop thinking skills. Fun and kindness were at the heart of the service provided to the children and families. A parent told us, "Steph is always positive and bubbly, so she is easy to get on with. She is great with the kids and myself and my husband trust her fully."

It was clear that relationships and communications with families were a key strength of the service. The childminder had developed strong relationships with children and families, supporting them to feel included and valued. They used 'Minding Kids' app to share information and communicate with parents as well as day-to-day conversations. A parent told us, "Steph is a lovely person. We didn't know her before but feel we have built a really good relationship. She is very laid back and welcoming and we trust her completely with our children. It is really easy to text or phone Steph about anything. I like that when we pick up the kids, she is frequently sitting down playing with them and giving them her full attention."

The childminder's knowledge and skills supported high quality experiences for children. The childminder was proactive in keeping up to date with best practice. They had attended a range of training courses and a childcare qualification. Reflecting on new learning had enabled the childminder to identify how it could enhance their practice. This contributed to supporting very good outcomes for children.

Children benefitted from good supervision which ensured they were always safe.

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?	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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