

Little Stars Child Minding

Elgin

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 June 2024

Service provided by:
Diane McKenzie

Service provider number:
SP2022000162

Service no:
CS2022000238

About the service

Diane McKenzie, trading as Little Stars, is registered to provide a care service to six children at any one time up to 16-years of age; 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 situated in Elgin on the edge of a residential area of a village where there are natural wild areas to explore close by, and it is within walking distance of a school, shop and play parks.

Children are cared for in a designated play room, although the large lounge/diner is also used by the children, especially at meal times. There is a secure garden to the rear of the premises that has a patio and lawn, accessed from the lounge. An outdoor building has also been adapted as a playroom for the children.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 4 June 2024 between 11:45 and 14:45. The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

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:

- contacted six parents
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The childminder's warmth and caring interactions with the children helped to support their overall wellbeing, children were happy and confident.
- Families had been involved in the creation and review of their child's personal plan; it helped to provide consistency and continuity of care.
- The childminder had got to know families well and reflected their views in practice when caring for their child.
- Children enjoyed being able to explore, test things out, and make choices in their play. They benefitted from spontaneous and planned quality play experiences that included lots of outdoor play both at the service and in the community.
- Children benefitted from being cared for in a home that was comfortable, clean and well furnished. It helped to give the message to children that they mattered.
- The childminder's skills, knowledge and enabling attitude was supportive of children to have fun in their play and to achieve their potential.

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

The childminder's warmth and caring interactions with the children helped to support their overall wellbeing. Children were happy and confident, the childminder's nurturing approach and kind words of encouragement helped positive relationships to be established. The childminder had got to know families well and reflected their views in practice when caring for their child. Parents strongly agreed they had formed a strong connection with their childminder. Whilst there were no children needing to sleep, the childminder had appropriate arrangements in place that promoted good habits, safety and emotional security of the children.

Lunch time was relaxed and unhurried, children sat at the table and clearly enjoyed eating together. The childminder sat with the children and was attentive to their needs, and such practice also helped to promote close attachment. Food choices were appropriate for children's individual dietary needs and nutritious options were promoted. Children had water with their lunch and water bottles were readily visible and accessible. The childminder encouraged children to remain hydrated.

Families had been involved in the creation and review of their child's personal plan; it identified needs such as health, care routines, interests, and likes and dislikes. This helped to provide consistency and continuity of care and enabled the childminder to respond sensitively to changes in the child's life. The childminder was implementing practice that ensured reviews took place at a minimum of six monthly. The childminder recorded information that also helped to identify children's individual needs and to direct actions, which meant children and families were well supported. We discussed the benefits of using chronologies for such purposes with the childminder. Reference: practice guide to chronologies - [hub.careinspectorate.com](https://www.hub.careinspectorate.com)

Most parents strongly agreed and one agreed that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan. Parents told us they have a really good relationship with the childminder. Other comments included, "The childminder listens and goes out of their way to support our child" and "The childminder is very friendly, I can't fault the connection that she now has with my child, it's amazing."

The childminder had a clear policy and suitable documentation for the administration of medication. We discussed medication arrangements with the childminder, as a child that had 'as required' medication was due to start at the service. The childminder had a copy of the good practice guidance document: Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services. We advised the childminder to ensure practice reflected the guidance with particular reference to consent and first dose of medication.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children enjoyed being able to explore, test things out, and make choices in their play. When outdoors, children had fun with bubble water using various containers, funnels and water spinners. They explored and used their imagination in the well resourced outdoor play kitchen that had a variety of real utensils, and poured water and mixed flowers to make potions and cakes. A child told us that they were making lasagne, they liked pasta. Children chose to sit at the outdoor table and used dough to create patterns and shapes.

Children were able to move around safely and independently. They benefitted from spontaneous and planned quality play experiences that helped to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Children enjoyed sitting with the childminder outside, listening to and talking about a story book, and then singing songs together. They used chalk to make patterns and draw on the paving slabs. Indoors, they were matching a variety of shapes and colours and filling various sized containers. The meaningful conversations and interactions between the childminder and the children also helped to extend their learning and interests. The childminder helped children to learn from each other, play together, and have an understanding of safety and risk. When a child wanted to use the slide they pointed out the puddle of water that had gathered at the bottom, they helped the childminder to mop it up with a towel.

The childminder observed and assessed children's progress and development that also recognised children's achievements. Parents strongly agreed that their child's development was supported through interesting and fun play experiences. They were always welcomed into the childminder's home to discuss their child's play and learning. Their child's development was always supported through interesting and fun play activities that included arts and crafts, sensory play, literacy and numeracy.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through strong connections to the wider community. They included visits to local community groups such as mother and toddlers, natural play areas, beach and play parks. Parents stated that their child always had the opportunity to play outdoors. Comments included, "....outdoor adventures most days, scavenger hunts, educational visits, play farms, and garden fun that included the mud kitchen."

The childminder's holistic approach to children's wellbeing and right to play supported children's emotional resilience. Children were confident and progressing well as the childminder was attuned to the interests of the child.

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 2.1: Quality of the setting for care, play and learning

Children benefitted from being cared for in a home that was comfortable, clean and well furnished. It helped to give the message to children that they mattered. Ample ventilation and natural light contributed to children's psychological wellbeing.

The childminder had implemented infection control practices that followed best practice guidance to support children's safety. They included good hand hygiene and appropriate equipment for nappy changing such as, disposable gloves and aprons. The childminder had complied with food hygiene legislation to support safe food practices.

Children were supported to enjoy challenging and fun play experiences that also enabled them to move around freely, manage and learn about their own limits. Risk assessments for the premises and outings helped to support the safety and security of the children. We suggested that a programme of review and adapting as necessary would help to ensure that risk continued to be assessed and evaluated. Reference: SIMOA keeping children safe practice notes - [hub.careinspectorate.com](https://www.hub.careinspectorate.com)

Children had ample space to play and explore in the large lounge/diner and secure garden that was directly accessed from the lounge. A designated playroom inside and an adapted building outside, also offered a variety of play materials and resources that were regularly rotated. Indoor and outdoor areas had been sensitively arranged to promote children's choice in their play. The garden also provided active play activities that supported children's physical wellbeing. Curious, creative and exploratory play was promoted such as sand and water play activities, real and open ended (no fixed purpose) materials, and wooden resources that provided a tactile feeling for the children.

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 led well

The childminder had records and documents that were well organised and readily accessible. They had clear policies that supported them in running the service and provided a basis for evaluation. We suggested that having a programme of review would help to ensure they reflected the provision of the setting and aligned with good practice guidance.

The childminder had invited children and parents to share their views to help inform the development of the setting. Children's achievements were also shared with parents. Parents strongly agreed that they and their child were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Parents told us that the childminder often sought feedback formally and informally, and all suggestions were welcomed.

The childminder had developed a concise format for identifying areas for improvement which included play and learning, and family engagement. Reference: Me, my family and my childcare setting: A practice note for building stronger connections and meaningful relationships - [careinspectorate.com](https://www.careinspectorate.com) Outcomes and actions were identified and a timescale had been allocated. We discussed the benefits of consistently using the plan to sustain improvements, and how recording the impact of the changes made to children and families supported evaluation of the setting. We also referred the childminder to the early years improvement programme - [hub.careinspectorate.com](https://www.hub.careinspectorate.com)

We also discussed notification reporting to the Care Inspectorate and referred the childminder to the guidance on the hub.

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/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

The childminder had considerable experience of working with children. They held relevant early years qualifications, including a degree in child and youth studies that supported their skills and knowledge in early years practice. Additional training such as induction to childminding, first aid, positive behaviour, and arrangements to attend refresher training in child protection also helped to support the childminder's competence.

The childminder was able to reflect on and take steps to improve their practice so that children received high quality experiences. We suggested that the childminder kept a record of how learning, including research/good practice guidance, had supported their development and the difference it had made to the outcomes for children.

The childminder's enabling attitude was supportive of children to have fun in their play and to achieve their potential. Their warmth, kindness and nurturing approach towards the children enabled them to feel valued, loved and secure.

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
2.1 Quality of the setting for care, play and learning	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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