

Wee Ones Child Minding

Hamilton

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 July 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2011982921

Service no:
CS2011301709

About the service

Wee Ones is a childminding service provided by Catherine MacLachlan from the family home in Hamilton, South Lanarkshire. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children up to the age of 16. Numbers are inclusive of members of the childminder's family. There are currently five children registered with the service.

The children have access to the downstairs of the property which includes a playroom, living room, dining area, kitchen and bathroom. They have access to gardens at the front, side and rear of the property and regularly access places in the local community. This includes extended play opportunities at a nearby wooded area. The service is close to schools, nurseries, parks and public transport links.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 2 July 2024 between the hours of 09:30 and 12:30. Further feedback was shared at 17:30 by telephone that evening. 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 two children using the service and received four questionnaires from families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The childminder provided a welcoming, nurturing and homely environment which enabled children to feel safe, secure and relaxed.
- There were excellent play and learning opportunities for children, particularly at the outdoor forest group.
- Children and families benefitted from robust quality assurance processes and the childminder's commitment and dedication to service improvement.
- The childminder was motivated to source training and learning opportunities to meet the needs of children and extend their professional development.

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?	6 - Excellent
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
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?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

The childminder knew children and their families very well. Close, trusting relationships and effective communication systems had been developed and maintained. Parents told us, 'The childminder is extremely nurturing so I have complete peace of mind leaving my child in their care,' and 'I feel my child is absolutely thriving in Catherine's care.'

Kind, caring and nurturing interactions between the childminder and the children were observed over our visit. Children were very relaxed in the care of the childminder and with other members of the childminder's family. This homely, nurturing environment supported children's individual needs and emotional wellbeing. One child told us, 'I like coming in the holidays because I can be here all day. I like to hug Catherine. They give the best hugs.' As a result, children felt valued, loved and secure.

The use of 'colour monster' books and soft toys supported children in recognising their own feelings and emotions, coping with change and supporting their emotional wellbeing. These resources were available for children to access independently. Most recently these had been used successfully to open conversations with children about leaving the childminding service and starting school, which had reassured children.

One child had drawn 'feelings pictures' for her friends to point to or talk about each day. The childminder and child agreed where to display these, so that all children could see them when they arrived. The child told us, 'You just point to how you are feeling or tell Catherine anything you want to do every day. You can do it or not.' This had included children's ideas, assisted children in recognising how they were feeling and enabled the childminder to be responsive to children. This gave a message to children that their ideas and feelings mattered.

There was a discussion around changing some plans on the day of the inspection. Children were consulted and their views and suggestions were listened to and respected. The children decided to make alternative arrangements for strawberry picking later in the day or that week to include others. One child added, 'We could go this afternoon or on Thursday and then (another child) could come with us too.'

There was effective use of personal plans. Individual plans gave a current reflection of each child. Personal information, health or medical needs, significant events, achievements and agreed next steps for children's learning and development were regularly reviewed and updated with children and parents. This took account of 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators of being safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. An app was used daily to share children's photographs and activities with parents. This informed and included parents in their child's day at the service and offered an opportunity for a two-way link. One parent told us, 'We discuss the care plan and my child's development. We try to do this at regular intervals on a formal basis and more regularly on an informal basis.'

Observations with evaluations were carried out for all children. Parents and children were consulted and included in determining next steps in play, development and learning. One parent added, "Catherine consults me regularly to ensure I feel they are meeting my child's development and emotional needs, as well as taking an interest in what my child's interests are to ensure activities are enjoyable and engaging." One child had identified their own next steps and wanted to find out about being a doctor. To meet this, plans were in place to visit places in the community and the Science Centre to find out more about the human body and the role of a doctor.

All children were supported to reach their full potential. Where children also attended nursery, the childminder had visited to share views, ideas and agree strategies for individual children. This was discussed and shared with parents. These open, positive relationships ensured there was consistency in meeting individual children's care and support needs, achievements and ensured improved outcomes for children. Working closely together to complete children's transition reports meant children's development and progress was accurately recorded. This approach informed parents and supported the child as they moved on to primary school.

Children were involved in the preparation of snack, which developed their independence and skills. They showed us where they washed their hands and made individual choices of what to eat and drink. Snack time was a relaxed, unhurried experience for children. Fresh water was available throughout the day. Children were encouraged to remain hydrated and better options for food and drinks promoted to support a healthy, balanced intake.

The storage of medication and associated consent and administration of medication paperwork was in line with current guidance. Parents had been consulted to devise and agree individual plans for any children with diagnosed conditions. This ensured a clear, consistent approach was in place to meet individual children's health needs.

The childminder was confident in her role and responsibilities in keeping children safe. Annual child protection training provided by the local authority refreshed their knowledge and ensured they were up to date with any changes. This contributed towards children's overall health, safety and wellbeing.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were happy, having fun and experienced high quality play and learning opportunities. They made their own choices of what to play with by selecting resources from low level accessible storage boxes and shelves. Planning approaches were child-centred and responsive. Children shared many examples of child-led play experiences and how they chose what to do after school or over the summer holidays. They said, "When it was only me here we went to the cinema. I really wanted to do that and I loved it."

Children shared stories, photographs and floor books of varied activities and outcomes for play and learning, both indoors and outdoors. Children told us, "We were at the care home. Then we collected cherries from cherry trees. We washed them and made cherry water to drink. It was lovely." Children's creativity was encouraged and supported through imaginative play, arts and crafts and the use of loose parts, both indoors and outdoors. Loose parts are everyday objects found in homes or outdoors which children can use in many ways to encourage and promote their imagination and curiosity. One example was a collection of stones and sticks which had been gathered by the children over time to create their own changeable artwork, exploring patterns, textures and properties of different natural materials. One child added, "I use everything. I just like to use my imagination."

A particular strength within the service was the childminder's development of a forest group. This had continued to grow and develop over the last few years as the benefits of outdoor play and the positive impact on children's confidence, health and wellbeing became more apparent. The childminder undertook further training and gained a national health award. This experience and knowledge had ensured there were responsive and extended play and learning experiences for children. This included activities to promote language, literacy, numeracy and problem-solving, with depth of learning and challenge, while ensuring children had fun. Parents told us, "I collect my child every day to find they have been on a new adventure."

Children were involved in risk assessing the area and led their own play in a variety of ways depending on the seasons and the changing natural resources nature provided. This supported children to have an awareness and responsibility of their own and other's safety and wellbeing, as well as having fun and extending play and learning opportunities. Children's comments included, "I made 'Stick Man' with five legs" and "Is that the forest climbing frame?" when looking at old tree roots on different levels. Experiences and outcomes were discussed with children and some recorded in floor books for children and parents to re-visit. As a result, there were excellent outcomes for individual children. Parents added, "Catherine always consults my child to give them a voice in their development and learning, whether it be an activity my child wants to do or a skill they want to master," and "They often take part in outdoor experiences, whether it be making bird feeders as well as real life context experiences such as cooking."

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

Care was provided from the downstairs of the childminder's house which was clean, well furnished and homely. Children had their own space at the front porch to store their belongings and their drawings and artwork was displayed. All parents were welcomed inside when dropping off and collecting their children. This gave a strong message to children and their families that they mattered. One parent told us, "Catherine always invites me in when dropping off or collecting my child, whether to show me something they have made or an activity they are finishing."

A well-resourced playroom was bright, cosy and comfortable. Children were very much at home and relaxed in this play space, although they did access other areas downstairs for different activities at other times, for example, baking or table top activities at the large dining table.

To ensure children's safety indoors and outdoors, daily checks were undertaken prior to children's arrival. The front and back doors were locked and gates and fences in the front, side and rear gardens were risk assessed. Additional measures were in place to ensure all areas were safe and secure when children were playing outdoors, for example, a second closure was on the front gate and the side garden was enclosed from the main gardens and driveway. The childminder was aware of the Care Inspectorate's safety campaign - Keeping Children Safe - Look, Think Act. This highlighted the importance of keeping children safe when indoors, outdoors or on outings and had been shared with families.

The gardens offered varied opportunities for children to play and explore with a natural grassed area, paved area for wheeled toys, a playhouse, natural resources and loose parts to extend children's imaginative play.

Outdoor spaces were used in response to children's requests, with the childminder supervising children at all times outdoors.

Infection prevention and control procedures contributed to children's health and safety. The childminder and children washed their hands with liquid soap and running water before preparing and eating food. Children demonstrated how they washed their hands. They told us, 'We dry our hands here and put it in the basket.' Nappy changing procedures were discussed which followed good infection control procedures and promoted children's privacy and dignity.

Children's personal details were stored and managed safely in line with general data protection requirements (GDPR). The service was registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to ensure they were fully informed of their responsibilities in protecting children and families information.

How good is our leadership?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for children.

Quality Indicator: 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There was a strong ethos of continuous improvement to ensure children had high quality experiences and positive outcomes maintained. A clear vision, values and aims for the service had been shared following consultation with families. This let families know what the service aspired to provide for them and their children. There were robust systems in place for quality assurance, self-evaluation and service development. As a funded provider with the local authority, an improvement plan with key priorities was in place. This highlighted areas for development and identified how families and children would be included and involved. It was used as a working document to identify progress made, any changes and next steps.

To include families in the service development, parental questionnaires or questions regarding specific areas of improvement were shared with families. An example was to evaluate the success of existing forest activities and learning opportunities and to invite parents to a 'stay and play' activity in the forest. Responses from families had been very positive with no areas for improvement suggested. Large books with photographs, learning outcomes from activities and parental input were then shared at individual parents' meetings. Parents told us, "The childminder regularly requests feedback on what would improve the service," and "Children are never bored and have learned so much. They learn about their feelings, how to take turns, living skills."

Effective communication systems were in place. Parents had suggested ideas for summer holiday events, such as a local school's forest trail and the itinerary for a local museum. The childminder also shared information with families, for example, their planned attendance at an autism awareness day, where their learning would then be shared. Parents whose children had already left the service continued to share ideas for outings and had maintained close connections with the childminder. This involved people and promoted close partnership working which created positive experiences and outcomes for children.

A child using the service had devised a questionnaire for younger children about the choices of resources and activities. They recorded children's comments and shared the responses with the childminder. This gave children responsibility and a voice. All children's views and suggestions were included, respected and responded to.

The childminder had very good experience and understanding of the importance of quality assurance and outcomes for those using the service. A monitoring calendar was used to identify specific areas the childminder planned to review and update throughout the year. This included reviews of personal plans, the annual review and update of policies and regular consultations with children and families. Documents such as national practice guidance 'Building the ambition: being me' and the local authority's guidance 'Together we can and we will' were used to assist with self-evaluation. We signposted the childminder to the improvement and support questions within the Care Inspectorate's 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' document and the Health and Social Care Standards to further support self-evaluation.

Following the success of the childminder's forest group which demonstrated clear, positive outcomes for children, the childminder shared their initiative with the local childminding group, who often supported each other. This expansion proved to be very successful and created additional play and learning opportunities for more children, for example, risk assessing and exploring a larger area and outdoor cooking.

This practice was shared more extensively for early learning and childcare daycare of children services, as well as childminders within the local authority's training for outdoor learning. The childminder had an active role in the presentation of the training and was very proud of this achievement. They continued to support others with information and advice to improve outcomes for children, confidence outdoors and service development.

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 strong values and was passionate about providing the best care for children and their families. They were kind, caring and responsive to children's needs. This supported children to feel safe, secure and loved. The four parents who responded to our questionnaire strongly agreed that overall they were happy with the care and support their child received in the service. They added, "You can clearly see the amazing relationship they have built up and how much the children adore her," and "Catherine is a fantastic childminder who takes her role extremely seriously."

Supportive networks with other childminders and nurseries had enabled the childminder to share and discuss current guidance, best practice and knowledge to maintain a high quality care service for children.

The childminder was committed to her role and engaged in continuous professional learning. They had identified their training needs and areas of interest to explore further. This had a positive impact on their professional development and meeting the needs of children. Recording and evaluating all training attended had resulted in positive outcomes for children, for example 'Getting ready to read' training had shared the importance of exploring rhyming words with children to expand their vocabulary and find out how language works. This resulted in fun language games with the children and one child writing a poem, which was then printed to highlight their achievement.

Other examples of training included 'Virtual Nature School' training where children's awareness of nature and the environment around them was captured within a large book. This contained photographs, children's observations, activities and learning outcomes which was shared and often re-visited by children and their families. Attachment training had resulted in the childminder having a better understanding of children's distressed behaviour, which would inform practice and information sharing with families going forward.

Children and families benefitted from a childminder who was well trained, motivated and dedicated to their role. One parent commented, "Catherine is always available for queries or updates. They are friendly, approachable and have built trusting relationships with us parents, whilst always maintaining the highest level of professionalism."

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?	6 - Excellent
1.1 Nurturing care and support	6 - Excellent
1.3 Play and learning	6 - Excellent

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	6 - Excellent

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

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