

Louisa Gaines Child Minding

Elgin

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
1 August 2024

Service provided by:
Louisa Gaines

Service provider number:
SP2022000201

Service no:
CS2022000298

About the service

Ms Gaines 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 a residential area of a town, close to some local amenities. Children are cared for in the lounge/diner. A secure garden with lawn and patio to the rear of the property is accessed from the kitchen.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 31 July 2024 between 10.45 and 13.45. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

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

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Communicated with three parents;
- Spoke with the childminder;
- Observed practice and children's experiences; and
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

The childminder's warmth and caring interactions with the children helped to support their overall, wellbeing.

The childminder's holistic and nurturing approaches to children's wellbeing and right to play supported children's emotional resilience.

Children were supported to enjoy challenging and fun play experiences.

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in making choices in their play and had lots of fun.

The childminder was embedding a method of improvement, that was enabling them to consistently inform improvement in the quality of the service to children and families.

The childminder was able to reflect on and take steps to improve their practice so that children received high quality experiences.

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

1.1 Nurturing care and support

The childminder's warmth and caring interactions with the children helped to support their overall, wellbeing. Children received kind words of encouragement and comforting cuddles that provided reassurance and helped them to feel better. Where children needed personal care, their dignity and confidences was well supported through the respectful and nurturing approaches of the childminder. Sleep routines reflected individual needs and family wishes and promoted good habits around sleep such as a travel cot and sleep mat.

Children were clearly happy to be involved in the preparation of their lunch with the help of the childminder. They buttered their own bread and made their own sandwich from their choice of cheese and salad and they also selected their own fruit. Children chose to sit together at the child sized table outside under the cover of a canvas shelter. They poured their own drink from a small jug. It was a relaxed and unhurried social experience as the children chatted with each other. The childminder sat with them and joined in the conversation and was also attentive to their needs, which also helped to promote close attachment. Food choices were appropriate for children's individual dietary needs and nutritious options were promoted. Children had water bottles that were easily accessible that encouraged them to remain hydrated. The childminder refreshed the water as it was a particularly hot day.

Parents 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/dislikes. An on-line programme also enabled changes in children's care to be discussed and actions agreed, such as toilet training and personal safety. This helped to provide consistency and continuity of care, and enabled the childminder to respond sensitively to changes in the the child's life. The childminder also had chronologies that helped to identify children's needs and directed actions to support children well.

Parents strongly agreed that they were fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan. They always felt welcomed into the childminder's home to discuss their child's care, play and learning. They told us that the childminder always kept them updated, shared information regularly and took great care to involve them in their child's development and care.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children clearly enjoyed being able to move around the play space safely and independently, both indoors and outdoors. Well considered innovations and creative approaches engaged children's imagination and enriched their play and learning, they were able to try things out for themselves.

The childminder's holistic and nurturing approaches to children's wellbeing and right to play supported children's emotional resilience. They skilfully used their knowledge and practice to support high quality play and learning.

Children chose to play outdoors for the large majority of the inspection and clearly enjoyed playing outside together. They benefited from spontaneous and planned play experiences that helped to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Children moved between water play, a tray full of slime and a large sand pit that were equipped with a variety of utensils, they enjoyed building and baking with cake tins. Children had great fun with large chalk sticks, after deciding they wanted coloured water, some prompts from the childminder helped them to decide to try grating the chalk and adding water. The play then extended to making patterns and shapes and foaming soap was also added. Natural materials such as tyres, tree trunks and small planks also provided different textures and exploration. Children could paint/draw on small wooden discs too. We discussed how play experiences might be extended further with the childminder, such as recipes and scales in role play kitchens, tape measures, note pads and clip boards. Children were also learning about growing, having planted tomato's and strawberries. They told us how they had enjoyed picking and eating all the strawberries too.

Children experienced high quality play and learning as the childminder skilfully used their own knowledge and experience. The childminder had conversations with the children during play that helped to widen their skills and consolidate their learning.

The childminder observed and assessed children's progress and achievements, which was shared with parents. Parents strongly agreed that their child's development was supported through interesting and fun play experiences. They always had the opportunity to play outdoors. Play experiences included fun treasure hunts, bug hunts, outings, planting, sensory games baking and messy play.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their own and wider communities. Children visited woodlands, the beach, a toddler group, library, and castle grounds that included natural play areas. The childminder was also exploring options for intergenerational practice so that children could benefit and learn from different generations.

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

Children benefited 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. A soft toy elephant reflected the Care Inspectorate, look, think, act campaign also known as SIMOA. It enabled children to have tactile connection with learning to keep themselves safe. When a child tripped up and bumped their knee, the childminder talked with them about what happened and what SIMOA might say. This helped them to recognise that on running to quickly they had missed the step and hurt themselves.

The inspection took place on a particularly hot day and children clearly chose to play outside, small and large sun shelters had been erected in the garden to provide shade and protection to the children during play. Written risk assessments for the premises and outings helped to support the safety and security of the children.

Children had ample space for floor play in the lounge/diner and a secure garden was accessed from the kitchen. Indoor and outdoor areas had been sensitively arranged to promote children's choice in their play. A variety of resources and materials were stored in open shelving units within the lounge/diner, a large cupboard had also been converted so that children could access additional play activities/materials. The garden had a large lawn and slabbed area that supported active play, exploration and creative play. An outdoor storage box was also equipped with real items such as pots and pans, cardboard boxes, rolls and sheets. The dining area was also used for snacks/meals, crafts and messy play activities. Large sofa's in the lounge also enabled children to relax, rest and recuperate.

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

The childminder had records that were well organised and readily accessible. They had clear aims and objectives and policies that supported them in running the service and provided a basis for evaluation. We suggested that on the next review it would be beneficial to link them to the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS).

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 asked for feedback, their children were offered lots of play choices.

The childminder was using a self-evaluation document that was beneficial in helping them to reflect on the on their practice and the service, that helped bring about positive changes to outcomes for children and families. They included introducing resource swaps, literacy and 2's training, introducing planting and growing with the children and retrying family get togethers.

The childminder was embedding a method of improvement that was enabling them to consistently inform improvement in the quality of the service to children and families. We discussed the benefits of maintaining a focused and manageable approach that identified the result of any changes. The childminder clearly strived to ensure that high quality learning through play was at the heart of improvement planning.

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.

The childminder had a clear understanding of how children developed and learned and had considerable experience of working in the early years sector. They also had previous experience of providing a childminding service and working in an early years setting. The childminder held relevant early years qualifications, that supported their skills and knowledge that enhanced outcomes for children.

Training such as child protection, first aid, observations, 2's training, STEM, additional needs and parental involvement also supported the childminder's professional development and benefited outcomes for children.

The childminder was able to reflect on and take steps to improve their practice so that children received high quality experiences. The childminder kept a record of how learning had supported their development and the difference it made and we suggested that this could be extended to the use of good practice guidance /research.

The childminder's enabling attitude was supportive of children to have fun in their play and to achieve their potential. Their warmth and kindness towards the children enabled them to feel valued, loved and secure. Children's independence, confidence and curiosity was promoted as the childminder interacted in a sensitive and responsive way.

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?	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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