

Fraser, Hazel Child Minding

Muir of Ord

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 August 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2008971454

Service no:
CS2008184101

About the service

Hazel Fraser provides a childminding service from her property in the village of Muir of Ord. The service is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children up to sixteen years of age. The service is situated in a residential area of the village within walking distance of the local nursery, primary school, library, shops, woods and other amenities. The children are cared for in a living/dining room, kitchen, and have access to a fully enclosed, secure back garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 12 August 2024, between 14:00 and 17:00. 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with two family members of people using the service
- reviewed five responses to our MS Forms survey of family members of people using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Children experienced warm, kind and nurturing interactions, and as a result had formed strong attachments with the childminder.

A younger child was very engaged in their play and having fun. The childminder was responsive to the child, getting down at their level, providing vocabulary for their experiences and allowing them to lead their play independently.

Children's stages of development, interests and curiosities were well considered and reflected in the selection of resources on offer.

While the childminder demonstrated that they were able to evaluate their practice informally, developing a formalised approach would support the identification of strengths and areas for development more effectively.

Parents felt involved in the service as any changes to routines and needs were acted upon immediately.

Further engagement with best practice documents could help continue the development of reflective practice and quality assurance processes, such as self-evaluation.

Children benefitted from a childminder who was motivated to learn and engaged with a range of professional development to improve their practice.

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.

1.1 Nurturing Care and Support

Children's overall wellbeing and care was supported by the warm interactions and nurturing care they received from the childminder. This helped children to feel valued and loved, leading to the formation of strong bonds. One child was being minded at the time of inspection. They readily approached the childminder, confident that their needs would be met, helping them reach their potential.

During the minded child's personal care routine, the childminder talked and sang. This resulted in the child being relaxed and comfortable during this key part of their daily routine. The childminder told us that when more than one child was present, she was mindful of positioning. This demonstrated an awareness of protecting the dignity and privacy of a child whilst receiving personal care, as well as safely observing other children.

Children's care, wellbeing and development were supported by personal plans which detailed their basic needs. Personal plans were supported by regular communication with parents at pick-ups and through the use of a digital app. Parents told us: "If anything changes or arises we can speak to Hazel and it will be acted upon instantly," and "Hazel is always willing to support any changes in (child's name)'s development." This meant that the needs of children were well met with relevant, current routines which reflected parents' wishes.

Children's health and wellbeing benefitted from the childminder regularly encouraging drinks of water. This supported a minded child to stay well-hydrated on a warm day. Tea time was a sociable, homely experience as the child and childminder chatted together. The childminder was attentive and responsive to the child as they ate, gently supporting them to eat well and safely. This demonstrated an awareness of the potential risk of choking.

1.3 Play and Learning

The young child attending the service during our inspection was provided with a wide range of activities that supported their play and learning. They were able to choose from a selection of toys and play equipment that met their stage of development and interests. For example, the child had access to various resources to support their curiosity and problem solving skills. These included sensory activities, small world toys, small loose parts and real life items, such as kitchen utensils. The childminder spent a lot of time down at the minded child's level, actively playing and engaging with them. The childminder was mindful that they were the only child attending that day, the childminder managed interactions well enabling play to be fun and meaningful.

The childminder showed photographs of children engaged in a variety of activities including playdough, baking and exploring the natural environment. All families who responded to our survey strongly agreed with the statement: 'My child's development is supported through interesting and fun play experiences'. These experiences supported children to feel valued and have their wishes and choices respected.

Children's play experiences were enhanced by regular visits to the local community. They had regular visits to local woods, a play park, woods and to see farm animals.

They some times attended Bookbug sessions at the local library. These visits extended children's knowledge and understanding of their local area and sense of place. A parent told us, "All weathers the children are out - they experiment with the elements of the seasons and play with available resources... our child adores being outside taking part in these."

Skilled interactions from the childminder supported children's learning and development. These included repeating key words as the minded child explored different objects, questioning and giving time for the child to respond and giving language to experiences. The childminder linked songs to activities and experiences. These experiences helped the child to develop their understanding of language and use new words with confidence.

During play the young child's development of mathematical understanding was considered with reference to relevant concepts. Words such as "small" and "large" were used to make comparisons in relation to containers during water play. The concept of capacity was introduced in a developmentally appropriate way. These opportunities supported children to develop key numeracy language and skills.

Children benefited from planning that considered their young age and interests, enabling them to feel valued. The childminder had a fluid approach to planning for each day. This gave children ownership of their learning, supporting their interests and choices to be fulfilled. The childminder used a range of methods to record and share details of individual children's learning experiences with families. This included a messaging app and through daily conversations at drop off and pick up times. The childminder worked closely with families to support children's development and progress. As a next step in developing how children's progress is recorded, we suggested the childminder might want to think about what skills, knowledge or understanding a child is gaining from an experience.

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 experienced care in a welcoming, comfortable and homely environment which offered plenty of natural light and ventilation. The childminder had considered the layout of their home and during business hours adapted the space to create a safe, cosy space within the living area with ample space for floor play. A secure, gently sloping back garden gave children a flat slabbed area and a large grassed area for play and activities.

Children were able to access a range of resources which were developmentally appropriate. Children benefitted from a childminder who understood the variety and type of play experiences key to supporting developmental progress for their age stage of development. As a result, a minded child was engaged in play and activities which fostered their interests, curiosity, imagination and creativity. The childminder pointed out recent additions of open ended resources a minded child had been playing with and shared examples of sensory play through photos. The organised layout and availability of space enabled children to lead their play and learning and gave a strong message that they mattered.

Children's health and wellbeing benefitted from effective infection prevention and control procedures being in place at key times. A young child was supported to wash their hands before and after eating. The childminder made effective use of appropriate PPE when carrying out a nappy change. The childminder told us about how she managed the provision of toys and resources to ensure that regular cleaning took place.

They were mindful that younger children were more likely to put items in their mouth so regular, manageable cleaning was implemented. As result children experienced care in an environment which was safe and clean.

The property was well maintained indoors and outdoors. Risk assessment strategies were implemented to ensure that children's safety was promoted and potential risks were minimised.

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.

The aims and objectives shared with parents reflected the experiences and care received. These provided families with clear expectations about the service, and how their children's needs would be met. Aims and objectives were embedded into practice and, as a result, children experienced high quality care and support. One parent told us that when the childminder attends courses she "shares tips that help parents." This demonstrated one way in which the childminder actively promoted parental involvement and partnership working with parents.

The childminder did not yet have a formal system in place for reflective practice and self-evaluation. However, the childminder was clearly a reflective practitioner and able to articulate the impact of changes that had been implemented. For example, since our last inspection the childminder had decided to focus on providing a service for children up to the age of attending nursery. This meant that young children were able to play and learn uninterrupted by older children's routines, allowing interests to be followed at their pace. As a result, a minded child was able to become deeply engaged in activities and learning.

One or two aspects of the service would benefit from some formalised quality assurance systems to support continued high quality care and learning. A couple of policies did not reflect the current service or did not take into account current best practice. Policies should now be reviewed and updated where necessary and some personalised to the service. More structured self-evaluation would support the childminder to identify such areas for development and improvement.

Feedback from families was valued by the childminder. Parents were given regular opportunities to share feedback. For example, through daily conversations, technology and occasional surveys. Families commented positively about service communication and felt well informed about their child's experiences. A parent told us: "(the childminder) will send out evaluative forms and asks 'What can I do to improve?' " As a result, parents felt able to make suggestions about improvements to the service at any time.

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.

Children's overall wellbeing and outcomes were supported by a childminder who had developed strong relationships with them and their families. Interactions were warm, compassionate and nurturing. The childminder understood what children needed to help them grow and develop, and responded to their needs in a caring manner. This helped children build secure attachments and positively supported their wellbeing.

A parent commented that for their child there was: "...lots of settling in - lots of build-up to leaving (child) with Hazel."

The childminder interacted with the minded child in a responsive and sensitive way which helped to promote curiosity, independence and confidence. The childminder recognised the importance of fun in children's play. This meant that the child engaged in play and learning with genuine enjoyment and excitement.

In addition to core training, the childminder had accessed and completed training opportunities in subjects which enhanced their knowledge and skills. This was demonstrated through changes and improvements the childminder had made to ensure that children's experiences took current and best practice into consideration. This meant children experienced stimulating play experiences which fostered high levels of engagement in play. As a result, they were supported to enjoy good quality interactions and experiences.

We reminded the childminder to develop a method of recording learning and development and its impact as part of quality assurance.

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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