

Smith, Nichola Child Minding

Falkirk

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 September 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2004937077

Service no:
CS2003038619

About the service

Nichola Johnstone, trading as Nichola Smith, operates a childminding service from their home in the village of Airth, Falkirk. Nichola is the main childminder with occasional assistance from her mother Margaret Johnstone, who is named as an assistant.

The childminder may care for a maximum of eight children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than six are under 12 years; of whom not more than three are not yet attending school and; of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

When working with the assistant, the care service can be provided to a maximum of 10 children at any one time up to 16 years of age; of whom no more than eight are under 12 years; of whom no more than three are not yet attending school and; of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

Children have access to the ground floor of the childminders home. This includes the open plan lounge/playroom, kitchen and downstairs toilet. French doors allow direct access to the garden space at the rear of the property. This provides opportunities for children to have fun as they enjoy physical play and learning outdoors.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 18 September 2024 between 08:45 and 11:30. Feedback was given on Thursday 19 September 2024. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 children in the service
- reviewed digital responses from nine families
- spoke with the childminder and assistant
- observed practice and interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced a warm, nurturing and respectful approach to their care.
- The childminder knew children and families very well.
- Children benefitted from a setting that was homely and comfortable.
- The childminder and the assistant were dedicated to meeting the needs of children and their families.
- Effective communication with parents meant that changes, transitions and next steps in the child's learning and development were meaningfully identified and acted upon.
- Children's voices were well represented, children's interests were supported and extended, and the daily routines were skilfully adapted to suit each child's individual pace.

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 these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1 - Nurturing care and support

The warm, caring and nurturing approaches experienced by children meant they were happy and relaxed as their overall wellbeing was supported. Children told us that they liked going to the childminder's. One child said, "She's kind, she lets us try new food, she lets us play and you can tell her anything". Another child said, "I like how Nichola is always there for us".

The childminder knew children and families very well. They took into account families' personal preferences, and children's personalities. For example, we observed the childminder sensitively supporting children as they interpreted non-verbal cues. The childminder offered comfort and reassurance whilst gently encouraging children's developing independence. This ensured that the care and routines provided were consistent and met the needs of individuals.

Families provided packed lunches for children and nutritious snacks were offered by the childminder. We observed children sitting together, in appropriately sized chairs, to enjoy a relaxed and unhurried morning snack. The childminder and assistant were close by to ensure children were safe. We suggested ways to involve children in the preparation of snack. For example, chopping fruit, spreading butter on toast and pouring their own drinks. This would further promote and encourage children to develop important life skills.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through effective use of personal planning. The childminder gathered detailed information from families on their child's needs and preferences, and reviewed this regularly with them. The ongoing sharing of information enabled the childminder to provide continuity of care, and respond quickly to any changes in a child's life.

We found that the childminder knew their responsibility regarding the safe administration of medication and appropriate systems were in place to record information. This helped keep children safe.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Children were having fun as they actively led their play and learning. There was a balance of spontaneous and planned activities which promoted children's choice and independence. Planning was responsive to children's interests and took account of their age and stage of development. As a result, children were happy, confident and making progress.

A range of activities and experiences gave children opportunities to develop their imagination and creativity. For example, children had been making their own beach using containers with sand, shells and pebbles. Older children investigated tides as they added and removed water, and younger children enjoyed a sensory experience. Shells and other open-ended resources were available for children to use in different ways to promote curiosity and enrich their play and learning.

The local community was well used by the childminder to extend children's experiences. They had fun as they explored nature, visited parks and met with other children and adults at local groups they attended. As a result, children's opportunities for play and learning were improved as they developed strong connections to their own and wider communities.

Careful observations of children's learning and progress were recorded and shared with families in a variety of ways. Such as, floorbooks, learning journals and through the use of technology. They shared information and ensured additional supports were planned for and put in place if required. The childminder communicated well with families and worked closely with them to ensure children were supported to reach their potential. One parent told us, "Nichola is thorough in her personal development plans and she really cares about [child's name] development and if there is anything I would like to work on".

The childminder had a very good understanding of the importance of promoting children's rights. Children's right to be heard was evident as their voices were clearly represented and visible throughout the setting. This meant children felt respected, included and valued.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a setting that was homely, comfortable and offered lots of natural light. The open plan lounge/playroom meant children had ample space to play and relax. The playroom offered children a variety of age-appropriate toys, activities and books to choose from. The lounge area provided space to eat together and rest with cosy soft furnishings. The carefully considered and organised layout enabled children to lead their learning and gave them a strong message that they mattered.

The childminder understood the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall wellbeing. French doors led directly from the playroom into the outdoor space which provided some free flow play opportunities. We observed children playing and having fun in the fully enclosed garden at the rear of the property. We discussed the importance of ensuring the gate is locked when children are playing outside. The all-weather surfaces provided opportunities for active, physical outdoor play all year round. Children also had regular access to fresh air and exercise as they had fun and made use of outdoor spaces in the local community. Outdoor experiences meant children were learning about the benefits of an active lifestyle that promoted their health and wellbeing.

The property was well maintained indoors and outdoors. Risk assessments ensured children's safety was promoted as potential risks had been reduced. Infection prevention and control measures were in place. Regular cleaning of toys and resources, alongside effective handwashing at key times meant we were satisfied that the spread of infection was minimised. As a result, children were cared for in a safe environment where their wellbeing was prioritised.

The childminder understood the importance of keeping children's personal information secure and followed General Data Protection Regulations. They asked for permission before taking photographs and shared their confidentiality policy with families using the service.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 3.1 - Quality assurance and improvements are led well

The childminder and assistant demonstrated a strong commitment to providing positive outcomes for children. They told us that wellbeing and nurture were at the core of their values. The vision, values and aims of the service were evident in the kind and supportive interactions we observed during the inspection. This had created an ethos of care, love and respect.

Positive, trusting relationships had been established with children and families, and the childminder knew them well. Their views were actively sought to inform the continual development of the service. Observations of children's interests, and the childminder's reflections also helped to identify future improvement priorities. For example, further developing the mud kitchen in the garden was identified as an area for improvement following observations of children's play. Most families told us that they felt involved and could help to develop the service. One parent said, "Nichola regularly consults on our thoughts and views and offers updates of any suggestions. My son does this through floor books with Nichola". Another family told us, "Nichola welcomes feedback". This meant children and families were meaningfully involved and could influence change within the setting.

The childminder was reflective in their practice and had developed ways to evaluate the service. This demonstrated their understanding and commitment to continual improvement. We discussed ensuring the views of the childminder's assistant were included in self-evaluation processes. This would ensure the views of all stakeholders were considered and clearly represented.

The childminder had developed positive working relationships with the local authority and the Scottish Childminding Association. They worked in partnership with Falkirk council to provide funded childcare for some children. As a result, children experienced high quality care and support from a service that was dedicated to meeting their needs.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 4.3 - Staff deployment

The childminder had overall responsibility for the children in their care, and the day to day running of the service. They recognised that continuity of care was important for children and ensured that the assistant spent time with them. Busier times of the day and week were planned for. For example, we observed transition times such as school drop off and pick up, to be well considered. The assistant cared for younger children when needed which supported the childminder to walk safely to school with older children. Children had built very strong relationships with the childminder and the assistant. We observed younger children being comforted with cuddles and reassurance as they settled into the service. The responsive, respectful and nurturing approach meant children were happy and had developed strong, secure attachments with the childminder and assistant.

The childminder and the assistant worked very well together. Effective use was made of experience, knowledge and skills to ensure outcomes for children were positive. They communicated very well with each other and worked together to support children and keep them safe.

The childminder and the assistant were dedicated to meeting the needs of children and their families. They demonstrated a very good understanding of child development and engaged in training and networking opportunities. They understood that children's experiences and outcomes improved as they developed their own skills and knowledge.

The wellbeing of the assistant, as well as children and families, was a priority for the childminder. They made time to meet with the assistant and ensured breaks and holidays were planned. This meant children experienced high quality care in a service where everyone felt valued.

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
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.