

Wee Helens Childcare Child Minding

Isle of Mull

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 September 2024

Service provided by:
Helen MacInnes

Service provider number:
SP2023000044

Service no:
CS2023000059

About the service

This service registered with the Care Inspectorate on 9 March 2023. The service provider is Helen MacInnes.

Wee Helens Childcare is a childminding service. The service operates from the childminder's home, located in Tobermory, on the Isle of Mull. The service is provided from a detached two-storey house, with children having access to the ground floor and enclosed back garden.

The service is within walking distance of the local bus route and primary school.

Current registration allows the childminder:

1. The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age:

-of whom no more than six are under 12 years;

-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.

2. Minded children can only be cared for by persons named on the certificate.

3. No overnight care will be provided.

About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection, carried out by one early learning and childcare inspector, which took place on 4 September 2024. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and any intelligence gathered since registration in March 2023.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Observed practice and daily life.
- Spoke with children using the service.
- Reviewed documents.
- Spoke with the childminder.
- Sent questionnaires to parents/carers to gather their views and feedback.

Key messages

- Children were experiencing warm, nurturing care and support.
- The childminder's dedication and passion was supporting children to thrive and flourish.
- Children could enjoy free flow access to outdoor play.
- The childminder communicated and engaged well with families.
- Children's experiences were being enhanced and enriched through strong connections with their own and the wider community.
- The childminder's warmth, kindness and positive ethos of mutual trust and respect was promoting a happy, secure and supportive environment for children and their families.
- The childminder recognised children's personal plans and the service's quality assurance processes needed to be further developed.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

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 1.1: Nurturing care and support

We were able to see children experiencing warm, nurturing care and support. The childminder knew children well and had developed trusted and loving relationships with them through nurturing interactions that supported their wellbeing and helped them feel valued, safe and secure. Children were happy and settled in the service. They were relaxed and confident around the childminder and in the home from home environment. Parents commented: "[My child] feels loved, safe and has lots of fun.", "[The childminder's] is a very welcoming space and she treat us all as family. Her doors are always open for us." and "I am absolutely confident in [the childminder's] care. I have zero reservations about dropping [my child] off and I drive away knowing he/she is going to have a great day. He/she has a great bond with [the childminder] and is always happy to go."

Families provided snacks and packed lunches for their children. One parent commented; "[The childminder always] has lots of fruit and vegetables on offer [although] we provide their lunch." The childminder explained the importance of children enjoying a positive relaxed experience when eating. This supported their independence, encouraged friendly social interactions and developed their communication skills, as well as their fine motor skills. For example, helping to prepare a selection of fruit for snack with appropriate utensils for chopping their bananas and strawberries.

The childminder was nurturing and respectful with children's personal care and explained how sleep routines would be followed using current best practice and tailored to children's individual needs.

Children's personal plans contained relevant core information. Children's likes, dislikes, and interests had been gathered in partnership with parents. An introductory meeting before they started was supporting the childminder to meet their health, welfare, and safety needs. A parent commented; "[The childminder] always asks for our opinion on things and tries new methods to meet each children's needs."

Although there was 'All about me' paperwork and care plans in place that took account of children's individual needs and were linked to the developmental milestones and the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, the childminder recognised children's plans needed to be further developed. This was with a view to keeping more detailed records on children's progress that reflect their emerging and changing needs, next steps and any support strategies that may be needed. The childminder should continue to review and update children's plans every six months in line with legislation. We also directed the childminder to our guidance document on personal planning for early learning and childcare. **(See area for improvement 1)**

The childminder communicated effectively with parents through regular conversations and daily discussions to support children's wellbeing. Through discussion she explained the importance of working collaboratively when needed with other professionals, for example, the health visitor and agencies involved in a child's care and support.

No children were being given medication at the time of the inspection. We sampled medication formats and found these needed to be updated.

We discussed with the childminder that they review the format, in line with current best practice guidance: 'Management of Medication in daycare and childminding services' and she confirmed she would do this.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

The childminder engaged with children in a sensitive, nurturing and respectful manner to reassure and support their play, encouraging them to make choices, share and promote friendships. Children were busy, having fun and engaged well playing together. They had access to a wide range of age and stage appropriate toys and resources to support their play and learning both indoors and outside. Children were able to choose and freely access these resources supporting them to lead their own play. These experiences were being enhanced and enriched through strong connections with their own and the wider community. For example, counting and introducing the Gaelic language through songs, stories and nursery rhymes.

Parents told us:

"The kids have so much fun with [the childminder], she always has activities and adventures planned and [my child] comes back with lots of stories about how much fun he/she had."

"I find it incredible the amount of things [the childminder] does with the children. She takes them to the local museum, aquarium, whale and dolphin centre regularly and they go for walks all the time. She also comes up with lots of fun indoor activities and really embraces messy play too. The fact that she involves the children into everyday tasks is one of my favourite things."

The childminder was supporting children to explore their ideas and build on their interests. Informal planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's individual needs. For example, using observations to support the development of their natural curiosity, identifying next steps and progression in their play and learning. We discussed how this could be strengthened further by considering individual interest/floor books as a way to record children's developing skills and progress, gathering their ideas and interests and identifying possible lines of development and challenge.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's health and wellbeing the childminder should further develop children's personal plans. This to ensure more detailed records are kept on children's progress that reflect their emerging or changing needs, next steps and any support strategies that may be needed. The childminder should continue to review and update children's plans every six months in line with legislation.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15)

And

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

How good is our setting?

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 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

The childminder's home was clean, comfortable and well ventilated with plenty of natural light. Children had their own dedicated play space, as well as areas with soft furnishings for relaxation and comfort. Children had space to play together, relax on sofas or have time to themselves if they wished.

Children could enjoy free flow access to outdoor play and had access to a range of suitable resources that were being regularly refreshed and replenished, including natural, open ended and loose parts play materials.

Children were able to make choices and select toys. Resources were accessible to children and based on their interests. This provided opportunities for them to direct their own play and be independent. Importance was placed on being outdoors and engaging in the wider community. For example, walks through the woods to collect leaves, natural materials and see the 'stick man' tree. Also visits to a local farm to feed the chickens and see the Shetland ponies. Outings to soft play and catching the bus back home being a particular favourite. One parent told us; "They are out a walk at least once a day and [there are always] new activities in the house." This was supporting children to explore, be curious and enjoy risky play, promoting their imagination, sense of wellbeing, wonder and adventure. A parent also told us how they valued their child's "Freedom to play in a safe environment. To be around other children of different ages and all get involved in things together. For my child to be able to adapt and adjust to new people in a new environment."

Measures were in place to support children to enjoy a wide range of activities. The childminder agreed she should keep a written record of all the risk assessments she undertakes to enable them to be regularly reviewed, updated and shared with parents and children.

The childminder demonstrated good practice in infection prevention and control. For example, she modelled good hand hygiene and children were regularly reminded and supported to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before and after eating and coming in from outdoors.

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 well led

The childminder was welcoming, engaged well with the inspection process and was responsive to our suggestions for further development. She was committed to the ongoing improvement and development of her service to achieve the best outcomes she could for children and their families and was at the early stages of self-evaluation using our new quality framework.

The childminder had developed a range of policies and procedures, and these were made readily available to parents, so they knew what to expect from the service. The childminder confirmed she would continue to review and update these regularly to ensure they remained in line with current legislation and guidance.

The childminder recognised she was in the early stages of developing formal quality assurance processes. As a starting point we suggested she issue questionnaires to parents to seek their views and identify areas where she could improve. This would enhance the service moving forward, enabling the childminder to reflect on suggestions and make improvements where required.

The childminder would benefit from developing a plan with achievable targets and making links to best practice guidance. For example: 'A quality framework for day care of children, childminding and school aged childcare', 'Realising the ambition' and the 'Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS)'. This would support the childminder to reflect on what was working well in the service and what could be improved. This will also ensure children and families continue to have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development of the service. **(See area for improvement 1)**

The childminder communicated and engaged well with families. Parents were given regular updates on their child's development and learning through daily conversations, telephone calls and digital technology. One parent said, "[The childminder] is so lovely and efficient to deal with. She cares so much about all the children in her care and you can really feel that."

We discussed with the childminder that she is required to register her business with the information commissioner's office (ICO) as she is a registered business handling personal data. The childminder confirmed she would do this at the earliest opportunity.

Areas for improvement

1. To support a culture of continuous improvement, the childminder should develop monitoring and self-evaluation processes that will help to identify service strengths and areas for further improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes (HSCS 4.19).'

How good is our staff team?

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 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

The childminder's dedication and passion was supporting children to thrive and flourish. Her warmth, kindness and positive ethos of mutual trust and respect was promoting a happy, secure and supportive environment for children and their families. She was nurturing in her care and had formed strong attachments with the children and their families. Parents commented; "[We] couldn't ask for a better [service]" and "We as a family feel so lucky we were able to secure a place with [the childminder]. To be able to have total confidence and comfort in your child's care is invaluable."

The childminder engaged with children in a responsive, and respectful manner which supported their self esteem and confidence. She promoted positive behaviour by role modelling, kind words and friendly engagement with the children.

The childminder kept herself well informed through her membership with The Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA). To support children to learn, develop and achieve their potential she was continuing to build on her knowledge, skills and expertise gained from her previous experience working in a local authority early years setting. For example, regularly visiting the Care Inspectorate 'Hub' and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) website, where she had access to best practice guidance and online training to further inform and enhance her practice. She had undertaken recent online training in first aid and child protection, and was clear what to do and who to go to should she have any child protection concerns. The childminder demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of identifying and managing risk. She understood the importance of refreshing core training on a regular basis and confirmed she would continue to do this.

Going forward we suggested the childminder keep a record of any professional development and training she undertakes to enable her to evaluate the impact it has had on outcomes for children and the ongoing development of the service.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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