

Duncan, Audrey Child Minding

Dalkeith

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 September 2024

Service provided by:
Audrey Duncan

Service provider number:
SP2003905944

Service no:
CS2003012218

About the service

Audrey Duncan is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 8 children at any one time under the age of 16 of whom no more than 6 will be under 12 years, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's family.

Children had access to the living room, playroom, craft room and toilet. The rear garden was accessible through the kitchen and children could also play in a small garden to the front of the home.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 18 September 2024 between 12:45 and 14:30. We returned on Thursday 26 September 2024 between 15:30 and 16:15 to meet more minded children. 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 a total of five children
- received online questionnaires from ten families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefitted from a home from home environment.
- There was a range of activities available for the children to choose from that catered to their interests.
- Trusting and respectful relationships had been built with children and families.
- Parents and children held the childminder in high regard.
- The childminder demonstrated a commitment to supporting children and families.

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

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|------------------------------------------|---------------|
| How good is our care, play and learning? | 4 - Good |
| How good is our setting? | 5 - Very 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 quality indicator 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

Children benefited from a warm, caring, and nurturing environment, where they were supported through strong family values. Parents highlighted how the childminder's approach created a sense of extended family, with one parent expressing, "As someone without close family or surviving parents, I cannot imagine not having this bespoke service, filled with unwavering support and kindness." Another parent added, "This exceptional childminder became an integral part of my child's family." A child told us about a time when they hurt themselves and the childminder helped them, "very much." Another said, "She is the very best babysitter." Such positive and compassionate practices provided a secure and loving setting for children.

The childminder effectively partnered with parents to ensure that routines reflected the individual needs of the children and the preferences of their families. Parents appreciated how closely the childminder mirrored home routines, stating, "Routine from home is closely replicated; meals and nap times are kept the same, and we receive detailed updates each day on how our child is doing." One parent highlighted a successful potty-training experience, noting, "Audrey knew before I did that my child was ready, and thanks to that, we are nappy-free!" Parents felt involved and informed, with one commenting, "We're always kept up to date daily and have had many opportunities to give feedback. We are asked about any changes in habits and offered options to accommodate." Observations during the inspection further illustrated the childminder's nurturing approach. For instance, when a child woke up, the childminder attended to their needs with care, ensuring they felt settled and comfortable with a nappy change, cuddles, and a snack. Meanwhile, another child actively participated by eagerly setting up a chair in the garden for their waking friend. This demonstrated not only the childminder's commitment to individualised care but also showed a sense of responsibility among the children, ultimately creating a supportive and responsive environment.

The childminder was aware that children's personal plans needed to be updated and was appreciative of our conversation about how families could become more involved whilst ensuring paperwork was not too demanding. This would help the childminder ensure that personal plans were meaningful working documents that informed children's care, play and learning. Directly after the inspection, the childminder began working with families to update their child's personal plan. This showed a commitment to promptly addressing gaps in practice and ensuring personal plan information was up to date.

The childminder provided meals and snacks for the children, including breakfast and lunch. These meals were home-cooked and nutritious, meeting the children's dietary needs and adhering to current nutrition guidance. One child commented, "She's very nice to me and makes me nice snacks", reflecting the care and attention given to meal preparation. As a result, the children enjoyed balanced and healthy meals, which supported their overall wellbeing and development.

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

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

The childminder applied their experience and knowledge of child development to create a rich environment that valued and respected children's play and learning. They provided a wide range of engaging activities, including arts and crafts, construction, puzzles, games and storytelling which effectively catered to the diverse interests and developmental stages of the children. An abundance of play experiences was designed to foster children's skills in language, literacy, and numeracy through the use of loose parts. Together, the childminder and the children collected materials such as slates, shells, leaves, and pebbles, which they transformed into impressive projects. Parents reported a high standard of creative play, noting that "Audrey often has a particular craft project going on", such as decorating pots and planting bulbs, exploring seasonal themes, and examining different colours and shapes through art. This approach brought joy to the children, who expressed their enthusiasm for doing art, making friends, and engaging in various fun activities. One child remarked, "I get to play with (child's name), and Audrey's house is very nice with lots of games and drawings." Overall, the combination of thoughtful activities and a supportive environment led to positive outcomes for the children, who thrived in their play and learning experiences.

The childminder provided many opportunities for children to engage with the natural outdoor environment, facilitating enjoyable walks to local parks, tending to community gardens, and exploring various places of interest in the local area and beyond. Parents appreciated the emphasis on outdoor play as they noted, "Audrey regularly takes children on short train rides, and drives to Farm and play venues for the whole day" and "Garden play, taken to multiple parks and days out on public transport." Such opportunities enhanced children's play and learning through strong connections to their own and wider community.

The childminder arranged an Easter egg hunt in the local community, which had grown significantly from a small event in their garden 15 years ago to one now attended by as many as 150 children. Parents of minded children, both past and present, actively participated in organising and enjoying the event with their children. This reflected the childminder's commitment to fostering a sense of togetherness, tradition, and community spirit. As a result, the event had become a meaningful occasion that strengthened bonds among families and contributed positively to the wider community.

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

The childminder's home had an inviting atmosphere, creating a welcoming and homely environment. The downstairs layout allowed children to freely access the living room, playroom, craft room, and toilet, promoting easy and convenient use for them. The garden, an extension of the home, was accessible through the kitchen, providing a safe and enjoyable outdoor space.

Children were cared for in a clean and tidy environment at the childminder's home. This prevented the spread of infection, promoting a positive and healthy atmosphere.

The front and back gardens provided children with a range of enriching experiences, including planting and growing, painting, engaging in role play in the outdoor kitchen, climbing, bike riding, playing football, and enjoying sand and water play. The various seating areas allowed children to relax, read and observe others at play, promoting social interaction and a sense of community. Parents consistently praised the childminder's, "Outstanding outdoor play areas," recognising their value in enhancing children's development. One parent remarked on their child's progress, sharing that the childminder had encouraged

their child to face their fear of the slide, resulting in a wonderful achievement. These varied outdoor experiences not only fostered children's confidence but also enhanced their enjoyment of play and learning in the outdoors, contributing to their overall development and wellbeing.

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

Years of experience allowed the childminder to enhance the setting naturally and informally. Children played a key role in guiding improvements as they had a voice in shaping activities at the childminder's home. By listening to children, and a deep understanding of each child, the childminder remained attuned to their needs and interests. This proactive approach allowed the childminder to plan ahead, ensuring a nurturing and personalised care, play and learning environment.

Before starting in the setting, the childminder provided families with verbal and written information within a handbook about their family, home and childminding service, including copies of policies. This practice was important as it ensured transparency, helped parents understand the environment their child would be in, and set clear expectations from the start. As a result, parents were well informed and could be confident about the care their children would receive, fostering open communication from the beginning.

The trusting and respectful relationships the childminder built with parents facilitated a partnership approach, allowing for informal discussions about children's needs and how best to meet them. Parents consistently expressed confidence in the childminder's willingness to listen to their thoughts and suggestions. They appreciated how they actively sought feedback on new activities, tailored their childminding approach to the children's interests, and maintained regular communication to ensure their needs were met. Parents valued the childminder's dedication to continuous improvement, noting that they were always seeking ways to enhance the children's experiences. This open dialogue helped ensure that the care provided was responsive to both the children's and parents' needs.

When asked about potential improvements, most parents expressed satisfaction, with many stating "Nothing" could be enhanced. A few parents suggested that they would appreciate receiving more daily photos of their child at play, though they recognised the challenge this could present for the childminder. One parent noted, "I'm not sure we can help to develop the service, as the service we're getting is amazing as it is. It took us ages for a space to come available with Audrey; she's well known and loved by many families before us and will continue to be loved by many after us." This feedback highlighted the high level of satisfaction with the childminder's service, emphasising the strong reputation and trust built within the community.

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 had a professional approach towards their role and was able to draw on their formal childcare qualifications and life skills to foster a culture where children could thrive and flourish. They supported children's wellbeing through compassionate and responsive care.

Meeting other childminders and being a member of the Scottish Childminding Association supported the childminder to keep up to date with new developments and explore topical issues. This indicated a dedicated approach with a commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for children and their families. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate bitesize videos and best practice documents on the Hub. This would support the childminder to further update their knowledge of current best practice.

Parents shared highly positive feedback about their childminder, praising their fairness, devotion, and strong values in their approach. They highlighted the childminder's "excellent communication skills" and the "personal touch" to the care provided, noting the individualised attention their children received. One parent described the childminder as "exceptional" and expressed how they considered them as an extended part of their child's family. This reflected the deep trust and connection built with both the children and their families. These qualities fostered a nurturing and supportive environment, contributing to the children's overall wellbeing and happiness.

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 | 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? | 4 - Good |
| 4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values | 4 - Good |

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