

Drake, Karen Child Minding

Livingston

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
11 September 2024

Service provided by:
Karen Drake

Service provider number:
SP2006960327

Service no:
CS2006129676

About the service

Karen Drake provides a childminding service from their property in a quiet residential area of Deans, Livingston. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of eight children at any one time under the age of 16 of whom:

- a maximum of six will be under 12 years
- no more than three are not yet attending primary school
- no more than one is under 12 months.

Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's family. Minded children cannot be cared for by persons other than those named on the certificate. Mr James Caven will be employed as an assistant: his sole duty will be providing transport when required. At the time of our inspection, five children were registered with the service.

The service is close to local primary schools, shops, parks, and other amenities. The children are cared for in the living room, dining area and kitchen, with access to the upstairs bathroom. Children also have access to large, enclosed front and back gardens.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 10 September between 09:15 and 12:00. 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, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service and received feedback from three families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Children experienced genuinely warm, caring and nurturing interactions. Their individual needs and cues were understood and responded to effectively.

Children's right to play was supported by a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences.

The childminder had successfully created a homely, inclusive environment for children to play and relax which ensured they felt safe and secure.

The childminder demonstrated a strong commitment and passion to providing and improving positive outcomes for children

The childminder could document planned improvements to demonstrate and measure the impact that improvements had made to enhance positive outcomes for children.

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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were happy and relaxed in the care of the childminder who was loving and respectful. It was obvious that good attachments had been formed and that children felt secure in the childminder's care. The childminder had developed very strong relationships with the families they provided care for and worked hard to build supportive partnerships with the parents by being open and approachable. This was confirmed by a parent who told us, "Karen is always there to answer any questions we have about our child's development and what they have done during the week."

Children were supported to choose healthy snacks and lunches using the pictorial snack choice board. Children sat together to enjoy a sociable and relaxed experience. This helped them to develop healthy eating habits and social skills. The childminder was knowledgeable and supported children's individual dietary requirements in partnership with their family. This contributed to children's wellbeing and safety.

The childminder worked in partnership with families to ensure effective information sharing. As a result, children experienced high quality care where they were nurtured, loved, and respected. Personal plans were in place for each child, and they contained key information to provide consistency in care, support children's development and meet their needs, wishes and choices. Plans were updated regularly, a minimum of every six months or sooner if needed. The childminder was keen to further involve children in reviewing and updating their personal plans to ensure that the information fully respected their wishes and that they felt included and valued. Parents told us that they felt included in reviewing and updating their child's plan. One parent said, "We actively participate in creating and reviewing our child's plan, ensuring it aligns with our family's values and needs."

Children's routines were responsive to their individual needs. The childminder prioritised children's needs by going for a walk during the inspection. This was to support a child who was not able to settle to sleep with an unfamiliar adult present in the setting.

No children were receiving medication at the time of inspection; however, the childminder spoke confidently about how to store and administer medication. A medication policy and related paperwork was in place and in line with best practice guidance.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children could make independent choices about where they wanted to play and what they wanted to play with. This was supported by an environment which contained a wide range of toys, games, books and craft materials.

Play experiences developed children's skills in language, literacy and numeracy. These included imaginary play, board games and through conversations with the childminder. A literacy rich environment enhanced these opportunities. This included pictorial choice boards, pictorial labels and text on drawers to show children where play resources were kept.

Children's achievements and successes were shared with children and parents through pictorial books which showed each child's story of learning. The childminder planned to incorporate records of children's progress and possible next steps in learning into the books. This would provide a holistic approach to clearly show each child's story of learning in one place.

The childminder transferred their learning gained from training into practice. One example was planning learning experiences for children to develop their skills in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Planned activities included supporting children to design bridges for cars to go over, and working out how they can balance on a ladder. Such experiences provoked children's problem solving and creativity skills. Activities were planned with children's interests in mind. The childminder told us that all activities were flexible and would evolve in different ways as children developed their ideas through play. This showed that children were afforded the freedom to make decisions to lead their play experiences. Planned activities could be further enhanced through recording the evaluation of play experiences. This would offer opportunities for children to revisit, reflect and to plan future experience.

Children experienced daily outdoor play experiences which kept them active and allowed them to have regular fun playing outdoors. Going to the local pond to feed the ducks was a favourite. Scavenger hunts and woodland walks afforded children the opportunity to appreciate the benefit of being outdoors and the natural world around them. This contributed to good health and opportunities to engage in risk benefit play experiences. Further afield, children experienced trips to various museums such as the museum of childhood. This supported them to develop connections with their own and 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

Children experienced a homely, thoughtfully planned environment. There was plenty of natural light and the setting was well ventilated and comfortably furnished. Play spaces had been carefully planned to support children's needs and help them to feel included. The setup of the environment gave a strong message to children that they mattered, where they had ample spaces which were clearly defined for their needs. Children were given opportunities to make choices and lead their play and could independently choose from the accessible range of interesting play materials. As a result, children benefited from a range of stimulating open spaces to enhance play experiences.

The indoor and outdoor environments were sensitively structured and took account of all children's stages of development and learning. Spaces reflected children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate resources and materials to support learning. For example, a broad range of books, board games and puzzles. Sensory resources and problem solving toys for younger children, such as light up spiky balls, bubble tubes, and natural and open ended materials encouraged creativity and a sense of wonder.

Children benefited from easily accessible front and back gardens. Both gardens were equipped with a range of exciting play resources, including the mud area to explore and fairy garden. The childminder had made good use of the space available to them, giving children access to fresh air and the right to play outside.

Children were kept safe and protected as the service was well maintained and clean. Effective infection prevention and control measures were in place. The childminder had effectively considered and introduced procedures to minimise the potential spread of infection. For example, individual hand washing and drying facilities following nappy change.

Children and families' personal information was securely stored, and the childminder had registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. This helped protect children and families' privacy.

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, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder demonstrated a strong commitment and passion to providing and improving positive outcomes for children. They did this through keeping up to date with best practice guidance and improving their practice in line with knowledge gained. They valued the importance of children feeling safe and happy, and to learn through having fun which was evident throughout the inspection.

Regular self-evaluation had resulted in a number of improvements to the service. Recent improvements included introduction of sensory resources, and the creation of a fairy garden in the front garden. This was developed in consideration of children's needs and interests. To enhance safety of children when in the service, CCTV had recently been installed to monitor the premises and respond to incidents quickly.

Parents had opportunities to share feedback and influence improvements, through daily conversations and messaging. This helped to build positive relationships and to ensure that children's needs were consistently met. Families unanimously informed us that they felt involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. One parent added, "We actively contribute to developing the service by regularly communicating with Karen about our child's needs and progress."

Moving forward, the childminder could consider recording planned improvements to demonstrate and measure the impact that improvements had made to enhance positive outcomes for children. This could support the childminder to reflect on where changes had positively impacted on service provision and play experiences, and support them to plan further improvements.

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.

Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The childminding assistant is employed solely to transport school age children to the service at the end of the school day. Currently there are no children requiring this service, therefore the assistant was not working in the service at the time of the inspection. The assistant remained available, should a situation arise that meant they were needed to support.

The assistant was kept fully informed of children's needs, preference and wishes and was introduced to children and families before transporting children from school.

Parents are asked to consent in writing when their child was being transported by the assistant to the service. The assistant was informed of important policies and procedures to keep children safe, such as safeguarding and health and safety. Similarly, they completed a daily evaluation about the collection and journey to the service. A clear job description, and risk assessments were in place for the transportation of children. Such processes helped to keep children safe and respected during their journey from school to the service.

The childminder was committed to developing their skills to ensure the best outcomes for children and to keep up to date with best practice guidance. Since the last inspection, the childminder had developed their knowledge and understanding by attending several training courses. This included courses to support children with autism spectrum disorder needs.

The childminder participated in an online support group with other childminders. This provided opportunities for professional discussions and sharing of good practice through sharing skills, knowledge and values around quality experiences for children. These shared learning opportunities provoked ideas to develop practice, such as, the introduction of natural open ended play resources to enhance opportunities for children to develop creativity and imagination.

We discussed how keeping records of professional development activities and evaluating training, personal reading and research would assist with identifying improvement in practice and could be included in the service self-evaluation.

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

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