

# Happy House Childminding Child Minding

Alexandria

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
20 August 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Emma Murdoch

**Service provider number:**  
SP2022000258

**Service no:**  
CS2022000390

## About the service

The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 6 children at any one time under the age of 16, 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 children of the childminder's family.

The childminder offers a full daycare and after school care service to children. At the time of inspection, 11 children were registered with the childminder to attend on a variety of patterns. Three minded children were present during our inspection visit.

The childminding service operates from the childminder's home which is a semi-detached property in Alexandria in West Dunbartonshire. The children can access the facilities on the lower level of the house and an upstairs toilet. The front garden was being used at the time of inspection as work was being undertaken in the rear garden.

The service is within walking distance of local bus routes, several primary schools and a play park.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 20 August 2024 between 10:00 and 12:30. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. This was the first inspection of the service.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the service registered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

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

## Key messages

- The children had developed very positive relationships with the childminder. They were safe and secure. Good information was available to ensure the childminder knew each child very well as an individual.
- The children were very happy and relaxed in the setting, enjoying a good range of experiences. Parents were very happy with the quality of the service provided to their children.
- The childminder had developed strong and effective channels of communication with families.
- The childminder needed to make a start on assessing the strengths and quality of the service and identifying any improvements.
- The childminder had developed positive relationships with the children in her care and worked closely with parents to ensure the children's needs were met and their routines respected.

## 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.

Three minded children were present during our inspection. They were happy and confident within the childminding setting. They were happy to explore the toys and resources and were comfortable to move about the childminder's home freely.

The childminder had appropriate processes in place to collect pertinent information about minded children and their families before they started. This assisted with the settling in process and enabled the childminder to plan to meet children's individual needs and personal preferences. The childminder discussed the importance of the settling in stage to children for building trust and becoming confident in her care. Each child had a personal plan and the childminder completed a six monthly personal development plan for each child to identify targets for learning and development. The childminder needed to ensure that parents were involved in a six monthly review of the information held about their children to ensure that the childminder was working from the most up-to-date information. We directed the childminder to a Care Inspectorate publication, which provided useful information on completing and reviewing personal plans - <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/personal-planning-guides-for-providers/>

Parents agreed that the childminder knew their child well, including what they liked and what was important for their care and commented: "At the start we sat down and completed a full care plan. Always asked about any changes and listens and acts on any changes we may tell her" and "I am always fully involved in my child's care plan, and any changes or updates are always discussed."

The childminder advised that some children were dropped off and collected by their families at the front door of her home while others came indoors. We discussed the benefits for both children and their families of being invited into the childminding home. During our visit, one child was dropped off and both the child and parent received a warm welcome and the childminder chatted at length with the parent.

The childminder discussed the individual needs of the children with the parents on a regular basis. Parents enjoyed photos of their children's achievements and messages about their children's activities with the childminder. This reassured them that their children were having a good time and included them in their children's day. This approach helped to support effective communication and consistency and continuity of care. Parents valued this communication with the childminder.

"Emma is always very friendly, gives me lots of information about my child's day and activities they've been doing. Is always so helpful and flexible with my different hours. They are a very lovely family and I trust her to take care of my child."

"Always welcome in the house to chat about my child's day, she keeps us up-to-date with anything necessary during the day and is so accommodating with anything."

"Emma is amazing and always accommodating to my child's needs. Emma's approach is very child-centred. Communication is perfect and all information is communicated well."

"We speak every night about the day's events and development."

The childminder provided meals and snacks for some of the children in her care, while parents provided snacks and meals for the others. The childminder had registered the food preparation aspect of her business with the local authority to ensure compliance with food safety standards. Appropriate seating was available to ensure children could eat at a table to enjoy safe and sociable mealtimes. We confirmed that the childminder had a good understanding of safe sleeping guidance and had appropriate sleeping and rest arrangements in place for the youngest children.

Since registration, the childminder had not been required to administer medication to any of the children in her care. Appropriate paperwork was in place for parents to give written consent to administer medication should this be required. We suggested that the childminder obtained a copy of our guidance document to ensure that families could be reassured that her procedures were in line with best practice <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1549/management-of-medication-in-daycare-of-children-and-childminding.pdf>

The childminder's approach to play and activities was child-centred and responsive to the children's interests, wishes and level of skill. At the time of inspection, the minded children were happy playing with the toys available to them in the playroom including cars and drawing materials. Two children joined in with a children's yoga activity they were watching on television. Children had regular opportunities to be active and access fresh air on walks to and from school and visiting the local play park.

Parents were happy with the range of activities their children could experience to support their learning and development and told us: "I could not fault the care my child receives. Emma is very nurturing and welcoming and my child looks forward to spending time there. There are always various activities for my child to explore and the range of outdoor experiences is amazing. My child just adores their childminder" and "I like the friendly welcome, the patience and kindness she shows the children. She is extremely reliable and the kids are always busy whether out and about or at home in the rain, Emma has activities on everyday."

## 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.

We found that the childminder had created a warm, comfortable, welcoming and homely environment for the children to play and relax in. Parents enjoyed a warm welcome and told us: "Emma always welcomes me into her home and always has a friendly persona" and "Welcomed in at the start and end of every day to discuss anything necessary and tells me all about my child's day."

Overall, the home was in good repair, clean and a good standard of health and safety was observed throughout. Appropriate arrangements were in place for cleaning the home and resources. Children were able to access the lounge, kitchen, playroom, hallway and upstairs toilet. There was a good selection of play resources available. These resources were well-organised and accessible to the children to allow them to make choices.

The childminder provided appropriate activities, materials and experiences for the children, both indoors and outdoors. This reflected the interests, development and learning stages of the children in her care. Children had daily opportunities to play outdoors and get fresh air. They particularly enjoyed playing in the garden. Parents commented: "Out everyday. Parks, walks. My toddler loves it", "Emma has a beautiful garden and also regularly takes my son to the park and various others. Emma is always fully equipped with wet suits to ensure my child experiences the outdoors regardless of the weather" and "My child loves playing in the garden with toys, a play table for exploring different sensory materials, scooters etc. They often go to the local parks and nature walks."

The childminder was confident about her responsibilities to keep children safe and had developed risk assessments for her home, garden and outings which recorded all identified hazards and control measures needed to keep children safe. The childminder reviewed these regularly to ensure they remained up-to-date. However, the childminder needed to ensure that her fire drills and alarm tests recorded were up-to-date.

The childminder had developed a policy detailing her approach to controlling and preventing the spread of infection within her home and there were satisfactory arrangements in place to prevent and control the spread of infection within the service to protect children. However, at the time of inspection the childminder did not have supplies of the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for nappy changing. The childminder advised that stocks had been depleted and would be restocked immediately. Children would have benefited from the use of separate towels for use after handwashing to minimise the risk of infection.

We confirmed that the childminder held appropriate insurance to operate the service, use her car for business purposes and that annual maintenance arrangements were in place to ensure the gas boiler and central heating were working safely.

## 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.

We found that the childminder used daily discussion to ensure that children and their families could be consulted on the day-to-day running of her service. The childminder ensured that parents were involved from the outset and through the settling in period. She shared policies and procedures at enrolment and was willing to respond to ideas and routines highlighted by parents. This was particularly relevant where the childminder and families needed to develop a consistent approach to children's care routines.

Through regular communication with the parents and children, the childminder was able to provide a service that met the needs and interests of the children she was caring for. The childminder regularly shared the children's experiences, successes and achievements with their parents. This approach helped parents feel they were included in their child's day. Parents told us: "Emma has always asked for input about what likes and dislikes my child has", "Emma is always asking what sort of things my child enjoys and involves her in decisions on what they will be doing for the day" and "Emma regularly consults myself with new ideas and possible outings/learning experiences."

The childminder respected the views of children and parents and used their views to improve the service, where possible. We were told that most feedback came from informal discussions with children and their families. The childminder used verbal feedback from the parents and children to reflect on the type of experiences they were having. This helped her develop informal plans and reflect on the care and activities she provided to the children and families. The childminder was aware that there was a need for a more formal approach to self-evaluation to enable her to assess the quality of her service against the Care Inspectorate document, A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare. The childminder needs to use this document to identify and record strengths and areas highlighted to improve outcomes for children and families. On completion, this work would form a good evidence base for a service improvement plan. Information on self-evaluation can be found at: <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/quality-improvement-programmes-and-topics/early-learning-and-childcare-improvement-programme/>

### 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.

The childminding service had been operating for a relatively short period of time with this being the first inspection since registration. We found that the childminder was becoming more skilled and experienced with well-developed procedures and processes in place. Most paperwork was comprehensive, well-developed and maintained to ensure positive outcomes for children and families.

The childminder had a well-developed knowledge and understanding of the skills and qualities required to provide an effective childcare service and ensured her knowledge and practice remained up-to-date through participation in continuous professional development.

Since registration, the childminder had participated in training in child protection, food hygiene and paediatric first aid and the childminder should now work to build confidence in her role in safeguarding children. The childminder was aware of the need to develop her approach to continuous professional development to ensure that her knowledge, skills and practice were updated and refreshed regularly. The childminder should participate in more regular training sessions and make use of informal self-reflection techniques to consider her skills, practice and development needs. We highlighted the Care Inspectorate Hub as a good source of information and practice guidance. We suggested that the childminder accessed this resource where possible to enhance her approach to continuous professional development. <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/>

The childminder told us that she kept up-to-date with best practice guidance and changes to legislation through accessing online resources. The childminder would benefit from developing working relationships with other childminders in the area, which could provide mutual support and development opportunities. This would be an extremely effective way to highlight, share and exchange ideas and best practice advice. The childminder also had membership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) which was a good source of information and advice.

The childminder was sensitive, kind, caring and consistent in her approach to children which helped them feel safe and secure. She was committed to ensuring high quality outcomes for children and families. The childminder had developed very positive relationships with families which was reflected in their comments to us and resulted in a warm and welcoming ethos within the service. Parents were very happy with the quality of the service. They told us:

"My child is always so happy to go to Emma's and is very excited when they see her, the bond she has with my child is lovely to see, not only is she very professional, she also cares a lot for the children she takes care of."

"Knowing my child will go and always be loved and well cared for but also will always have a fun day with lots of activities."

"Emma is very caring, always put the children's needs first, she is always efficient and my child loves spending time with her. She is extremely friendly, supportive and very reliable, I am super happy with her services and would recommend her to my friends and family."

"Emma is amazing with my child. Loving, caring and compassionate and just all round wonderful. She's always bright and cheery. She gives the children such fun experiences each day. My child loves going and comes out having loved the day each time."

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the service registered. Details of any upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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