

Strawberry Patch Childminding Child Minding

MUSSELBURGH

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
25 November 2024

Service provided by:
Katharine Bleakley

Service provider number:
SP2021000016

Service no:
CS2021000022

About the service

Katharine Bleakley, trading as Strawberry Patch Childminding, is registered with the Care Inspectorate to care for a maximum of 6 children at any one time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than 6 are 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 include the children of the childminder's family/household.

The childminder is in partnership with East Lothian Council to provide ELC funded placements.

The childminder provides the service from her property in a quiet residential area of Wallyford, East Lothian. Children are cared for in the designated playroom, kitchen/diner and lounge. Children also have access to a downstairs toilet and enclosed garden to the rear of the property.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 November 2024 between 11:00 and 13:45. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service people
- reviewed comments from three parents
- spoke with the childminder
- observed childcare practice and daily experiences for children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced kind, caring and nurturing relationships with the childminder.
- Children were supported by personal planning but this could be adapted to provide a clearer overview of important events or changes.
- Opportunities for play and learning were varied but planning and recording of progress could be further developed.
- Children were having fun and experienced a range of activities which were well balanced between home and the local community.
- The self-evaluation of the service could be formalised to evidence improvements.
- The childminder was reflect in her practice and used her skills and experience to promote 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?	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

Children were clearly comfortable, happy and relaxed in their surroundings, they had formed positive relationships with each other and with the childminder through the use of warm and nurturing approaches. The childminder's responsive and respectful interactions promoted children's confidence and enabled them to feel secure and cared for. Parents commented positively on the relationships between children and the childminder. "Kathy is caring, nurturing, kind and thoughtful. I value her advice and am beyond thrilled about the relationship she has with my child." "My child gets to have some quality time with other kids near their age and also 1-1 time with Kathy too which has been greatly helping improve their development." and "I don't think there is anything that Kathy could improve on- my child absolutely adores going to strawberry patch."

The childminder had improved the process used to settle children into her care. This was fully focussed on the needs of children and taken at their pace. The childminder gathered a range of information about children and their needs to inform the settling in process and discussed progress with parents regularly, until children were fully settled and happy to be left in the childminders care. This helped children develop confidence when facing transitions between carers.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the use of personal planning. The childminder gathered important information each child's needs, routines and preferences. Plans were reviewed every six months or when there were changes. The daily diary was used to communicate approaches which were being used to support individual children. We discussed ways to record significant events to give a clear overview of children's care and support and significant events. We signposted the childminder to the guidance on the Practice guide to chronologies - hub.careinspectorate.com.

When carrying out personal care needs the facilities and interactions with the childminder supported children's independence, privacy and dignity. Children's overall development, was also supported through arrangements for sleep which followed good practice guidance to promote safety and individual preferences.

Meals and snacks were eaten in the kitchen. The childminder provided some of the meals or parents could provide packed lunches. The childminder took account of good practice guidance when providing snacks and meals. Children enjoyed this social time of day where they chatted to the childminder and each other.

The childminder had significant experience in working with children who needed additional support. This experience had been used to help children in their development of friendships and understanding of how to regulate their behaviour. We discussed the policy which the childminder had in place to give parents information on how she supported children with their emotions and friendships. We have suggested that the childminder could review this policy to ensure that it more accurately reflected their practice.

Quality indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Children had a dedicated playroom to use for their play. They could also use the lounge for setting up small world play and the kitchen for a range of art and craft activities. Children were busy and engaged in a range of activities which were age and development stage appropriate. Where children needed support during their play this was provided but on the whole children were able to use the range of resources to lead their own play and learning. We spoke to the childminder about the amount of resources provided for children, which

The childminder held a childcare qualification and was in partnership with the local authority to provide funded early learning and childcare. During our discussion the childminder described how the planned activities she provided supported specific aspects of children's learning and development. There was evidence of some learning outcomes being recorded in children's daily diaries. To build on this we have suggested that the childminder could use systems such as a floor book to further develop planning of activities and tracking of developmental progress.

Parents commented on some aspects of play and development "Kathy focuses on our child's needs and provides experiences for them to develop skills." "If there is any concern around my child's development, Kathy will raise and or have a discussion with me - which I can feedback into my sons overall development"

The childminder understood the importance of outdoor physical play and opportunities to use the local community to support learning. The small garden at the rear of the house provided children with some opportunities for physical play and to enhance this the childminder used local parks and soft play facilities. One child told us that they loved playing with the water in the garden and going to soft play. Another said they went on regular walks. Parents commented positively on the additional activities provided out with the home "Kathy is a fabulous gardener and my child loves planting and gardening with her. They were delighted to watch the hyacinths and daffodils they planted with Kathy." "My child goes to playgroup, soft play, the museum, going to the park, creative play etc!" These opportunities provided children with variety in their play experiences.

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 home was situated in a quiet residential street. Children benefited from being cared for in a home that was comfortable, clean and adapted for their needs. It helped to give the message to children that they mattered. Ample ventilation, warmth and natural light contributed to children's wellbeing.

Children could use the playroom, lounge and kitchen for their play. They were familiar with the areas that they could use, and suitable safety equipment was in place to restrict access to the rest of the home. Children's safety was promoted through the use of risk assessment procedures for areas of the home, garden and the outings that the childminder took children on.

Children had many resources to use for their play. To support imagination and problem solving the childminder could further develop the use of loose and real life resources both indoors and for outdoor play.

To help children focus on activities the childminder could limit the number of resources available to help children see what was available to them.

The childminder had implemented infection control practices that followed good practice guidance to support children's safety. They included good hand hygiene and appropriate equipment for nappy changing such as, disposable gloves and aprons. The childminder had complied with food hygiene legislation to support safe food practices and been inspected by Environmental Health.

The childminder kept records for aspects of their childminding service. Information was stored confidentially and in an organised manner. This meant that children and families could be confident that their personal information was stored in line with relevant best practice.

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 led well.

The childminder had a friendly and welcoming approach with children and families. This supported the development of trusting relationships with parents, and children. Communication with parents helped the childminder provide the right level of care and support. The daily diary was used to share and request information and regular discussions with parents at the start and end of the day provided opportunities for feedback and the development of relationships.

Throughout our discussions, the childminder was reflective of their practice. They had made a start at informally evaluating their service. However, this was not always leading to improvements which could be evaluated. Introducing a formalised self-evaluation approach and using their reflections to inform a service improvement plan would allow the childminder to identify the impact of any changes they make and how these support positive outcomes for children and families.

The childminding service was clearly focussed on the needs of children and this had a direct influence on what was provided for them. The childminder will further develop the recording of how children influence the setting through her planning for play. Although the views of parents had not been formally sought as part of self-evaluation their comments and opinions were regularly sought. Parents commented "By providing feedback to Kathy around her service helps improve this for our child!" "Kathy always welcomes feedback and asks my opinion."

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 clear vision for the setting and could discuss with us what it was they wanted to achieve for children and families. This was a rights based approach which focussed on positive outcomes for children. Parents commented on the level of nurturing care provided by the childminder "There is

nurturing care and love extended to our child." "Kathy invests much more than is required and goes above and beyond to ensure that our child is happy, achieving and nurtured in her care."

The childminder had used their skills and knowledge to support children in their care. They held a childcare qualification and actively used this to support children's development play and learning. One parent commented "Our son's overall development in general has come on leaps and bounds since beginning his care with Kathy. He appears to be more chatty and definitely more confident."

To support their ongoing professional development the childminder had completed a range of core training such as child protection, food hygiene and first aid. Additional courses such as support for communication had been used to develop way of working with children. In addition the childminder had a good understanding of the good practice documents which could be used to develop and support the setting.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The provider should ensure that parents are meaningfully involved in their child's care through effective communication.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard 4.23: I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

This area for improvement was made on 8 November 2023.

Action taken since then

Each child has a communication diary which is completed daily. There were also discussions held with parents at drop off and pick up times.

Information in the communication diary was detailed and included routine of the day and what the child did during the day.

This area for improvement was met.

Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website (www.careinspectorate.com) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

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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