

Gallacher, Zara Child Minding

Bathgate

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 February 2025

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2008968532

Service no:
CS2008169661

About the service

Zara Gallacher operates a childminding service from their home in a residential area of Armadale, Bathgate. They are registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 7 children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom a maximum of 6 will be under 12, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months.

From 25 November 2024 until 30 June 2025, on a Monday and Wednesday between the hours of 08:00 and 08:45, and 15:15 and 16:00, the childminder may care for a maximum of 8 children at any one time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than 7 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 are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The service offers children space to play and rest in the living/dining area of the home. Toilet facilities are situated on the ground floor. The garden area to the rear of the property offers children outdoor space for active play. The service is close to local amenities including shops, parks, local nurseries and schools.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 10 February 2025 between 11:45 and 14:00. 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.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children in the service
- reviewed digital responses from six families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, kind and nurturing interactions from the childminder.
- The childminder understood the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall wellbeing.
- Children were at the heart of the service and were cared for by a childminder who knew them and their families well.
- The childminder's understanding of child development meant that children enjoyed fun activities which were appropriate for their age and stage.
- Children's emotional wellbeing benefited from positive attachments.
- The childminder was motivated to provide the best possible experiences for 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

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - 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 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 cared for with warmth, kindness and a nurturing approach. They experienced care which was well considered to meet their individual needs. The childminder understood the importance of developing positive relationships with families. This ensured clear communication and provided a consistent approach for children.

The childminder took into account personal preferences and personalities which meant the care provided met the needs of individuals. One family told us, "Zara is caring and kind. She treats me and my family with respect and is so helpful. She is a good listener and has always been amazing with all my kids." As a result, children were happy and relaxed as positive relationships supported their overall wellbeing and their needs were being met.

Personal plans for children had been developed by the childminder and included the views of families and children. The information was used to support children's individual wellbeing and took account of the SHANARRI (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included) wellbeing indicators.

The childminder had a very good understanding of how important sleep routines were for children. They had sourced and invested in travel cots which supported children to feel safe and secure as they rested. Routines were reflective of individual children's needs and provided consistency and continuity of care. This meant that the care provided met the needs of individuals and respected the wishes of parents.

The childminder provided nutritious home cooked meals for children accessing places funded by the local authority, and snacks for all children. They involved children in snack menu planning and described ways in which children were given opportunities to help with preparation of snacks. Children enjoyed relaxed and unhurried mealtimes where the childminder sat and chatted with them. This ensured children were safe as they enjoyed a caring and positive social experience where close attachments were promoted.

At the time of inspection no children required medication. We were satisfied that appropriate procedures were in place to safely administer, record and share information with families when it was needed.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun as they actively led their play and learning. There was a balance of spontaneous and planned activities which promoted children's choice and independence. Planning was responsive to children's interests and took account of their age and stage of development. The childminder explained how they incorporated everyday activities to promote and extend children's learning. For example, encouraging children to look for numbers in the environment as they explored the local community, and identifying colours as they investigated nature. This meant children were developing confidence in their abilities as they explored their learning through play.

Careful observations of children's learning and progress were recorded and shared with families in a variety of ways. Such as, learning journals and through the use of technology. These supported the childminder to plan possible next steps for play and learning opportunities. Photographs and further observations of children enjoying fun experiences were recorded within a floor book. This provided opportunities for children to reflect on their experiences and share their thoughts and ideas. We encouraged the childminder to include more of children's voices within documentation. This would give them a sense of ownership as they shared and celebrated their learning and achievements.

The local community was well used by the childminder to extend children's experiences. They had fun as they explored nature, visited parks and met with other children and adults at local groups they attended. As a result, children's opportunities for play and learning were improved as they developed strong connections to their own and wider communities.

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

Children were cared for in a homely environment that was comfortable and offered them space to play, rest and relax. The layout of the lounge/dining area supported children to independently access toys and activities. This gave children a message that they mattered and made them feel welcomed.

The childminder understood the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall wellbeing. The back garden was enclosed and offered children opportunities to enjoy physical play outdoors. Children were actively involved and encouraged in planning future improvements to the garden area. They had opportunities to learn about planting and growing as they planted and harvested vegetables and fruit. Outdoor experiences meant children were learning about the benefits of an active lifestyle that promoted their health and wellbeing.

At the time of inspection, the garden fence and some garden resources had been damaged in a recent storm. The childminder had risk assessed the area and planned to carry out repairs to fencing.

Risk assessments helped to ensure children's safety was promoted. We suggested involving children when reviewing and developing new risk assessments. This would promote opportunities for them to learn important life skills.

We discussed developing robust infection prevention and control routines with the childminder. We were satisfied that children were well-supported with effective handwashing routines which helped to minimise the spread of infection. Areas used by children, such as the dining table for eating, were appropriately cleaned to ensure children were safe. However, increased ventilation, and ensuring kitchen worktop and sink areas are kept clear of unnecessary household items, would further promote robust infection prevention and control measures. This would also ensure thorough cleaning routines could be carried out.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvements are led well

The childminder had a clear vision and aim for the service, "to provide a safe, happy engaging atmosphere where children can learn and develop through play and other activities." Their values were evident in the kind, compassionate and nurturing interactions observed throughout the inspection. The positive ethos meant that children felt loved, valued and respected.

Strong, trusting relationships had been established with children and families, and the childminder knew them well. Their views were actively sought to inform the continual development of the service. Observations of children's interests, and the childminder's reflections, also helped to identify future improvement priorities. For example, developing the garden area further was identified as an area for improvement following observations of children's play. Most families strongly agreed that they, and their children, were involved in meaningful ways to improve the service. One family said, "Zara always listens and takes into account suggestions that I give her for my son." Another family told us, "Zara is open to suggestions on things to improve on and takes things on board." This meant children and families were meaningfully involved and could influence change within the setting.

The childminder also made good use of the Care Inspectorate's document, A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding, and school aged childcare. This supported them to evaluate the service they provided, and helped to identify areas for further development.

The childminder had developed positive working relationships with the local authority and the Scottish Childminding Association. They were approved to work in partnership with West Lothian Council to provide funded childcare for some children. As a result, children experienced high quality care and support from a committed and motivated childminder.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

The very experienced childminder demonstrated a good understanding of how children develop and learn. They were mindful of this as they planned activities, ensuring they were age and stage appropriate. The childminder was skilled and made good use of effective questioning. They interacted with children in sensitive and responsive ways which promoted children's independence and confidence. They also recognised the importance of children having fun in their play to enable learning to be taken forward. As a result, children were well-supported and encouraged to achieve their potential.

The childminder was committed to providing the best possible experiences for children, and to their own continuous professional development. Through reflective practice, the childminder identified areas for their own professional development which would further promote positive outcomes for children. They had achieved recognised early learning and childcare qualifications and made very good use of training opportunities with the local authority. They regularly engaged with other childminders in the area to share ideas and good practice. This meant children and families benefited from a well-trained and skilled childminder who was dedicated to meeting their needs.

Kind and responsive interactions supported children to feel loved and secure. The childminder understood the importance of listening to children and families. This enabled them to build strong relationships and provide appropriate care and support for individuals. One child told us, "Zara is kind and caring." Another child said they enjoyed, "getting lots of hugs and snuggles." As a result, children's emotional wellbeing benefited from positive attachments.

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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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