

# Little Farm Childminding Child Minding

Castle Douglas

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
13 February 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Simone Mcdonald

**Service provider number:**  
SP2023000267

**Service no:**  
CS2024000026

## About the service

This service was registered on 19 January 2024, Simone McDonald, referred to as "the childminder" in this report, is registered to provide care to a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. These numbers include the children of the childminder's family.

Children are cared for at the childminder's home, which is spacious and has access to a large garden. Children have opportunities to be active both indoors and outdoors. They regularly play in the garden and go for adventures into the local area where they have the opportunity to find out about the world around them.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced which took place on 12 February 2025. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate. Feedback was given on 13 February 2025.

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 last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children in the service during our visit
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and interactions with children
- reviewed documents
- reviewed feedback from parents using Microsoft forms.

## Key messages

- The childminder had created friendly positive relationships with children and their families.
- Children were responded to in a kind and respectful way. They were confident and secure in the childminder's care.
- Children had opportunities to be active both indoors and outdoors. They enjoyed being outdoors in the garden and going on adventures into the local area.
- The childminder should continue to develop self-evaluation and quality assurance process so that her service continues to improve.
- The childminder should review the storage and amount of toys provided, so that the environment is calmer and children better able to make choices.

## 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?	3 - Adequate
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 happy and settled in the childminder's care. The childminder had developed warm, respectful relationships with them and this meant that they were able to let the childminder know what they wanted and how they were feeling. The childminder knew the children and their families very well. The friendly relationships she had developed with families meant that they were comfortable sharing information with her and this helped her to meet children's needs and interests well. Parents told us: "My child feels very comfortable with Simone. The setting feels like a home from home. My child is happy to go and play there and has all her needs met while in Simone's care. Simone is very welcoming and provides an excellent service."

The childminder worked with parents to develop personal plans which set out agreed strategies for supporting children as they grew and developed skills. She used a daily diary and a social media platform for sharing information with parents on a daily basis. We agreed that the childminder should review her records so that duplication is reduced. Parents told us: "We regularly review my daughters care plan and alter it wherever required. Simone always asks for feedback on care plans and if there's anything we wish to add."

The childminder provided all meals and snacks and we saw that children were experiencing a generally sociable lunchtime meal as the childminder joined the children and supported conversation. We have suggested that children could be more involved in preparing their food, which will include them as well as support the development of skills and independence.

No children needed to sleep during our visit. The childminder told us that a travel cot was available and described her monitoring procedures for children who did need to sleep. We did suggest that she could provide an opportunity for rest after lunch as the children appeared tired in the early afternoon.

The childminder was aware of her responsibilities for keeping children safe. There was an appropriate procedure for medication, and we have suggested that this be reviewed using the recently updated guidance. The childminder has attended safeguarding training and should now build her confidence in applying her learning.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children were having fun as they played with the very wide variety of toys and games available. The childminder listened to the children and responded by providing experiences which were appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Children had opportunities to be curious and try things out for themselves. We observed them exploring sand with different scoops, measuring jugs and their own feet. In particular, children had very good opportunities to develop gross motor skills and be adventurous. Children enjoyed looking at books, being read to and singing which meant that they also had time to rest and relax after being active.

The childminder captured children's experiences in the regular newsletter which she shared with parents. We have suggested that the childminder may find using the "Realising the Ambition" document a helpful

tool for planning and recording experiences for young children. The childminder also provided a daily diary, in addition to an online platform, for parents so that they could see what their children had been doing.

Children had a variety of opportunities to be active both indoors and outdoors. As well as the large garden, children went for daily walks and adventures around the farm and surrounding area. This meant that they were learning about caring for the natural world and keeping themselves safe.

Parents told us: "very varied play and activities, lots of outside play and movement, which my child loves. Lots of painting, cooking and time to get creative. Indoor movement area is great as my child loves climbing and physical play. Lots of imaginary play opportunities, stories, songs and dancing. Very happy with what's on offer."

## 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 being cared for in a spacious and homely environment. They were able to choose from a variety of rooms in the downstairs part of the house. This meant that they could choose where they wanted to be, whether to play by themselves or relax in a more quieter area.

Children were able to choose from a very wide variety of toys. The childminder was taking steps to reduce the amount of toys so that children would be better able to see what was available. This would also help to keep the home tidy and a calm place for children. As a starting point, we have suggested that she look for and remove duplicates. Storage boxes were labelled and we have suggested that photographs would improve children's abilities to make choices.

The childminder ensured that her home was clean and safe. Risk assessments had been completed and shared with parents. We have suggested that she could involve children more regularly in assessing risk, as this would encourage them to think about their own safety. The childminder knew about good practice for controlling infection. Children washed their hands after nappy changes and before eating.

The childminder had registered with the office of the Information Commissioner and ensured that all records and paperwork were stored securely.

## How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

### Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

Children were cared for in a welcoming environment. The childminder had developed a clear vision for her service which aimed to meet the needs of children and their families. This was shared with parents when they first started using her service. This was the childminder's first inspection following registration and we have suggested that it would be helpful to review policies and procedures with parents to ensure that they are relevant for her service.

The childminder was at early stages of evaluating her service formally. She had recently attended a workshop on self-evaluation and was planning to put her learning into practice. The childminder was aware

of areas that needed to improve, for example the variety and storage of toys. We found that the childminders was reflective and did engage very well with the inspection process.

She spoke to parents every day and provided them with comprehensive information about their child's time with her. Parents told us that the childminder "always lets us know about new developments and asks for our advice about what our child would or wouldn't like to do."

## 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 was caring, supportive and respectful when interacting with the children. She had developed friendly relationships with parents who told us: "My child has built a strong bond with Simone and gets very excited when they realise where they are going. My child enjoys playing with the other children and doing activities with Simone".

The childminder was an experienced children's nurse and had a strong background knowledge of child development and how to meet children's needs. She was keen to learn and attended training and available learning opportunities. The childminder was developing her knowledge and understanding of how children learn through play and was using this learning to build up resources which support children's creativity and problem solving skills.

The childminder was a member of the Scottish Child Minding Association (SCMA) and made good use of the support available from them. She had developed friendships with other childminders in the area and used these relationships to share experiences.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older 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?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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