

Newcroft Childcare Child Minding

Keith

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 March 2025

Service provided by:
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Service provider number:
SP2015986782

Service no:
CS2015336258

About the service

Newcroft Childcare is registered to care for a maximum of seven children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than six are under 12 years, no more than three are not yet attending primary school and no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/ household.

The service is located rurally on a croft, near Keith in Moray. Children are cared for in a purpose-built cabin, set in the childminder's fully enclosed garden. They have access to a playroom, sleep room and shower room within the cabin.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 20 March 2025 between 09:15 and 11:45. One inspector from the Care Inspectorate carried out the inspection.

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

This inspection was part of a pilot to test the 'Quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors' developed jointly with Education Scotland. Because this inspection was part of a pilot, no new evaluations (grades) have been awarded.

During the inspection we:

- Spoke with three children and observed their experiences
- Spoke with two family members
- Spoke with the childminder
- Received seven completed survey responses
- Observed practice and daily life; and
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefitted from an environment that had been developed to provide exceptional, innovative and consistently high-quality experiences.
- A wide variety of resources, spaces and experiences outdoors gave children excellent opportunities to develop their imagination, skills and overall wellbeing.
- Children were supported to feel safe, secure and loved as the childminder had built nurturing relationships with them.
- The childminder placed children and families at the heart of all decision-making processes.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces

Children experienced a warm, friendly and welcoming environment which was based within the garden of the childminder's home. The dedicated cabin was attractively laid out to enable children to choose resources to play with, and to rest and relax. Children and their families had been involved in decorating the cabin, and it was furnished in a way that fully met the needs of children of a wide range of ages and at differing stages of development. For example, low tables and chairs enabled the youngest children to sit with others for mealtimes and craft activities. A large rug provided ample space for babies to crawl and a large sofa gave older children a space to relax. Children's photos and art work lined the walls and a digital display at the front door gave parents an insight into the children's experiences. This gave a very strong message to all children that they were valued and had ownership of the space.

Children's right to enjoy outdoor play was at the heart of the service, which had been developed to comprise a large garden, a "forest school" and the livestock area of the croft. The childminder demonstrated exceptional confidence and creativity in making best use of available spaces and resources to create, sustain and enhance a motivating physical environment for learning. Each area enabled children to independently explore, experiment and seek out resources and experiences that captured their interest, imagination and natural curiosity. For example, while some children fed the goats, other children chose to play on the slide and climbing frame nearby. In their own time, the children re-joined the group as they moved on to search for freshly laid eggs. This meant that the physical environment supported children to feel safe, secure and inspired as they experienced play and learning centred on their own needs and interests. As a result, children were engaged, happy and confident wherever they were within the setting. Parents strongly agreed that outdoor play and learning was a strength of the service. One parent said there were regular opportunities for, "Forest school, puddle jumping, playing in snow, garden play, walks."

The environment provided outstanding opportunities for children to actively explore and learn about the wider world, and the childminder used it exceptionally well to promote high-quality experiences for children. The childminder skilfully linked these opportunities to learning in literacy, numeracy and a broad range of other outcomes. For example, while feeding the animals, children were supported to count scoops of food, and they counted chicken's eggs into egg boxes. In the main garden, a wildlife area contained bird feeders, tally charts and video cameras which enabled children to learn about the wildlife inhabiting the garden. Frog spawn had been introduced to the pond, following children's interest in new life in springtime, and this interest was skilfully extended indoors through role play in the "science lab" and observing eggs in a

hatchery. This also demonstrated that children were highly involved in influencing experiences and opportunities. They were closely listened to, their views were respected and their rights were upheld. One parent told us, "There's never a set routine, so if one day my child wants to do craft, they get to do craft, and they can switch to something else whenever they want."

The childminder provided exceptional opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and caring for the natural environment. This was evident in daily routines within the setting. For example, children were supported to use cloth wipes and reusable hand towels throughout the day. They got involved in planting and growing vegetables, and preparing them for meals. They collected food scraps from their own meals to feed the livestock. The childminder also regularly shared her expertise in learning for sustainability with other settings and this benefited children beyond her own setting. For example, she had recently won an award from the Scottish Woodland Awards for her forest school provision. This comprised a pack of oak tree seedlings to plant in the forest school area. To increase the impact of this, she had requested enough to also provide each child in the local primary school and nursery with a sapling. The children in her service then went to the school to help plant the trees, along with sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Hence, the childminder was supporting children and services beyond her own, in learning and sustainability, and this was excellent practice.

The childminder took effective steps to minimise risks to children, both indoors and outdoors. She embraced a dynamic benefit-risk approach with children, who were involved in regular checks to identify and remove hazards in each area they played in. This meant that children could safely engage in a very wide range of play opportunities which challenged and extended their development and learning. This extended beyond the setting, as the childminder maximised the use of areas in the local community, such as trips to the beach and other woodlands. This helped to build their self-confidence, develop skills for life and positively impacted their health, wellbeing and happiness.

The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of infection prevention and control and had invested in providing a dedicated, high-quality, clean and safe environment. The cabin was clean and well maintained, and contained a bathroom complete with shower for washing after particularly messy play. Where children required personal care, children's privacy and dignity were fully respected.

Children and families benefited from a childminder who promoted diversity, equity and inclusion in the provision of their high-quality experiences. For example, for children who were not used to spending much of the day outdoors, she gave lots of reassurance and gentle guidance to help them build their confidence and was mindful of the need to reinforce messages around benefits and risks with the children. She provided a full age range of outdoor wear such as wellies, splash suits and hats for all children, so that everyone had equitable opportunities to explore all the experiences on offer.

The childminder had considered all aspects of security around the setting, including the confidential storage of children's information. She had a comprehensive policy for ensuring that CCTV was used appropriately and had gained parents' permission to utilise it. As a result, children's privacy was maintained in line with legislation and best practice guidance.

Children are supported to achieve

QI: Nurturing care and support

Children benefited from a childminder whose approach was built on the understanding that nurturing relationships are essential for children's growth and development. They experienced warm, consistent and responsive care that fostered their wellbeing. The childminder responded quickly to children's cues for support and skilfully helped them to express their needs. For example, whilst children were enjoying singing and dancing to songs and nursery rhymes, the childminder supported a younger child to join in by sitting on the floor with them, moving to the rhythm and modelling actions. This helped her to feel included and to develop her skills. Parents strongly agreed that the childminder was caring and kind. One parent told us, "She has an obvious love and affection for children and works really hard to ensure the children are included."

The childminder had developed strong, positive relationships with the families of the children in her care. She communicated with families regularly about children's progress and their day and this positively impacted on children's care and support. Families welcomed advice and support from the childminder and this further helped to ensure consistent approaches to care. One parent told us, "She gives great detail in what she does with the kids, and if you're struggling with something she will always try to help." Children's care was very well supported through the use of effective personal planning information. Plans were regularly reviewed and were enhanced by information shared between the childminder and parents in daily diaries and at pick up times. This meant that the childminder was able to meet the changing needs of the children in their care. The childminder also made very good use of private social media to inform families of the children's days, and parents told us that they felt well informed. One parent shared, "We are made to feel so welcome to come and discuss my child's individual needs."

Children enjoyed sociable and relaxed mealtimes, with everyone sitting together at a low table. This enabled the childminder to closely supervise younger children throughout the mealtime. Children's food choices were nutritious and in line with best practice guidance. Menus were shared weekly and alternatives to the hot lunchtime meal were on offer if needed. Fresh water was readily available throughout the day. The childminder considered daily routines, such as mealtimes as valuable opportunities to promote children's involvement, independence and enhance their experiences. The low level table and chairs and highchairs provided a homely mealtime whilst enabling the childminder to supervise young children closely. This meant that mealtimes were enjoyable and safe.

Children were able to sleep and rest in response to their needs. The childminder understood the importance of sleep for children's development and provided a dedicated sleeping room with cots for the youngest children. She discussed sleep routines with families to help ensure that home routines were followed. This supported children to feel safe and promoted their health and development.

QI: Safeguarding and child protection

The childminder was aware of their responsibilities to ensure children were safe and protected from harm. She had recently attended child protection training and demonstrated a very good understanding of how to recognise and respond to child protection and safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding policies and procedures had been developed for the service, and this supported the childminder to meet children's needs in line with local and national guidance. We asked the childminder to add all relevant contact telephone numbers to the procedures so that they could be quickly accessed.

The childminder's ethos and vision strongly promoted children's rights and equality. She demonstrated strong and positive, nurturing relationships with the children in her care and knew them and their families well. Children were actively encouraged to give their views and families told us that they also felt able to approach her with any concerns. One parent told us that they had an, "Open and honest relationship. Easy to contact at any time." This helped to ensure that children felt safe and were kept safe.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

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