

Childminding with Amy Child Minding

Buckie

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
18 March 2025

Service provided by:
Amy Simmers

Service provider number:
SP2023000034

Service no:
CS2023000043

About the service

Childminding with Amy is registered to provide a childminding service to a maximum of four children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the children of the childminder's family.

The childminder's home is in a rural location near Buckie in Moray. Children are cared for in a playroom within the home and have access to a large, fully enclosed garden. They have access to the family kitchen, the bathroom and the livingroom.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday, 13 March 2025 between 09:15 and 11:30. One inspector carried out the inspection. 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 the childminder about the service they provided
- Spoke with children during their play
- Observed practice and children's experiences
- Reviewed documents related to the service
- Gathered the views of parents and carers of children who attend the service.

Key messages

- Positive and caring relationships with children and their families ensured children's individual needs were well supported and respected.
- Children benefitted from quality play and learning experiences both within the home and in their local community.
- The childminder was at the early stages of involving children and families in evaluating the service and identifying areas for development, and was keen to develop this further.
- The childminder was committed to their own professional development and had undertaken a wide range of training that supported 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?	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.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were benefitting from warm, nurturing interactions with their childminder, who knew the children and their families well. She skilfully followed the children's lead as they played, supporting them to explore the playroom and try new things. Her caring approach helped the children to feel secure and loved, and promoted their overall wellbeing. Parents strongly agreed that their child was well cared for, with one parent saying, "Amy is really caring towards our son and it shows in his attitude around her. We really value this." Another parent told us, "I feel as though she knows my child very well. She can tell if they are having an off day and does a little extra to help them through."

Children were supported with personal care by the childminder's kind and nurturing interactions. She followed family routines and preferences to provide continuity of care. She followed children's cues when they were tired, and offered safe and quiet places for each child to sleep, using separate rooms. This, along with regular exchanges of information with parents around sleeping arrangements, ensured that their needs were being met.

Mealtimes were relaxed and unhurried, and children were closely supervised throughout which helped to keep them safe. Food choices at snack time were nutritious and children were able to choose from a selection of fruits. Parents told us that they appreciated the range of fruits that were offered as a snack. We advised that the mealtime experience should be further developed to enable a more sociable, homely experience for the children. This would give children opportunities to be more involved in mealtimes, further promoting a caring and positive experience. To support with this we signposted the childminder to the practice note, 'Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC).' Children benefited from having access to fresh water throughout the day and they were encouraged to remain hydrated.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. The childminder had gathered information from families prior to their child starting in the service and this helped her to consistently support children in line with families' wishes. Families had regular opportunities to discuss their children's care, development and learning. The childminder had systems in place to support regular communication with families, both verbally and in writing. One parent told us, "We get a chance to talk every pick up/drop off and this never feels rushed or hurried. The daily report she gives us is really useful and where there are any issues she's in regular and speedy contact." An electronic system had recently been introduced to share some of this information. We asked the childminder to continue to develop her approach to reviewing plans, to ensure that the information reflected each child's current needs and next steps. For example, welcoming families into the home to share in their child's experiences, hobbies and interests had the potential to impact positively on children's care and support.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun exploring the resources and toys in the dedicated playroom. The room was thoughtfully laid out so that children could access resources freely and this enabled the childminder to follow the children's cues. As a result, children were actively leading their play, and this promoted choice and independence. For example, when one of the children showed an interest in climbing on the large, soft blocks, the childminder sat close by to encourage and guide him, as well as ensuring that he stayed safe. This supported development of his co-ordination and motor skills. Another child was supported to use dressing up props and role play, during which he used a variety of natural materials and household items which helped to foster creativity and imagination. When the childminder saw that their interest had moved on, she supported the children to explore other resources. They had access to a water tray which provided sensory play, and further opportunities for role play. Both children in the service during the inspection enjoyed playing with these resources freely.

More structured play opportunities were offered through craft activities in the home and daily trips into the local community. This included attending the library for Bookbug sessions, local toddler groups and visits to the park and woodlands. These outings provided opportunities to learn about the wider world as well as opportunities to build skills and socialise with other children. Parents told us that they valued the range of play opportunities their children experienced. One parent said, "Our son is exposed to both outdoor play and indoor activities every day and we love this." Another parent shared that their child enjoyed, "Lots of storytelling, free play, structured play, messy play and outdoor play." We agreed that the childminder was providing a good balance of planned and spontaneous experiences which enriched their play and learning.

Children benefited from experiences that supported the development of their skills in literacy and numeracy. For example, the children enjoyed joining in with stories, songs and rhymes throughout the day. This was supporting the children to develop their language skills and confidence. During free play, the childminder skilfully spotted opportunities to talk about shape, colour and counting with the children, and this helped them to develop their numeracy skills.

Children and families benefited from the information the childminder shared about their day and their progress. Parents told us that they valued the observations and photos shared through paper and electronic media, which enabled them to celebrate their child's successes and achievements. The childminder had recently begun to record detailed observations of learning and appropriate next steps, and had also started to track their progress using tracking documents shared by the local authority. This had the potential to support children to develop a broad range of knowledge, understanding and skills for life and learning. We encouraged the childminder to continue to develop her observations, and to identify effective ways in which to share these with children and families. This would further support her to effectively plan for and celebrate children's successes and achievements in play and learning.

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.

Children benefited from a home that was welcoming, comfortable and clean. The dedicated playroom provided spacious play spaces which offered a wide range of inviting and developmentally appropriate resources. The resources reflected children's current interests, such as the role play mat where children held a tea party. A variety of natural, open ended materials encouraged children to use their imagination, build and explore. There was a securely enclosed garden with plenty space to run and play, and a range of play

equipment and large loose parts such as tyres and planks. This gave children opportunities for imaginative and energetic play. The childminder shared with us that she planned to further develop the outdoor spaces, to create spaces that the family pet dog did not have access to. We agreed that this, alongside any developments that increased children's ability to choose to play outdoors, had the potential to enhance overall experiences for children.

The childminder had procedures in place to minimise risks to children whilst enabling them to enjoy challenging and fun play experiences. This enabled children to engage in a broad range of interesting play opportunities to extend their development and learning and build self-confidence. Resources were well maintained indoors and outdoors, and risk assessments for the home, garden and trips had been developed and implemented. As a result, children were kept safe. We suggested that children could be involved in assessing risks, encouraging a sense of responsibility for their own safety and that of others. Children's information was stored securely on a digital platform. This ensured that each child's personal information was kept private.

Effective measures to prevent the spread of infection were in place. This included well established routines for nappy changing, during which the childminder used gloves and apron appropriately. Children were familiar with when to wash their hands and were supported to do so at appropriate times. We advised that children should be supported to wash their hands with soap and water wherever possible, especially in the home. This would help them to build independence and further develop important life skills.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

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

The childminder shared the vision and aims for her service alongside other useful information, when families first enrolled their child to the service. These demonstrated a commitment to providing quality childcare and gave prospective families an insight into the childminder's ethos for her service. The childminder had started to gather the views of parents and carers via annual questionnaires, to inform her on meeting the needs of the children and families using her service. This was a positive step and we encouraged the childminder to continue to find ways of actively including children and families in this.

The childminder was in the early stages of using self-evaluation for identifying and implementing improvements to her service. She had begun to use documents from Care Inspectorate and a childminding support organisation to inform her work on this. As a result she understood the importance of gathering the views of children and families to inform development of the service. We discussed how reviews of policies, as well as other aspects of the service could also involve families and children. This would support the childminder to ensure that any such changes reflect families' preferences and what they expect from the service. To support the childminder to build on this positive start to identify, plan and review improvements we made an area for improvement, and signposted her to the Care Inspectorate document, 'Registering and running a childminding service: what you need to know.' (**see area for improvement 1**).

The childminder had policies and procedures in place to support her to offer a quality service to children and families. We advised the childminder to review all such policies and procedures regularly, and whenever best practice guidance was updated, so that they remained current and useful for families.

Areas for improvement

1. To continue to enhance outcomes for children and support a culture of continuous improvement, self-evaluation should be further developed. Self-evaluation processes should identify strengths and areas for further improvement, and should meaningfully involve children and families.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

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 childminder had created a warm and welcoming ethos within the service. Her kind and nurturing interactions helped children to feel loved and secure. She was responsive to children's interests and this helped to promote and support their curiosity. This meant that children were having quality, fun experiences. The childminder had built strong and positive relationships with children and families. One parent told us, "Amy's lovely. Extremely accommodating, flexible and caring." Another parent said, "I've found her friendly and engaging in the time we've been with her. I feel I can speak openly and honestly with Amy. And trust her 100% with the welfare of my children."

Children benefited from a childminder who was committed to developing her skills and knowledge. She had completed a variety of training courses and gave examples of how her practice had changed as a result. For example, the childminder had identified that further training on communication would help her to support all children well, and she had undertaken training on Makaton as a result. This approach enabled responsive care that considered children's needs. We encouraged the childminder to reflect on changes she had made in her practice as a result, and how this was leading to enhanced outcomes for children.

The childminder made effective use of support from a variety of organisations. For example, she had accessed support on service improvement planning from the local authority childminding development officer. She was proactive in keeping up to date with new developments and best practice guidance. This indicated a dedicated and professional approach to their role which was focused on supporting children to reach their potential.

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?	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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