

Helen Blair Childminding Child Minding

Dumbarton

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
5 March 2025

Service provided by:
Helen Blair

Service provider number:
SP2012984061

Service no:
CS2012311718

About the service

The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 6 children at any one time under the age of 16, 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 the children of the childminder's family. Minded children cannot be cared for by persons other than those stated on the registration certificate. Overnight care is not provided and minded children should not have access to the garden.

The childminder provided a before and after school care service to children aged three years and over. At the time of inspection, 11 children were registered. Five children were present during the inspection.

The service is provided from the childminder's home in Cardross, West Dunbartonshire, and is close to the local school, shops and park. The service is accessible on foot, by car, bus or train.

About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place on Wednesday 26 February 2025 from 13:30 - 16:30. 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 four children using the service and two of their families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The children had developed very positive relationships with the childminder. They were safe and secure. Good information was available to ensure the childminder knew each child very well as an individual, although this needed to be reviewed more regularly.
- The children were very happy and relaxed in the setting, enjoying a good range of experiences. They were keen to chat about why they enjoyed their time at the setting.
- The childminder worked closely with parents to ensure the children's needs were met and their routines respected. Families were very happy with the quality of the service provided to their children. They valued the strong and effective channels of communication the childminder had established.
- The childminder could take a more formal approach to self-evaluation to identify the strengths and qualities of the service and identify any improvements.

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.

The childminder had appropriate processes in place to collect relevant information about minded children and their families before they started. This assisted with the settling in process and enabled the childminder to plan to meet children's individual needs and personal preferences. The childminder discussed the importance of the settling in stage to children for building trust and becoming confident in her care. The childminder needed to ensure that parents were involved in a six monthly review of the information held about their children to ensure that the childminder was working from the most up-to-date information. We directed the childminder to a Care Inspectorate publication, which provided useful information on completing and reviewing personal plans - <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/resources/personal-planning-guides-for-providers/>

Families agreed that the childminder knew their child well, including what they liked and what was important for their care. Comments included: "Great couldn't ask for anyone better" and "The childminder is very friendly and accommodating. Our child is happy."

The childminder advised that some children were collected by their families at the front door of her home while others came indoors. We discussed the benefits for both children and their families of being invited into the childminding home. Families commented positively about the childminder's welcoming manner: "Always welcomes into the home and see where child's playing and collect things needed" and "The childminder is very welcoming."

The childminder discussed the individual needs of the children with the parents on a regular basis. Families accessed a messaging page that kept them up-to-date with information about the service. The positive relationships that had been developed between the childminder and families facilitated effective communication, consistency and continuity of care. Families valued this communication with the childminder.

The childminder provided a healthy breakfast and snacks for the children in her care. The childminder had registered the food preparation aspect of her business with the local authority to ensure compliance with food safety standards. Children sat together to enjoy snack during our visit chatting with the childminder and each other. It was a calm, sociable and pleasant experience for them.

The childminder had a good understanding of the health and dietary needs of the children in her care. The childminder had not been required to administer medication to any of the children in her care, but appropriate paperwork was in place for parents to give written consent to administer medication should this be required. We advised that the best practice guidance had recently been reviewed and suggested the childminder obtained a copy of this guidance document for her records and to ensure that families could be reassured that her procedures were in line with best practice - <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/news/7870-new-guidance-on-management-of-medication-in-daycare-of-children-and-childminding-services>

Five minded children were present during the inspection. They were happy and confident within the childminding setting. They were happy to explore the toys and resources and were comfortable to move about the childminder's home freely. They chatted at length about their experiences within the childminding setting, expressing a high level of satisfaction with their care. They told us they particularly enjoyed playing on the Xbox, making jewellery and baking activities.

The childminder's approach to play and activities was child-centred and responsive to the children's interests, wishes and level of skill. At the time of inspection, the minded children were happy playing with the toys available to them in the playroom including playing board games, playing football on the games console and making loom band jewellery. Children showed us some of the jewellery and told us about other things they had created whilst at the setting in the past and told us about opportunities for crafting, painting and drawing. This demonstrated that the childminder valued their creativity. Children had regular opportunities to be active and access fresh air when visiting the local play park.

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.

We found that the childminder had created a warm, comfortable, welcoming and homely environment for the children to play and relax in.

The home was in good repair, clean and a good standard of health and safety was observed throughout. Appropriate arrangements were in place for cleaning the home and resources. Children were able to access the lounge, kitchen, hallway, sun lounge and downstairs toilet. There was a good selection of play resources available. These resources were well-organised and accessible to the children to allow them to make choices. At the time of inspection, the childminder's garden was not used by the minded children.

The childminder provided appropriate activities, materials and experiences for the children, both indoors and outdoors. This reflected the interests, development and learning stages of the children in her care. Children had regular opportunities to play outdoors and get fresh air. They particularly enjoyed visits to the local park. Comments included: "Weather dependant the kids are allowed to walk home with the childminder or go to the park after school."

The childminder was confident about her responsibilities to keep children safe and had developed risk assessments for her home which recorded all identified hazards and control measures needed to keep children safe. The childminder reviewed these regularly to ensure they remained up-to-date. The children were aware of the house rules in place to keep them safe.

The childminder had developed a policy detailing her approach to controlling and preventing the spread of infection within her home and there were satisfactory arrangements in place to prevent and control the spread of infection within the service to protect children. Children would benefit from the use of paper towels for use after handwashing to minimise the risk of infection.

We confirmed that the childminder held appropriate insurance to operate the service, and that annual maintenance arrangements were in place to ensure the gas boiler and central heating were working safely.

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.

We found that the childminder used daily discussion to ensure that children and their families could be consulted on the day-to-day running of her service. The childminder ensured that parents were involved from the outset and through the settling in period. She shared policies and procedures at enrolment and was willing to respond to ideas and routines highlighted by parents. This was particularly relevant where the childminder and families needed to develop a consistent approach to children's care routines.

Through regular communication with the parents and children, the childminder was able to provide a service that met the needs and interests of the children she was caring for. The childminder regularly shared the children's experiences with their parents. This approach helped parents feel they were included in their child's day.

The childminder respected the views of children and parents and used their views to improve the service, where possible. We were told that most feedback came from informal discussions with children and their families and the use of questionnaires. The childminder used verbal feedback from the parents and children to reflect on the type of experiences they were having. This helped her develop informal plans and reflect on the care and activities she provided to the children and families. Families strongly agreed that they were involved in helping to develop the service and commented: "Always asked if anything can be better" and "We are asked to complete a questionnaire."

The childminder was aware that there was a need for a more formal approach to self-evaluation to enable her to assess the quality of her service against the Care Inspectorate document, A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare (this document will be changed in September 2025). Using this document to identify and record strengths and areas highlighted to improve outcomes for children and families, would have formed a good evidence base for a service improvement plan. Information on self-evaluation can be found at: <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/quality-improvement-programmes-and-topics/early-learning-and-childcare-improvement-programme/>

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 childminding service had been operating for 12 years. Over this time, the childminder had become skilled and experienced with well-developed procedures and processes in place. The childminder's paperwork was comprehensive, well-developed and organised to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. The childminder had a measured, informed approach to our questions during the inspection, demonstrating that she knew the children and the families very well. The childminder had a good understanding of child development and could provide appropriate support and interventions to help children to reach their potential.

The childminder had a well-developed knowledge and understanding of the skills and qualities required to provide an effective childcare service. The childminder reflected regularly on her skills, experience and practice and participated in training to support her continuous professional development including most recently:

- Emergency Paediatric First Aid
- Enhanced Child Protection.

We highlighted the Care Inspectorate Hub as a good source of information and practice guidance. We suggested that the childminder accessed this resource, where possible, to enhance her approach to continuous professional development - <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/>

The childminder told us that she kept up-to-date with best practice guidance and changes to legislation through accessing online resources. The childminder had developed a working relationship with another childminders, which allowed for the mutual support and development opportunities these relationships brought. The childminder also had membership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) which was a good source of information and advice.

The childminder was sensitive, kind, caring and consistent in her approach to children which helped them feel safe and secure. She was committed to ensuring high quality outcomes for children and families. The childminder had developed very positive relationships with families which was reflected in their comments to us and resulted in a warm and welcoming ethos within the service. Families were very happy with the quality of the service and told us the most positive aspects of their child's experiences in the childminding service were; "Safety and wellbeing" and "Our child feels cared for, safe and happy."

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?	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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