

# Rafferty, Melanie

## Child Minding

Dollar

**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
24 March 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Melanie Rafferty

**Service provider number:**  
SP2009976492

**Service no:**  
CS2009235291

## About the service

Melanie Rafferty operates a childminding service from their family home in Pool of Muchart, Dollar. They are registered to provide care to a maximum of six children when working alone and 10 children when working with an assistant.

The service is close to local amenities including green spaces, a wooded area, park, shops, and the local school. Children are cared for on the ground floor of the family home and have access to the large open plan kitchen, dining area and living room, and toilet. Children were not accessing the childminders garden at the time of the inspection.

## About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection which took place on 24 March 2025 between 15:15 and 18:10. 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 two people using the service and reviewed four responses to our questionnaire from their family members.
- spoke with the provider and the assistant
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- The childminder and assistant had successfully created a trusting, welcoming environment where children felt included and had a sense of belonging.
- The childminder and assistant had formed strong and trusting relationships with families which supported them to effectively meet children's needs.
- Children benefitted from a wealth of opportunities to engage with their natural environment and wider communities as the childminder and assistant were advocates for outdoor learning and healthy lifestyles.
- We asked the childminder to develop a Missing child policy. This would help ensure clear procedures were in place to contact the relevant people and enable the appropriate action to be taken if needed to help keep children safe.
- The childminder and assistant were knowledgeable on how children develop and learn and responsive to their interests and hobbies. This meant children had ownership of their experiences and were very engaged in their play and learning.

## 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?	5 - Very 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 how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

The childminder and assistant were fun, caring and welcoming. They both demonstrated a calm and warm approach towards the children which contributed to them feeling happy, safe, and secure while in the childminders home.

The childminder and assistant knew the children and their families very well and confidently told us of their individual characters and their interests. Effective partnerships with families ensured they gathered important information which enabled them to provide consistent and meaningful care. This resulted in children who benefitted from love and support which fully promoted their wellbeing. Families' comments included, 'Mel is flexible, professional, and responsive to any messages' and 'I can talk easily to Mel, and we have a good relationship.'

Snack time was a calm and positive experience and at the time of inspection, children were organising a rota for helping prepare their snack. They happily sat together at a large dining table, and were offered healthy options of yogurt, fruit, and vegetables. The assistant sat with the children who all knew each other very well. This resulted in a sociable and unhurried snack time.

Children were kept safe from harm as the childminder and assistant were knowledgeable on child protection procedures and how to respond if they had concerns about a child's welfare and wellbeing. We asked the childminder to review their Child protection policy and include the procedure should an allegation be made against the childminder or assistant. This would further support them to safeguard children.

Children attending the service did not require medication at the time of our visit. We viewed medication paperwork and were confident it would support the safe administration and storage of medication should it be required.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

The childminder and assistant knew the children and their family life very well which supported them to provide interesting and enjoyable activities and experiences. Children were valued and their views mattered as planning approaches were child led, and children were respected as decision makers by the childminder and assistant. For example, Mind maps evidenced children had been consulted on snack choices, Science, Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM), indoor and outdoor activities. The childminder and assistant planned in response to children's views which meant they felt listened too, valued and were fully engaged in their play and learning.

The childminder and assistant were skilled at using effective questioning which encouraged children to widen their thinking and deepen their learning. Supportive interactions meant children were thriving and confident.

Children were offered a wealth of opportunities to engage with their natural environment and wider communities. They regularly explored woods close to the service and visited the local park. After school, the children liked to stay and play in the playground with their peers on the trim trail and large climbing apparatus. This provided children with social experiences and supported them to maintain positive connections with their local community.

Children benefitted from risky play opportunities which supported their resilience and confidence and taught them life skills. For example, they enjoyed new challenges making fires with flint and steel and help cook a pizza for snack on an open grill in the woods. A child told us, 'I like when we go exploring in the woods, it's exciting.'

## How good is our setting?

## 5 - Very Good

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

### Quality indicator 2.2. Children experience high quality facilities.

The childminder and assistant had created a warm, welcoming, and homely environment for children and families. Their home was welcoming, well maintained, clean and furnished to a high standard. This provided children with a safe, inviting, and comfortable space in which to play and learn. A child told us, 'Mel's is fun, calm and exciting.'

The layout of the large open plan kitchen, dining area and living room enabled children to move freely around and independently select where they wanted to play. Resources were stored in a way that meant children could self-select activities and games they wanted to play with. Areas of play were resourced to take account of individual interests and hobbies which demonstrated to children they mattered and encouraged individual choice.

Children experienced indoor play areas that had been organised in a way and thoughtfully resourced to take account of individual interests and hobbies. This gave them a sense of belonging, ownership and told us that children really mattered. Their environments were laid out in a way which helped develop children's independence. Resources were easily accessible and well organised which enabled them to self-select and make their own choices.

During the inspection, most children sat at a large dining table, chatting together and helping each other with word searches and playing games. The childminder told us towards the end of the week some children were tired, and they liked to relax on the soft furnishings. This meant children could rest after their day in school in comfortable and warm surroundings which supported their wellbeing.

Effective infection prevention and control measures ensured a clean and healthy environment. Children were supported to understand good respiratory and hand hygiene and took their outdoor shoes off when playing in the childminders home. This contributed to their learning of self-care and keeping themselves and others safe and healthy.

The childminder and assistant were knowledgeable on the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall wellbeing. They spoke passionately about their interest in healthy lifestyles and their love of the outdoors. Children were not using the childminders garden at the time of the inspection.

However, children told us liked to play football, investigate and explore which was more fun for them in the park to the rear of the house. One child told us, 'I like to play survival games, and we need space to run around.' This enabled children to experience more active and physical play.

## How good is our leadership?

**5 - Very Good**

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

### **Quality indicator 3.1. Quality assurance and improvement are led well.**

Children's experiences reflected the childminder's aims of their service. The childminder and assistant demonstrated the same values and had high aspirations for children. This resulted in a supportive, happy, and welcoming environment for children and families. We asked the childminder to include children and families when next updating their vision, values and aims. This would help promote the inclusive and positive ethos further.

The childminder was conscientious, committed, well organised and enthusiastic about improving outcomes for children and families. Since the previous inspection, the childminder had actioned suggestions we had made to support them to improve the service. For example, they ensured they were always working to the conditions of their registration which kept children safe. Additionally, they had provided children with more responsibility in preparing and choosing their snack choices. This resulted in children having more independence and helped them develop life-long skills. We found further plans were recorded in a diary which assisted them with priorities and timescales and supported them to continuously improve.

Trusting and meaningful relationships had been established with children and families. A detailed and informative welcome booklet meant families were clear on what to expect from the service prior to joining. Their views were actively sought to inform the continual development of the service. For example, regular questionnaires were sent out and they benefitted from regular newsletters requesting any 'Words of wisdom' they could provide. Children were consulted on a variety of their experiences and 'If there was anything they did not like at Mel and Mark's? The childminder and assistant meaningfully explored responses to these systems and adjusted their practice to ensure everyone felt valued and respected and outcomes improved. Most families that responded to our questionnaire, strongly agreed that they, and their children, were involved in meaningful ways to improve the service. They told us, 'Mel asks us to complete relevant paperwork and is always open to suggestions and seeks feedback on her service.' and 'Regular updates, questionnaires, and consultations as well as informal feedback,' and 'Lots of opportunity to provide feedback and make suggestions about the service.' This resulted in children and families being effectively involved in the service and contributing to positive change.

Robust policies and procedures helped support the childminder and assistant to provide high quality care, play and learning. Most aligned with current guidance and best practice documents. We asked the childminder to develop a Missing child policy. This would help ensure clear procedures were in place to contact the relevant people and enable the appropriate action to be taken if needed to help keep children safe.

**How good is our staff team?****5 - Very Good**

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

**Quality indicator 4.3. Staff deployment.**

The childminder and assistant worked closely together to provide high quality outcomes for children and families. They were compassionate, friendly, and responsive to children's needs. They had worked hard to establish positive relationships with children, and families. They communicated in a respectful way and spoke with enthusiasm and passion about their roles and responsibilities. This demonstrated a commitment to their work and created a positive ethos for children and families.

The childminder and assistant deployed themselves in a way that meant they were flexible to meet the needs of the children. For example, when the assistant supported children to prepare snack, the childminder would continue to play games and interact with the children. The childminder and assistant knew when to facilitate and support children's play experiences and when to step back and give children time and space to engage independently. Effective teamwork between the childminder and assistant meant children had meaningful play experiences and children were enjoying their time in the childminders home. This contributed to children being kept safe, valued, and loved.

The childminder was very experienced and had been childminding for a long time. They were knowledgeable on how children develop and learn. Both the childminder and assistant had worked at the local primary school and continually reflected on their practice. They were committed to learning and sought out development opportunities through self-directed reading and research. Activities and experiences were interesting, and age and stage appropriate which resulted in children being provided with high quality care, play and learning.

## **What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection**

### **Requirements**

#### **Requirement 1**

With immediate effect, the childminder must ensure the safety and wellbeing of children is maintained by delivering their service within the constraints of the conditions of registration as stated on the service certificate. This should include but is not limited to ensuring the number of children cared for at any time does not exceed the number stated on the registration.

This is in order to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

**This requirement was made on 21 February 2024.**

## Action taken on previous requirement

The childminder was working within her conditions of registration. We sampled children's attendance information in a diary and the childminder had 10 children attending on their busiest day.

**Met - within timescales**

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

## Areas for improvement

### Previous area for improvement 1

The service should review their current mealtime routine to ensure experiences promote independence and offer children more opportunities to develop skills for life.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'If appropriate, I can choose to make my own meals, snacks and drinks, with support if I need it, and can choose to grow, cook and eat my own food where possible' (HSCS 1.38).

**This area for improvement was made on 21 February 2024.**

### Action taken since then

Children were involved in the planning and preparation of their snack. Children were offered a choice of fruit and vegetables and sat happily at the table together. They cleared away their dishes when they had finished.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

## Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.



## 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?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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