

MacDougall, Margaret Child Minding

Taynuilt

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
9 April 2025

Service provided by:
Margaret MacDougall

Service provider number:
SP2008968563

Service no:
CS2008169747

About the service

This service registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011. The service provider is Margaret MacDougall.

Margaret MacDougall is a childminding service. The service operates from the childminder's home, located in a quiet residential area of Taynuilt. The service is provided from a semi-detached two storey house, with children having access to the ground floor and large enclosed back garden.

Current registration allows the childminder:

1. The childminder may care for a maximum of 6 children at any one time up to 16 years of age:

- of whom no more than 6 are under 12 years;
- of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and;
- of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months.

Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

2. From 13 January 2025 to 31 August 2025 (or before if a child leaves the service) (as identified in the variation request dated 18 December 2024), on a Monday and Tuesday, between the hours of 08:00 and 16:45, the childminder may care for a maximum of 6 children at any one up to 16 years of age:

- of whom no more than 6 are under 12 years;
- of whom no more than 4 are not yet attending primary school and;
- of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months.

Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection, carried out by one early learning and childcare inspector, which took place on 7 April 2025. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the 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:

- Observed practice and daily life.
- Spoke with children using the service.
- Reviewed documents.
- Spoke with the childminder.
- Sent questionnaires to parents/carers to gather their views and feedback.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.
- This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children were experiencing very warm, nurturing care and support.
- The childminder's dedication and passion along with her skills, knowledge and expertise were supporting children to thrive and flourish.
- Children relished the adventure of being outdoors and were able to free flow outside to a well equipped garden, as well as, explore a variety of stimulating opportunities in their local environment and community.
- The childminder communicated and engaged very well with families.
- The childminder's warmth, kindness and positive ethos of mutual trust and respect was promoting a very happy, secure and supportive environment for children and their families.

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

We were able to see children experiencing very warm, caring and nurturing support. The childminder engaged skilfully with them to reassure and support their play, encouraging them to make choices, share and promote friendships. She knew children very well and had developed trusted and loving relationships with them through sensitive, nurturing interactions that supported their wellbeing and helped them feel valued, safe and secure. Children were happy and very settled in the service. They were relaxed and confident around the childminder and in the home from home environment. A parent commented on their child's behalf; "[I like] playing with my best friend, being in the garden and seeing Cody the dog". Another parent commented; "XXXX loves going to "[the childminder's] home" and will ask every single day if today is a [childminding] day. [My child] smiles so widely and jumps up when I tell them XXXX is outside to pick them up!"

Families provided packed lunches for their children. The childminder provided fruit as a healthy snack if needed. We were able to see children enjoying a positive, relaxed, nurturing experience at lunchtime with the opportunity to develop their self-help skills and independence. For example, practising using their forks and spoons to eat their lunch, as well as choosing what they would like to eat and deciding when they would like some more. This was supporting their independence, encouraging friendly social interactions and developing their communication skills, as well as their fine motor skills. The childminder was attentive and mindful of children's needs supporting them well when they needed help.

The childminder was nurturing and respectful with children's personal care, inviting them to have their nappies changed and supporting them with sensitivity throughout the experience. The childminder explained sleep routines were tailored to children's individual needs and took account of parents' wishes, along with safe sleeping guidance.

Children's personal plans contained relevant core information. All about me profiles gathered children's likes, dislikes, and interests in partnership with parents. An introductory meeting before they started was supporting the childminder to meet children's health, welfare, and safety needs. Transition arrangements were also carefully planned and flexible based on children's needs. One parent told us; "[The childminder] is so approachable. She really listens and moves with the needs of [my child]. She puts the child completely at the centre of everything she does".

Plans were tailored to children's individual needs with next steps linked to the developmental milestones and the (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included) SHANARRI wellbeing indicators. Children's plans were being regularly reviewed and updated in line with legislation. The childminder had plans to develop these further to include a record of the informal observations she was undertaking. This was to further support and identify children's next steps, any emerging or changing needs, and support strategies if needed. Parents told us; "[The childminder] gives feedback on what activities my child has been doing that day. We always get lots of photos from the day. We [also get] regular written reports" and "[the childminder] is always readily available to talk and discuss through [my child's] needs. I feel very comfortable approaching her. She is always so positive. My child is nurtured under her care."

The childminder had developed strong partnerships with parents and communicated effectively with them through conversations, daily discussions and digital technology to support children's wellbeing. A parent said; "Communication with [the childminder] is excellent. She sends photos and gives a wee update every day. She is crystal clear about any upcoming trips and her paperwork and communication is always excellent." Through discussion the childminder explained the importance of working collaboratively when needed with other professionals and agencies that may be involved in a child's care and support. For example, the health visitor. A parent commented; "We liaise closely with [the childminder] about my child's care. She keeps us informed through verbal updates, a private [digital platform] and a regularly updated personal plan."

No children were being given medication at the time of the inspection. The childminder was regularly reviewing and updating her policy and procedures in line with our current best practice guidance: 'Management of Medication in daycare and childminding services' and confirmed she would continue to do this.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

The childminder engaged with children in a sensitive, nurturing and respectful manner. Children were very happy, busy and having fun, engaging well with each other and the play and learning opportunities on offer. For example, with bubbles outside, block play and the 'cake game' being a particular favourite. A parent commented on their child's behalf; "[My child] loves arts and crafts and playing in [the childminder's] garden [as well as] story time and playing with the other children." They had access to a wide range of age and stage appropriate toys and resources to support their play and learning both indoors and outside. Children were able to choose and freely access these resources supporting them to lead their own play. These experiences were being enhanced and enriched through connections with their own and the wider community. For example, when out walking and exploring in their local environment, on expeditions to the beach and visits to soft play and 'sandy' play. A parent said; "Each and every day, [the childminder] offers a wide array of different experiences for my child. I love that she always makes an effort to make sure my child has exercise and fresh air. There is never any screen time which I really appreciate too. [The childminder] offers lots of baking opportunities and craft and messy play opportunities. XXXX loves all the different toys on offer and [the childminder] has helped develop their responsibilities by ensuring they help to tidy up too which I'm loving at home!"

The childminder was supporting children very well to explore their ideas and build on their interests. Informal planning approaches were child centred and responsive to children's individual needs and interests. For example, using observations to support the development of their natural curiosity, identifying next steps and progression in their play and learning. The childminder was considering strengthening this further by re introducing floor books as a way to record children's developing skills and progress, gathering their ideas and interests and identifying possible lines of development and challenge. This would provide children with further valuable opportunities to make choices, reflect and lead on their play and learning. A parent commented; "I can't believe the range of activities [the childminder] offers - arts and crafts, cooking, imaginative play with a wide choice of toys, outdoor equipment in the garden [along with] nature walks and trips to the beach."

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's home was clean, comfortable and well ventilated with plenty of natural light. Children had their own dedicated space to play and areas with soft furnishings for relaxation and comfort. There was space for them to play together, relax or have time to themselves if they wished.

Children had access to an extensive range of suitable resources that were being regularly replenished, including natural, open ended and loose parts play materials. Children were able to make choices and select toys. Resources were accessible to children, providing opportunities for them to direct their own play and be independent. Children relished being outdoors and were able to free flow outside to a well equipped garden. A parent commented; "XXXX gets to explore [the childminder's] garden which has a fantastic selection of outdoor/age-appropriate toys on offer."

Measures were in place to support children to enjoy a wide range of experiences, with risk benefit assessments being regularly reviewed, updated and shared with parents and children. A parent commented; "[My child] is supported to develop their physicality and has never had a single injury under [the childminder's] care. [The childminder] ensures XXXX goes on daily trips - walks around the village etc. and trips further afield too which they absolutely love. XXXX is very stimulated on all his/her different adventures!"

The childminder demonstrated good practice in infection prevention and control. For example, she modelled good hand hygiene and children were regularly reminded and supported to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before and after eating and coming in from outdoors.

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

The childminder was very welcoming and engaged well with the inspection process. She was committed to the ongoing improvement and development of her service to achieve the best outcomes she could for children and their families. The childminder was embedding children's rights to be safe, to play and be healthy into her everyday practice. A parent told us the most positive aspects of their child's care were; "Developing confidence and friendships. Having a broad variety of experiences and access to a range of resources."

The childminder had developed a range of policies and procedures, that were readily available to parents, so they knew what to expect from the service. The childminder was reviewing and updating these regularly to ensure they remained in line with current legislation and guidance.

The childminder was self-evaluating using our quality framework and the United Nations Rights of the Child (UNRC) principles. She regularly issued questionnaires to parents to seek their views and identify areas where she could improve. This was enhancing the service moving forward enabling the childminder to reflect on suggestions and make improvements where required. A parents told us; "Feedback is encouraged. [The childminder] gives us opportunities as parents to comment and report on XXXX play and development via a private social media group as well as commenting on progress reports for XXXX. I feel very involved and can clearly see the huge range of activities on offer."

The childminder had identified priorities for improvement in place, with achievable targets linked to best practice guidance. For example: 'A quality framework for day care of children, childminding and school aged childcare', 'Realising the ambition' and the 'Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS)'. This was supporting the childminder to reflect on what was working well in the service and what could be improved ensuring children and families continued to have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development of the service. Parents commented; "[The childminder] asks for written feedback to develop her service" and "I believe that [the childminder] adapts the service to meet the needs of children currently attending."

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 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

The childminder's dedication and passion was supporting children to thrive and flourish. Her warmth, kindness and positive ethos of mutual trust and respect was promoting a very happy, secure and supportive environment for children and their families. She was nurturing in her care and had formed strong attachments with the children and their families. A parent said; "I feel really lucky that my child has a childcare place with XXXX. We have always been delighted with the service." Another parent commented; "She is one in a million and a truly caring, nurturing, creative, excellent practitioner!"

The childminder engaged with children in a responsive, and respectful manner which supported their self esteem and confidence. She promoted positive behaviour by role modelling kind words and friendly engagement with the children. Parents told us; "We really trust our child with [the childminder]. She looks after the children really well and sets them good boundaries whilst allowing them to develop" and "XXXX is fantastic!"

The childminder held a relevant qualification in childcare and kept herself well informed through her membership with The Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA). For example, she spoke knowledgeably about training she had undertaken with them on children's rights and participation which she found very interesting and beneficial in supporting positive outcomes for the children and their families. As part of the ongoing evaluation and development of her service, the childminder was utilising a section on her SCMA portal to evaluate and record the impact of training on outcomes for children. She was an experienced childminder who had built up her skills, knowledge and expertise over many years to support children to learn, develop and achieve their potential.

The childminder was committed to her continued professional development and regularly visited the Care Inspectorate 'Hub' and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) website, where she had access to best practice guidance and online training to further inform and enhance her practice. She had undertaken recent training in first aid and child protection, and was clear what to do and who to go to should she have

any child protection concerns. The childminder demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of identifying and managing risk.

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?	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
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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