

Fern Daycare Child Minding

Blairgowrie

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 April 2025

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2023000003

Service no:
CS2023000006

About the service

Fern Daycare provides a childminding service from their property in a quiet residential area in Alyth. The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than six are under 12 years; of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and; of whom no more than one is under the 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family or household. Overnight care will not be provided.

The service is close to local amenities, such as shops, parks, nurseries and schools. The children have access to the living room, kitchen diner and the family bathroom. There is an enclosed garden to the front of the property that children have access to.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection, carried out by one early learning and childcare inspector, which took place on Tuesday 22 April 2025 between 11:30 and 14:15. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the service was registered.

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
- reviewed feedback questionnaires from families.

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:

- 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.

Key messages

- Children were comfortable and happy while they attended the childminders home.
- Children experienced kind and warm care and support that helped them to feel loved and secure.
- Children were confident and comfortable to lead their own play.
- Children and families had developed positive relationships with the childminder.
- Children's interests were valued and respected.
- The childminder should now develop effective quality assurance systems, including improvements and monitoring of documentation.

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.

Quality indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind and compassionate care from the childminder. The childminder knew children and their families well. One child shared, "Heather is my friend and we play games", another parent told us, that there is an "open door policy for families". As a result, positive relationships had been formed.

Individual personal plans were in place for children. These forms gathered important information, for example medical details, routines, emergency contacts, likes and dislikes. These forms were reviewed with parents in line with current legislation at least every six months. A parent told us, "we go over any changes to medical, home and dietary needs". This ensured the information the childminder gathered was current and appropriate support could be given.

Children experienced a relaxed and unhurried lunchtime. They were given a choice of meals for their lunch and where to eat. As it was a nice day they decided to have their lunch outside. Children helped set up the outside table, they identified what they needed to clean and where they would like to sit. The childminder sat at the table and engaged in conversations of interest, for example pets and gardening. As a result, children were able to eat at a pace that was right for them.

Medication had not been administered to children for the past year. Appropriate administration forms were in place for when children received medication at the service. There were no appropriate forms in place for accepting and signing medication into the service from parents. The childminder had shared she had these previously and they would have been developed again if a child required medication while they attended the service. We signposted the childminder to the 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' and discussed the importance of having appropriate forms ready for use in the event of an emergency. (See area for improvement one in QI 3.1)

Children were kept safe by a childminder who undertakes regular child protection training at least annually. The childminder undertakes regular discussions with other professionals relating to safeguarding of children. As a result, the childminder was confident in identifying and how to manage any concerns appropriately.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

The childminder demonstrated warmth and care in their interactions, fostering a family-orientated environment. Children had areas to keep their personal belonging and were free to explore the childminder's home. We observed children independently access areas, such as the toilet when they needed to. As a result, children had a sense of belonging.

Children were supported to make choices and lead their own play. They confidently and independently accessed resources of interest to them. One child shared, "I just pick what I want to play with and then I can play with it". The childminder provided resources and activities that followed children's interests. For example, children took part in a tally chart activity to identify colours of cars that passed the home.

We discussed ways the childminder could document these opportunities and identify ways they could develop children's interest further.

Children had some opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Discussions with the childminder and resources supported children to explore these skills in a developmentally appropriate way. For example, books, jigsaws and mark making resources. The childminder used effective questioning and discussions to extend children's learning further. For example, when the church bell rang, they used their fingers to identify how many chimes there were, then counted their fingers together to figure out what time of day it was. As a result, children's learning opportunities were meaningful and woven throughout daily experiences.

Children's development and milestones were tracked on a tick sheet and shared with parents. It was clear the childminder knew children well and where they were developmentally. The childminder had worked on developing observations sheets at the time of inspection and shared observations taken. We discussed different ways to formally track significant observations for children. This would ensure children receive support and challenge in a way that is right for them.

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.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a home from home environment. They confidently moved around the childminders home and had access to a living room, kitchen-diner, bathroom and outdoor space to the front of the property. A parent told us, "I have no worries about the girls being at heathers house". It was clear to see that children felt at ease in the childminders home. As a result, children were happy and settled.

Risk assessments were in place that supported the childminder to keep children safe. Visual risk assessments were carried out by the childminder before children attended. Written risk assessments were in place that took account of who and level of risk and how to minimise these potential risks. These assessments included areas such as, outings, garden, traveling by car and pets. The childminder was due to review these. We discussed updating relevant assessments when changes occur to ensure they reflected the current service, for example when garden works were being carried out.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place that supported the health and wellbeing of children within the service. Cleaning schedules were in place which included regular cleaning of resources. Areas such as the bathroom were clean and free from clutter. Children and the childminder their hands at a propriate times of the day, for example before eating or after cleaning the outside table. This helped to reduce the spread of infection.

Children had access to the front garden to explore outdoor play. We discussed with the childminder to ensure the gate at the bottom of the property is closed at all times, not just when they go out to play. This would further support children's safety while they were in the service.

A system was in place for reporting accidents and incidents. The childminder was aware of reporting procedures in the event of an accident or incident requiring medical treatment.

Parents were informed and forms were signed and dated. As a result, parents were kept up to date if their child was hurt and could provide appropriate care if they needed to.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas need to improve.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder had a positive outlook on improvement and engaged well with the inspection process. During our visit, it was clear the childminder valued children and families, for example attending groups of interest to children. As a result, the service had a positive and supportive ethos.

Aims and objectives had been developed. These had not been reviewed since the service had opened. The childminder had plans to review these when new families were due to start in the near future. This would ensure a shared vision was established between current families and the childminder.

The childminder had developed a range of policies and procedures that underpinned the service. Some of these policies required reviewing to ensure they reflected the most up to date guidance, such as the medication policy. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate HUB section to review most up to date guidance to support them with reviewing of their policies. (See area for improvement one)

Quality assurance systems were informal and were not always effective. We discussed ways this could be developed further, for example a monthly calendar to identify tasks that were required to be completed in that time frame. The childminder should now develop an effective quality assurance system that supported the development and smooth running of the service. (See area for improvement two)

The childminder had ideas for improvements to the service and plans in place. They talked through their planned areas for improvement and what they hoped to achieve from these developments. For example, developing the outdoor area to ensure the area is developmentally appropriate for all children who attend the service. We signposted the childminder to the improvement section on the Care Inspectorate HUB to help with self-evaluation processes. This would support the childminder to ensure improvements identified and made enhance children's outcomes and experiences. (See area for improvement two)

Areas for improvement

1. To support safe practice the childminder should ensure policies, procedures and documentation that underpin the service are accurate and reflect current best practice guidance.

This should include, but is not limited to, reviewing current policies to ensure procedures follow current best practice and documentation is accurate and ready available if required.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27).

2. To ensure children continue to experience care and support, the childminder should develop effective quality assurance processes that help to identify and inform improvement and enhance outcomes for children.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) Developing self-evaluation processes.
- b) Developing an improvement plan.
- c) Actively seeking views from children and families.
- d) Reviewing documentation to ensure they reflect best practice guidance.

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

Quality indicator 4.1 staff skills, knowledge and values

Children and their families benefitted from a childminder who was committed to providing quality care. They had a good understanding of children's developmental needs and their individual personalities. A parent shared with us, "They are loved, respected and well cared for by Heather". The childminder was committed to providing opportunities to promote positive outcomes and experiences to children in their care.

Children felt valued, loved and secure while they attended the service. They were confident to move around the home and ask the childminder for comfort and support if they needed it. It was clear the childminder had built respectful relationships with children and valued their opinion. For example, while developing the garden space with new resources, children were asked where they would like items to go and how they would like to play with them. As a result, children felt confident and respected while they attended the service.

The childminder linked with other professionals which helped to promote professional discussions and share practice. The childminder had recently returned to childminding. We discussed ways the childminder could further develop their skills and knowledge, for example through professional reading of current guidance and legislation. The childminder had plans to prioritise their professional development to ensure they were up to date with the most current guidance and legislation. We would encourage the childminder to continue with these plans to ensure children's experiences were enhanced and their outcomes continue to improve.

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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