

McLauchlan, Tracy

Child Minding

Westhill

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 April 2025

Service provided by:
Tracy Macdonald

Service provider number:
SP2007964913

Service no:
CS2007149615

About the service

Tracy McLauchlan provides a daycare service from their property in the residential area of Westhill. The childminder is registered to provide a care service 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 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household. The parts of the premises not to be used are the first floor rooms with the exception of the children's bedroom. Overnight service will not be provided.

The service is close to a local primary school, shops, parks and other amenities. Children are cared for in a spacious home with a dedicated playroom. Children also have access to an enclosed rear garden. Parents provide a packed lunch, and snacks are provided for by the childminder. Access to the service is by foot, car or local bus route.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 29 April 2025 between the hours of 13:15 and 17:00. 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.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spent time with children
- observed children's experiences
- received two completed questionnaires
- spoke with the childminder
- reviewed documents.

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

- All parents strongly agreed they were overall happy with care and support their child receives in the service.
- Children attending the service were settled, happy and relaxed in the care of the childminder.
- The childminder had a friendly, nurturing and welcoming approach with children and families, which supported the development of trusting relationships.
- Children had fun playing and learning and had formed good friendships.
- Areas of practice around snack time for children need to improve.
- Involvement from parents and children needs to be more meaningful and consistent to fully support their engagement with the service.

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. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurture care and support

Children attending the service were settled, happy and relaxed in the care of the childminder. The childminder had a kind and caring approach with children giving individual care such as cuddles and conversations. This helped children feel nurtured, safe and secure. The childminder had built positive, trusting relationships with children and families. Comments from families included, "We have such easy communication it really is like she's part of the family."

Children were supported by a childminder who knew them well. They knew children's individual personalities, interests and needs and used this to help support children in a way that met their individual needs. For example, developing play activities and resources and provided personal care routines. The childminder worked in partnership with parents to develop personal plans; however, these were not always fully completed and up to date. The childminder should find ways to ensure appropriate and meaningful personal plans are in place and they are used to further support the care of children.

Nappy changing was a relaxed, nurturing experience for children. The childminder took a respectful approach to children's personal care and chatted to the children as they changed their nappy. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) was used and good hand washing routines were in place. This contributed to children being kept healthy, safe and well.

Children who needed to nap during the day were supported to do so. Home routines were followed and the childminder worked with parents on children's changing routines. Children often slept in a buggy as a first choice. Although this was often at the request of, and agreed with parents, spending too much time sleeping in a buggy can restrict children's movements and quality of rest. The childminder should look at ways of offering other, safe, sleeping routines.

Snack times for children did not always provide them with high quality experiences. The childminder should find ways to improve picnic style after school snack time. Children were provided with a healthy snack after school; however, most children ate standing up or walking around. This did not keep children safe and meant there was an increased risk of choking. Time was hurried as children wanted to go play. The childminder did not sit with children and use this time to promote a safe, relaxing atmosphere which promoted social experiences. School aged children had access to their own water bottles; however, they were not regularly encouraged to drink. Younger children did not have access to water bottles and were not encouraged to drink during or after play and walks outdoors. On a hot day this put them at risk of being dehydrated (**see area for improvement 1**).

The childminder was aware of their responsibilities in keeping children safe from harm. A child protection course had been completed, which kept them up to date with current guidance. Through discussion, based on a scenario, they were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of procedures related to addressing child protection concerns. This helped support children to be safe and protected.

1.3 Play and learning

Most children's play benefitted from a variety of activities and experiences, supporting the range of ages using the service. Children's interests were encouraged such as a love of cars, letters and numbers. The childminder used these to extend play ideas such as making garages for their cars or retelling stories together. Older children were involved in shaping their time by choosing where to play or how to develop the playroom. They enjoyed playing together and had built good friendships. One child told us, "I get to see my friends and in holidays I get to go to fun places."

Most children experienced regular opportunities to benefit from fresh air, exercise and to explore their local community. Children were very familiar with the area and places that were available to them. Regular visits to parks and local green spaces give children opportunities to play and develop physical skills. Many children were skilled in climbing, balancing and jumping. The youngest children did not always have positive play time in parks. During our visit, the youngest child spent most of their outside time in the buggy. The childminder should plan better to ensure resources are available for all children to enjoy the outdoors and play parks.

The childminder used play and activities to extend children's literacy and numeracy skills. For example, play involved storytelling, counting and letter recognition. Opportunities for reading and recognising road signs were used to develop a child's interest. Books were readily available for children to choose from.

Most children progressed well with their learning and development. The childminder should develop ways to involve children in setting goals and next steps and use this to plan for future play. Regular assessment focused on children's achievements and development would further support children of all ages and help ensure they are progressing to reach their potential. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward. **(see area for improvement number 1 in the section of this report 'What the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection').**

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's safety and wellbeing, the childminder should ensure that meal times are well planned and meet up to date guidance. This should include but not be limited to:

- children sit down to eat in an unhurried manner
- children are effectively supervised
- children of all ages are encouraged to drink water.

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

'I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35) and 'I can drink fresh water at all times' (HSCS 1.39).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a well-furnished, comfortable, home from home environment with plenty of space to play. The setting was clean, tidy and organised. All parents who returned our online questionnaire strongly agreed that the setting is well furnished, comfortable and homely. Children moved freely between the main living and play areas. Children were comfortable in the space which helped them feel a sense of belonging.

A dedicated playroom gave children space to play and access a variety of toys. Resources were age appropriate, and children were enabled to explore toys and resources which interested them. Children had ownership of this space and were involved in deciding which toys were available and how to decorate it for seasonal celebrations. This helped children know that they matter and have a voice in leading their environment and play.

Children's health and wellbeing mostly benefitted from hand hygiene routines. Children washed their hands at key times such as after outdoor play. The childminder should consider developing ways to ensure all children can wash hands before eating picnic style snacks. Infection prevention and control measures were generally good and helped ensure children had access to an environment that was safe and clean. d prepare The kitchen/dining area was clean, tidy and provided a safe area to cook meals following infection control guidance. The bathroom was kept in a clean, safe and orderly fashion for children to use.

Children had opportunities to benefit from fresh air, exercise and to explore their local community. The childminder was aware of the importance of outdoors for children and regularly used local parks and play areas each day.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder had a set of aims in place for their service. These were shared with parents during induction to the service. Aims included; providing a caring, safe and secure environment, treat each child as an individual, ensure and maintain the health and safety of children and encourage confidence in all life skills. Most of these aims were reflected in the childminder's practice, such as the close relationships that had been formed with families and knowing children well as individuals. Some areas could be further developed. The children may benefit from the childminder reviewing their aims and how these are met. This should be done using feedback from families and children.

The childminder had recently implemented an annual planner designed to support the ongoing development of the service. This had been accessed through their membership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA). This included priority area of development, reviews of risk assessments and policies and identified areas of self-evaluation and continued professional learning activities.

A few areas of practice had begun to be looked at such as space and time for children's rest. The childminder should continue to develop a support programme of continuous improvement. An area for improvement was made at the previous inspection and has been carried forward. **(see area for improvement number 2 in the section of this report 'what the service has done to meet areas for improvement we made at, or since the last inspection')**

Families and children had informal opportunities to discuss the service and make suggestions for improvements. Parents who returned our questionnaire had no suggestions for any improvements and commented, "Nothing, she's fantastic." Children had opportunities such as giving ideas for the playroom and choosing toys to be involved with the service. A more formal, planned approach to seeking children's feedback and ideas would encourage more meaningful involvement in the service. We discussed ideas and ways to do this such as involving children more in their personal plans and goal setting and using the childminder's new quality assurance plan to look at areas of practice and service delivery.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We found several strengths that impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values

The childminder had a friendly, nurturing and welcoming approach with children and families which supported the development of trusting relationships and close partnerships. The childminder recognised the importance of nurture and provided children with reassurance through cuddles and kindness. They initiated conversation with children and listened to children when they had stories to tell or something to say. This led to a comforting and friendly place for children.

The childminder spoke daily with parents during arrival and departure to exchange information. This created close partnership working to meet the needs of the children. Photos and messages were shared regularly through social media apps, which supported parents to be involved in their children's experiences.

Policies and procedures were in place to help keep children safe and support their health and wellbeing. These were shared with families prior to starting at the setting. We suggested some changes to current policies to reflect best practice guidance.

The childminder had completed a range of continued professional learning opportunities. The childminder had completed the necessary core training courses online such as paediatric first aid, child protection and food hygiene were up to date which supported the safety of children. Other training included benefit risk assessment, mental health and wellbeing and information sharing. The childminder used improved knowledge in these areas to support children. Membership with supporting organisations such as Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and local childminding groups provided ongoing support to the childminder. On most occasions this supported the ongoing development of the service.

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

To appropriately support and extend children's learning and development, the childminder to ensure effective implementation of a system of observation and assessment which fully supports the progression of individual children's learning and development.

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

'I receive high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11) and 'I am encouraged and helped to achieve my full potential' (HSCS Principles: Wellbeing).

This area for improvement was made on 10 January 2020.

Action taken since then

Most children progressed well with their learning and development. The childminder should develop ways to involve children in setting goals and next steps and use this to plan for future play. Regular assessment focused on children's achievements and development would further support children of all ages and help ensure they are progressing to reach their potential.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote regular, targeted improvement of the service, the childminder should ensure development and implementation of effective, comprehensive quality assurance strategies. Strategies to assess all aspects of the service on a regular basis and inform service improvement.

This ensures quality of management is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that:

'I can be meaningfully involved in how the organisations that support and care for me work and develop' (HSCS 4.6) and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 10 January 2020.

Action taken since then

The childminder had recently implemented an annual planner designed to support the ongoing development of the service. This had been accessed through their membership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA). This included priority areas of development, reviews of risk assessments and policies, areas for self-evaluation and continued professional learning activities. A few areas of practice had begun to be looked at such as space and time for children's rest. The childminder should continue to develop a support programme of continuous improvement.

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

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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