

Little Hilltop Childcare Child Minding

Kilmarnock

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 May 2025

Service provided by:
Rachel Lennox

Service provider number:
SP2016988004

Service no:
CS2016347096

About the service

The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children under the age of 16 years, of whom no more than six are under 12 years, of whom no more than four are of an age not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one 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.

The service is provided from the childminder's home within a residential area of the town of Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire. The areas used to provide the service were the lounge/living room, downstairs bathroom and garden. The childminder's home is close to local amenities, school and park. There are nine children registered with the service and four minded children present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 21 May 2025 between 10:15 and 13:30. 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:

- gained feedback through Microsoft Form questionnaires from six parents/carers
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- 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:

- 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

- The childminder knew the children well and they were warm and kind in their interactions with children.
- Toys and materials successfully engaged children's imaginations and curiosity.
- Children had access to a warm, welcoming, stimulating environment.
- Families were an integral part of improvements within the service.
- The childminder was committed to their continuous professional development and providing positive outcomes for children.

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

Children benefitted from a childminder who was warm, kind, and caring. The children had built up positive relationships with the childminder and sought comfort from them. The childminder responded to children's individual needs using nurturing approaches. For example, they offered children cuddles and reassurance when they were upset or unsure. As a result, they were happy and settled in the childminder's care. Parents commented: "There are lots of cuddles and nurture."

The childminder knew the children well, and they were responsive to their individual needs. For example, they supported children who were tired or hungry. This enabled children to eat and sleep at a time that was right for them. Parents commented: (the childminder) is great at knowing when my child needs to sleep and offers this when needed."

The childminder had formed positive relationships with children and their families, which supported effective information sharing. Parents were invited into the childminder's home, where they spent time playing with their children while chatting with the childminder. This supported consistency and enabled parents to be involved in their child's play. Parents told us: (the childminder) is approachable, any concerns or questions she is always happy to answer for me."

The childminder respected children as individuals and created a home-to-home experience. They had images of children within their home, and children had a designated area to hang their jackets and leave their bags. This showed children mattered and enabled them to feel valued. Parents commented: "It's a home from home" and "(the childminder) treats my children like their own, I feel they are well loved and respected."

Children enjoyed mealtimes in a relaxed, sociable environment. They sat around the table together, and the childminder encouraged them to select foods and drinks independently. They chatted with the children as they ate, respecting their choices and preferences. For example, they asked questions such as "Would you like?" and "Are you finished." This enabled children to feel respected.

Children's individual wellbeing benefited from the effective use of personal planning. Plans were linked to the wellbeing indicators of safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Updated information regarding children's likes and dislikes helped the childminder support individual children. Children's plans were effectively reviewed with parents at least every six months to ensure the childminder had accurate, up-to-date information to enable them to meet the needs of the children in their care. Parents commented: "We are fully involved in our child's personal plan which is updated on a regular basis."

Quality indicator: 1.3 Play and learning

Toys and materials successfully engaged children's imaginations, enriching their play and learning. For example, children used loose parts and natural resources, such as paintbrushes and textured rolling pins, to paint areas of the childminder's home and create games. Loose parts are materials that can be moved, redesigned, and used in multiple ways. Children were happy and enjoying a variety of opportunities that met their needs, interests, and curiosities. This meant that play was meaningful. Parents commented: "I like their approach to learning and the natural resources."

The childminder promoted children's choice and independence, allowing them to select areas of the childminder's home or a resource of their own choice. Children were able to make informed choices about leading their play and learning within a stimulating, challenging, creative environment. For example, children enjoyed using props to dress up and had fun pretending to take pictures with the toy camera. This supported children to express themselves through play with resources of interest to them. Parents commented: "(the childminder) does an amazing job of developing resources and creating a child led environment."

The childminder challenged children in their learning and extended learning experiences to support children in developing their skills. For example, children regularly visited the local wooded area where they collected items such as pine cones and stones. The children then used these as part of their play within the mud kitchen in the childminder's garden. They put these objects in pots with sand to make food. This enriched children's play.

Children's wellbeing was supported through play experiences, as the childminder recorded the children's experiences within a floor book that they were able to revisit. This encouraged children to discuss their play and share their thoughts on other activities they would enjoy next. This helped the childminder to be responsive in their planning, to respect children's ideas, and to offer them challenges. Parents commented: "(the childminder) listens to the child's voice and interests."

The childminder had created a basket of images of people within children's families, which they used as part of the children's play experiences. We observed children finding images of family members, and small fabric houses allowed them to explore and experiment with these through play. The childminder chatted with the children about who was in the images. This enabled children to feel safe and secure.

The childminder supported parents to be involved in their child's learning. They shared children's play and learning with parents through social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. This enabled parents to discuss their child's experiences further and extend learning at home. Parents told us: "We have open communication at drop off and pick up times and updates daily through various methods, such as WhatsApp and Facebook."

The childminder supported children's literacy and numeracy skills through a variety of opportunities and interactions, such as discussions with children, access to a range of books both indoors and outdoors at the childminder's home, and using resources such as coloured materials and matching games to support children to develop their skills in numeracy. This included considering children's ideas and comments, as well as learning from their experiences. As a result, children were developing well. Parents commented: "The play environment is language rich."

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

Children's routines and the childminder's home and garden were carefully considered to support children's needs. Children had access to a warm, welcoming environment. Children had space to play and rest, which supported their overall wellbeing. Parents commented: "I like the welcoming feel of (the childminder's) home."

The toys and materials were age and stage appropriate and they were at children's level, enabling children to self-select resources. A range of toys and materials, including natural resources, sensory wooden materials, and loose parts, encouraged children's creativity and imagination. Parents commented: "(the childminder) always has a range of experiences which are age and stage appropriate."

Children were kept safe while attending the childminder's home, and the childminder actively evaluated risks to children throughout the day. For example, they removed resources from the floor, which presented a tripping hazard, and a secure boundary fence kept children safe while they played in the childminder's garden. The childminder maintained accurate registers of children attending, and risk assessments enabled the childminder to identify risks and implement mitigations to reduce risks to children. Parents commented: "The children are always safe and included."

Toys and materials were clean and accessible for children, and children were encouraged to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet with soap and water. The childminder told us although children use a hand towel to dry their hands, this is removed and washed daily. Appropriate nappy changing procedures were in place, as the childminder used a wipeable mat, an apron, and gloves when changing children, which were disposed of in a designated bin. This helped reduce the spread of infection.

The childminder had good links within the local community, and the childminder and the children frequently visited local parks, toddler groups, and the local library. This enabled children to develop their knowledge of their local and wider community.

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

Positive relationships support effective information sharing and communication. The childminder was proactive in looking at ways to engage parents. They had identified questionnaires were not effective in gaining feedback from families and changed this to support more meaningful feedback from parents. This enabled parents to be involved in improvements. Parents commented: "(the childminder) always asks for input on their service and looks for ways to improve."

The childminder supported improvements within their service and involved parents in this process, asking them specific questions and gathering feedback relating to particular aspects of practice. For example, they sought feedback from parents after their child had settled at the service. This enables the childminder to make informed improvements in practice related to the needs of the families accessing the service.

The childminder had identified what they were doing, how they knew, and any improvements to be made through self-evaluation. They used the Care Inspectorate's "A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare" to support this. This enabled them to highlight improvements and supported positive outcomes for children.

The childminder demonstrated a strong commitment to providing and improving positive outcomes for children. The childminder was motivated about their role and had developed an improvement plan that highlighted priorities for improvement within their service. We saw evidence of these improvements in the childminder's practice and within the environment. For example, the childminder had identified the development of the outdoor area and summerhouse within their garden. This now supported children to have a cosy space to rest, relax and read books as well as an area to play on the chute. This supported children's overall wellbeing and led to more positive outcomes for them. Parents commented: "They have literacy in the new shed, books and audio books are used in this space and children are developing their gross motor skills with the new garden resources."

The childminder supported children and families in developing positive relationships with one another. For example, children had the opportunity to self-register when they attended with the childminder using a photo display of all of the children who attended. This supported children to get to know each other and build relationships. The childminder also held an annual summer day within their home and garden to enable families to come together and get to know each other. They also used this opportunity to gain feedback from families on the service they provide.

In line with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), the childminder had created policies and procedures that supported them in delivering high-quality care that was safe, consistent, and responsive to the needs and rights of children and families.

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 had established good, positive relationships with children and families, and the children were confident, safe, and secure within the setting. Parents told us: "(the childminder) is approachable, warm and welcoming and makes us feel confident that our child is in great hands."

Children benefitted from a competent, kind, and compassionate childminder who was committed to getting it right for children and families. They were committed to their continuous professional development, had kept up to date with supporting guidance, and were in the process of completing a qualification relevant to their role. They had used their knowledge to enhance their practice, and it was evident how this had impacted outcomes for children. Parents told us: "We recommend the childminder to everyone."

The childminder ran the local toddler group with other childminders within the local area. They had taken this over to ensure it continued to run within the local community, as they were aware it was a valuable part of the community. This supported families in coming together and building relationships.

The childminder ensured consistency and continuity of care to support children in their care and actively supported positive outcomes for children. For example, they had recently supported families in accessing continuous childcare provision for their children by allocating them a space at their service. This ensured the child had continuous access to childcare until they started school, providing them with the right support at the right time.

The childminder recognised the importance of nurturing, warm, responsive attachments and interactions. They used skilled interactions to promote children's confidence and had a positive influence on their lives. They had built positive relationships with children and families and interacted in a sensitive, responsive, and stimulating way. This enabled the childminder to have time to support, listen to, and respond to the children. This enabled children to feel safe and promoted curiosity, independence, and confidence.

The childminder was part of a local childminding group, where they shared practice and supported one another to develop ideas. This enabled them to achieve more positive outcomes for children.

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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