

McSheffrey, Ruth Child Minding

Elgin

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
8 May 2025

Service provided by:
Ruth McSheffrey

Service provider number:
SP2014986020

Service no:
CS2014327084

About the service

Ruth McSheffrey provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area of a town. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age; 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.

Children are cared for in a large kitchen/diner, a lounge is used for a quiet space and there is a downstairs toilet. There is a large, fenced garden to the rear of the property that can be accessed directly from the kitchen/diner.

About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection which took place on 7 May 2025 between 15:15 and 17:30 hours. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. The childminder was providing a service to school age children only and two children were present at the inspection.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- received two questionnaires from families
- spoke the childminder
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were helped to feel safe and cared for as the childminder provided respectful and nurturing interactions.
- The childminder had got to know the needs of the children well through regular conversations with parents and meaningful conversations with parents.
- Children had fun together and had formed friendships that supported them in their play.
- Children were supported to enjoy challenging and fun play experiences that also enabled them to move around freely, manage and learn about their own limits.
- The childminder recognised the value of working in partnership with parents in a meaningful and supportive way.
- The childminder was responsive to the individual needs of the children; they were able to initiate conversations with the children that were age appropriate, courteous and respectful.

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?	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?

5 - Very Good

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children were helped to feel safe and cared for as the childminder provided respectful and nurturing interactions. They had formed positive relationships with the childminder who had clearly got to know them well. Children were supported to play well together and learn from each other through the calm and reflective responses of the childminder.

There were no children attending that needed personal care or sleep, only school aged children attended the service. However, suitable arrangements were in place should such needs arise. Children were able to relax on the sofa in the kitchen/diner or in the lounge. They were clearly comfortable to make such decisions for themselves.

Children enjoyed sitting and eating a snack together at the play park after school. It was a pleasant social experience as they chatted with each other and the childminder. Foods reflected children's individual and dietary needs. Children had their own water bottles but were also offered cold drinks on return to the childminder's to help ensure that they remained hydrated.

Children responded to the encouragement of the childminder to put on sun cream on their exposed skin to provide protection, due to the strength of the sun during their play outdoors.

The childminder had got to know the needs of the children well through regular and meaningful conversations with parents. Children's information was recorded in the personal plan that helped the childminder to meet their needs. The childminder monitored children's wellbeing in consultation with parents and had updated the care plan to reflect changes in need. Recording the views of parents and children, where possible, would also be beneficial for the purposes of review. The childminder worked proactively with children and families and had helped them to liaise with other professionals to promote positive outcomes for the child.

The childminder also detailed significant events that helped them to direct actions to support children well. We discussed the benefits of a clear format for such purposes.

Ref: Practice guide to Chronologies - careinspectorate.com

Parents told us that they felt involved in all aspects of their child's care, the childminder always shared information with them. Comment included:

'Ruth always welcomes me inside and shares what they did throughout the day'

'Ruth occasionally inquires about their hobbies and interests at home to see if she can include those activities when they visit her'

'I'm fully involved in everything planned and when I collect children I get a full review of the day'.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children enjoyed being able to make choices and lead their own play. Children told us that they often chose to visit the play parks after school but had lots to do at the childminder's home and had lots of fun.

Children clearly enjoyed to play together on the spiderweb frame and slide at the play park, working out which way to climb. It enabled them to benefit from being in the fresh air and the activity also supported their muscle development. On return to the childminder's home, they were excited to have a game of skipping with a large heavy duty rope. They took it in turns to count the jumps and see who would have the winning score.

The childminder helped children to learn from each other, play together and to have an understanding of safety and risk. Children were helped to extend their thinking and find their own resolutions as the childminder talked with them and used prompts/questions during their play.

Indoors, children were able to select from a variety of games, colouring and books. Children enjoyed the relaxation of colouring in from a selection of pictures and pens. A younger child was creating a picture with mosaic beads. Children played conversation games with the childminder that helped expression, and open connections and interactive games promoted shared play experiences. Children had fun together and had formed friendships that supported them in their play.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were also enhanced through outdoor play, both at the service and in the local community. Outings had included local landmarks and visits to the beach.

Children's emotional resilience, wellbeing and right to play was supported through the childminder's nurturing approach and meaningful relationship with them and their families.

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/people; therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Children benefitted from being cared for in a home that was comfortable, clean and well furnished. It helped to give the message to children that they mattered. Ample ventilation and natural light contributed to children's psychological wellbeing.

The childminder had implemented infection control practices that followed best practice guidance, to support children's safety, such as good hand hygiene practices both at the setting and when out in the community. Children cleaned their hands prior to having their snack and before applying sun cream.

Children were supported to enjoy challenging and fun play experiences that also enabled them to move around freely, manage and learn about their own limits. The childminder knew the children well and supported them to follow safe practice such as road safety. We suggested that a programme of review would help to ensure that risk continued to be assessed and evaluated.

Ref: SIMOA keeping children safe practice notes - hub.careinspectorate.com

Children had ample space to play and explore. The indoor and outdoor environments had been sensitively arranged to take account of children's stages of development and learning. The spaces used by the children had a variety of resources that engaged their interests.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The childminder had appropriate records that were readily accessible. They had clear policies that supported them in running the service and they were shared with parents. We suggested that having a programme of review would help to ensure they reflected the provision of the setting and aligned with good practice guidance. Particular consideration was the child protection policy and complaints procedure.

The childminder recognised the value of working in partnership with parents in a meaningful and supportive way. They had actively sought the views of families to help inform the development of the setting and children's achievements were also shared. We discussed how children might also be more widely consulted/involved in development and changes in the setting, with the childminder.

Parents considered both them and their child were involved in a meaningful way to develop the service and that the childminder often asked for feedback. Comments included:

'The children are involved in deciding in all the opportunities and experiences each day'
'My children always gets an input on what they do where they go and what they play'
'Ruth always welcomes me inside and shares what they did throughout the day'.

To enable a consistent and manageable programme of improvement that was sustained, we discussed the benefits of a concise format for recording changes as they occurred and the impact of such changes. We also referred the childminder to the early years improvement programme for childminders - hub.careinspectorate.com

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

The childminder had a clear understanding of how children developed and learned. They had substantial experience of providing a childminding service. Their knowledge and understanding helped to enhance outcomes for children.

The childminder had sourced and researched relevant information that helped to support children's wellbeing and development. We discussed the Care Inspectorate hub, a central source of early years good practice guidance. We also suggested that the childminder refreshed child protection training to help ensure that knowledge and understanding remained current. They were also a member of an organisation that supported Scottish childminders and regularly received relevant information, that helped to support and to reflect on practice.

The childminder was responsive to the individual needs of the children; they were able to initiate conversations with the children that were age appropriate, courteous and respectful. Their enabling attitude was supportive of children to have fun in their play and to achieve their potential and enabled them to feel valued, loved and secure.

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?	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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