

Fitches, Sue Child Minding

Stirling

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
13 May 2025

Service provided by:
Suellen Fitches

Service provider number:
SP2003903245

Service no:
CS2003005485

About the service

Sue Fitches provides a childminding service from their property in a rural area of Gargunnock, Stirling. They are registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children up to 16 years of age. At the time of our inspection, four children were registered with the service.

The service is close to the local primary school, shop, park and other amenities. The children are cared for on one level, mostly in the living room. Children also have access to a fully enclosed garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 May 2025 between 11:00 and 14:30. One inspector carried out the inspection. 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.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with three children using the service
- received three completed questionnaires from parents and carers using the service
- spoke with the childminder and their assistant
- 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.

Key messages

- The childminder's kind, patient interactions supported children's wellbeing and positive attachments. As a result, children were cared for in a warm and respectful way.
- Toys and activities were tailored to children's interests and developmental needs, promoting high-quality learning experiences. Parents highlighted the warm, consistent and fun environment as a key strength of the childminder's care.
- Comfortable and accessible spaces promoted a respectful and inclusive ethos. Toys and games were age-appropriate, well-maintained and safely stored, allowing children to make choices and explore interests.
- Parents and children influenced care through open communication and feedback, including informal chats and questionnaires. The childminder regularly evaluated their service, identifying strengths and areas for development, such as enhancing risky play opportunities.

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 were nurtured through daily experiences. The childminder was caring and respectful to children. All parents told us that they strongly agreed that they had a strong connection with their childminder. One commented: "The childminder has a natural way with children. She is professional but also nurturing, warm and kind to the children in her care. She provides amazing seasonal plans and fun activities for the children to do and my child loves their little local outings". As a result, children were content and thriving within a safe and caring environment.

All children had personal plans that reflected key information about their care needs, likes and dislikes. Parents completed these when their children first joined the setting. All parents strongly agreed that they had a good relationship with the childminder. This enabled them to regularly discuss their child's needs and to share any necessary changes to their children's care and support. For example, one parent told us that: "She is very communicative with us as parents and keeps us up to date with their day. She is really very flexible and accommodating of my child's needs". Effective communication resulted in families and the childminder being confident that information was accurate and reflected children's needs and wishes well.

Children were fully supported to have periods of rest and sought comfort, as and when needed. For example, personal comforts such as dummies and soft toys were easily accessible to children. The childminder was attuned to children's cues and was responsive to their needs. One parent told us: "She has worked with us to find the ideal timings for our child's nap and made a quiet and safe space for them to sleep". This impacted positively on children's health and wellbeing.

Children always chose from a range of healthy foods that reflected their individual needs. Most parents supplied lunches and the childminder provided some snacks. The childminder had a full understanding of children's dietary needs. They were supported to eat at a time that was right for them. This promoted healthy eating habits and respected children's choice. The childminder sat and chatted with children as they ate, providing a positive social mealtime.

Children were kept safe because the childminder had a very good understanding around safeguarding children. Appropriate procedures were in place and she understood the importance of safe storage and administration of medication. When required, treatment was given safely and effectively. This was supported by an appropriate policy and recording system.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun playing through a very good balance of planned and spontaneous play and learning experiences. The childminder took time to provide toys that supported children's interests and development needs. They enjoyed playing with water in the garden, creating ladybird artwork and reading stories. One parent told us: "They are often doing arts and crafts, walks, reading books and playing, lots of outdoor time". The childminder used their knowledge of children's development to introduce engaging activities for children. This enabled children to experience very good quality play and learning.

The childminder used skilled interactions to challenge and motivate children. She was responsive to their cues, and recognised when it was best to intervene, or when to provide support that enable them to achieve on their own. This enabled children to build confidence and resilience.

Children were supported to grow and thrive. The childminder continually discussed children's play and learning with their parents, sharing ideas and achievements. Newsletters and individual observations were well kept to showcase children's personal experiences and outcomes. Children's development was tracked well to ensure they could be fully supported. This enhanced the quality of care, play and learning children received.

The childminder shared information with families through text messaging, providing pictures of children taking part in activities and information about what they had been learning. One parent told us: "The childminder always communicates so efficiently with regular WhatsApp updates including photos, care plans sent home and activity plans so I already feel that I'm very well informed". We found evidence of how children's needs and interests influenced their play and learning experiences. As a result, there was a genuine collaboration between children, parents and the childminder to enable children to achieve.

Children had the opportunity to visit places in the local community, including local ponds and parks. This helped to extend their play and learning opportunities and to promote a sense of belonging. Parents expressed that they were very happy with the experiences their children received. One parent told us the most positive aspect of their child's experience was "the comfort my child feels there as the childminder knows them so well. The fun they experience, the opportunity to play alongside other children and the consistently warm and positive environment."

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, cosy and welcoming, which provided a homely environment for the children. There was good natural light, with ample space for the child to move around, play and learn in. Children could use a living area designed to meet their needs, with comfortable seating that encouraged relaxation and social interaction. This helped children feel valued and supported a respectful, inclusive atmosphere within the service.

Toys and games were well organised, stored in boxes and shelving units, which were accessible to children. There was a range of resources on offer to support different play experiences and age ranges, such as bubbles, diggers in the garden and jigsaws indoors. Children were able to make choices and develop their own interests. The childminder was aware of how to manage varied age ranges and their access to resources. For example, they spoke about how some were only available for older children as some loose parts posed choking risks for younger children. This helped keep children safe while engaging in learning activities.

Children benefitted from a large, well presented garden. For example, water, toy insects and tunnels for active play were readily available for them to explore. To support children's safety, the premises was fully enclosed, secure. One parent told us: "The childminder's house and toys and resources are well looked after and maintained. She has extra security on her garden gate so the children aren't able to leave unattended". This ensured children had a safe space to play outdoors and enjoy fresh air. Children also benefited from local outings, such as exploring woodland areas and observing wildlife at the nearby pond. This broadened children's experiences and enabled them to build on their knowledge of their wider world.

The childminder carried out regular risk assessments and visual check to identify and minimise hazards within the environment. The childminder used her very good knowledge of the children to adapt the space depending on their individual needs, age and stage of development. We observed that children's opportunities were not restricted as a result, as the childminder was mindful to enable risky play with full supervision. This supported children to explore their abilities and learn from their mistakes in a safe, well-maintained environment.

Infection prevention and control procedures reflected current best practice. The childminder used appropriate personal protective equipment, such as gloves and aprons, when required. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at key times of the day, further reducing the risk of spread of infection.

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 provided a service that met the needs of individual children and families they cared for. Parents were kept informed of the childminder's holidays; this communication enabled them to prepare for childcare during planned time away. Families were supported with patterns of care they required, ensuring the service met their and their child's needs.

Aims and values were in place and reviewed regularly with children and parents. Regular check ins with parents provided opportunities for them to share their views and opinions. This allowed children and families to influence the care they experienced and supported them to feel valued.

Families were meaningfully involved and influenced change within the setting. Their views and opinions were sought through regular informal conversations and occasional questionnaires. One parent told us: "We have open lines of communication with the childminder, so if any concerns are raised I know they will be addressed. She also really listens to the children and their requests and amends her plans accordingly. Just last week my child really wanted to go to the park and she happily changed the plan to allow this! My child was very happy". This demonstrated positive partnership working with families to ensure that the service was right for them and their child.

The childminder was effectively self-evaluating the service. They had taken time to reflect on quality of children's care, play and learning experiences. As a result, they identified strengths in their practice, such as supporting children's individual routines and effective communication with parents. They also identified areas for future development aimed at enhancing outcomes for children. For example, researching risky play to enhance challenge and stimulation for children.

This demonstrated a commitment to continually improving practice and valuing feedback from those using the service.

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 Skills, Knowledge and Values

Children's wellbeing was supported through the childminder's kind and nurturing approach. This ensured that children and families felt safe, valued and respected. The childminder had a clear understanding of how children learn and develop. They were kind and patient when interacting with children. This impacted positively on children's overall wellbeing and promoted positive attachments.

Children were at the heart of the service. All parents told us they were always welcomed into the childminder's home to discuss their child's care, play and learning. The childminder carefully considered their needs, likes and interests to support improvement within the service. She understood the benefits of reflective practice to enable them to focus on goals and provided more opportunities to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Overall, the childminder had a positive, enabling attitude that effectively used changing needs and feedback to improve the service.

The childminder had a wealth of knowledge and experience of working with children. They kept their knowledge and practice up to date through continuous professional development. Recent professional development undertaken by the childminder included, but was not limited to, first aid, meaningful participation and reading Out to Play: Caring for Our Outdoor Spaces guidance. They were able to confidently discuss the impact the training had on their practice and how this supported high quality experiences for children. They stayed well-informed through regular updates from the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and the Care Inspectorate.

The childminder showed very good reflective practice that positively impacted children. They understood the importance of reflecting on their own professional development to ensure they provided a high standard of care, play and learning. A record of training was in place to support reflections and identify further professional development needs. This provided opportunities to effectively reflect on learning and measure the impact on children's care, play and learning.

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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