

# Ireland, Alison Child Minding

Inverness

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
4 June 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Alison Ireland

**Service provider number:**  
SP2010979282

**Service no:**  
CS2010271040

## About the service

Alison Ireland provides a childminding service from her home in a quiet area close to the city of Inverness. The childminder is registered to care for a maximum of 6 children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family..

The service is located close to a local primary school and nursery and other amenities.

Childminding takes place on the ground floor of the home, with children having access to the main lounge and dining area, kitchen area, toilet and rear and front garden.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 04 June 12:00 to 14:00.

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.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Observed interactions between the children and the childminder.
- Spoke with the childminder and to one family.
- Looked around the childminder's home and garden.
- Reviewed documents and records.

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

- The childminder was warm, kind and caring in her approach.
- The minded child was happy and relaxed in the childminder's care.
- The minded child experienced care in a well-furnished, comfortable, and homely environment. • Their stages of development, interests and curiosities were well considered and reflected in the toys and resources.
- The minded child's health and wellbeing were supported through opportunities to be active and engage in outdoor play.
- Self-evaluation processes could be further developed to reflect the improvements that had been made to improve outcomes for children and their families.
- The childminder engaged well with the inspection process and demonstrated a keenness to develop and improve practice.

## 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 identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children benefited from the warm and nurturing approach of the childminder, who used a calm voice and tone to support the overall wellbeing of the minded child in their care. Their interactions and play were happy and relaxed. The childminder was responsive to the child's needs and requests, supporting them with kindness. They followed the minded child's interests to provide them with opportunities to play and have fun.

Personal planning information was used effectively. The childminder spoke knowledgeably about the minded child and their individual routines and how they accommodated them within the service. The childminder spoke with parents regularly about the individual needs of the minded child. Information was updated when care needs changed, supporting the childminder to provide the care and support children needed at the right time. The childminder was aware of the impact that events in children's lives could have on them, supporting children and families with sensitivity. This approach supported effective communication and consistency of care for children.

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable, with children sitting round the kitchen table. The childminder was attentive to children during lunch, engaging them in conversation which supported their developing language and communication skills. The minded child was provided with a packed lunch and some of the items provided by parents were not in line with choking prevention guidance. We highlighted good practice guidance: "Prevention and Management of Choking Episodes in Babies and Children" to the childminder.

The childminder was very aware of her responsibility to safeguard children. We were confident that the childminder was committed to her role and responsibilities in keeping children safe from harm.

Whilst no children attending the service required regular medication, we reviewed procedures and paperwork in place. The childminder had a medication policy in place contributing to supporting children's health and well-being. We were satisfied that safe administration of medication procedures were in place to help ensure children's health needs could be met.

### Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and Learning

The minded child was having fun as they played in the childminder's home. They chose the resources they wanted to play with and were supported by skilful interactions by the childminder. She supported their developing literacy, language and numeracy skills by repeating and adding words, and introducing simple mathematical language to their play.

The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of children's developmental stages and how to support them. Planning approaches were child-centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. Children's learning was clearly reflected in written observations within the minded child's journal. These were detailed and contained next steps which were then shared with parents. The childminder had also taken time to reflect on some daily activities on offer and they included asking the minded children about activities they enjoyed and what they would like to learn and experience. These were used to plan experiences to support their development.

The minded child play and learning experiences were enhanced through regular visits to places of interest within their local and wider community. We could see from photographic evidence a range of activities the child took part in. Some of these included playing, messy play, singing/stories, arts and crafts, and playing with outdoor toys in the garden. They all made visits to the local leisure centre, Gruffalo walk, toddler groups, and play parks. This helped to extend their play and learning opportunities and to socialise with other children.

## How good is our setting?

**4 - Good**

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

### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The minded child was cared for in homely, comfortable surroundings. They spent most of their time in the big, bright dining kitchen. All areas were clean and well presented, providing a safe, secure environment for the minded child.

Spaces were created for children to explore, relax and be creative. For example, within the home the minded child had access to lots of resources including loose parts with opportunities to participate in small world play, construction, books, role play as well as arts and crafts activities. This promoted a range of learning, creativity and development skills. The organised toys and resources and quality of furniture enabled children to lead their play and access spaces freely

The outdoor area at the back of the property was fully enclosed, secure and offered the minded child a safe space to play and enjoy fresh air. The minded child had access to a spacious living/dining room area with direct access to a secure back garden. The all-weather surfaces provided opportunities for active, physical outdoor play all year round.

Risk assessments and safety checks for the home had been carried out. We discussed how the childminder could involve children in developing risk assessments so that they develop their own awareness of managing risk, be responsible and learn about the safety of themselves and others.

Appropriate infection control procedures were in place to support a safe environment for children and families. The minded child was encouraged to wash their hands at key times, for example, before mealtimes and when coming in from outdoors.

Information was securely stored and managed. This helped to keep children and families safe and protected.

## How good is our leadership?

**4 - Good**

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

### Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder was committed to the development of her service. The childminder had developed positive

relationships with parents and carers and worked in close partnership with them. Families' views were actively sought to influence change within the setting. Parents were actively involved sharing feedback through questionnaires, messages and daily discussions at drop off and pick up. Children's views were sought through questionnaires and they were able to ask what they wanted to participate in while attending the service. This promoted opportunities for the parents and children to feel valued and to provide feedback of the quality of her service.

Information about the service was shared with parents/carers, including aims and objectives, policies and procedures before their child attended. This helped them to understand the childminder's vision and ensured they were well informed about the service they received.

The childminder engaged well with the inspection process and was keen to take forward ideas for improvement. Effective self-evaluation and quality assurances were in the early stages of development. The childminder valued the views of the children attending her service, and their families, encouraging both formal and informal feedback through regular conversation and consultation. Parents who gave feedback as part of this inspection, strongly agreed that they were happy with the care and support their child received.

The childminder kept up to date with best practice and guidance through regular updates from the Scottish Childminding Association. We discussed using the "Quality Framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged children" to further support her self-evaluation, to identify where improvements could be made

Policies and procedures were in place, and these supported the safe running of the service. These were regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current best practice and shared with families. This provided parents with clarity about how the service operated and reassurance that there were procedures in place to keep children safe.

## How good is our staff team?

## 4 - Good

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

### Quality Indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

The childminder was kind and compassionate. She was nurturing in her care and had formed strong attachments with the minded child. We found that the minded child responded positively to the support provided by the childminder, and they were given an appropriate amount of time to listen and respond to instructions.

The childminder recognised the importance of maintaining her skills and knowledge in keeping children safe and protected. She had attended training on Food Hygiene, Child Protection and was in the process to update her paediatric First Aid. She had a recognised childcare qualification and kept an up-to-date training record to evaluate training attended. This meant that children were supported in all aspects of their care and development.

We discussed how best practice guidance would support the childminder's professional development and improvement in the service. We discussed ways in which she could use the online resources such as, 'Realising the Ambition, Being Me' and 'My world outdoors' as a way of accessing guidance and practice documents to support the ongoing development of the service. In addition we signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate hub, where a range of bite size sessions about improvements will help the

childminder develop her service further.

Regular networking with other local childminders provided opportunities for discussion, learning and sharing good practice. This demonstrated a commitment to provide a high-quality service, to promote positive outcomes for children and families.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very 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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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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