

Kirsten's Childminding Child Minding

Cumnock

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 July 2025

Service provided by:
Kirsten Harkness

Service provider number:
SP2022000089

Service no:
CS2022000127

About the service

The service is provided by, Kirsten Harkness and is provided from her home in a residential area of Cumnock. Children are cared for on the ground floor of the home and have access to an open play living/ dining area, which had direct access to secure outdoor play area. Ms Harkness is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six 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. At the time of the inspection, there was one minded child and the childminders own child, who were not yet attending primary school, present during the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday, 15 July 2025 between 09:15 and 11:30 hours. One inspector carried out the inspection from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included Intelligence gathered since the service has been registered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with two children using the service
- received three responses to our request for feedback from parents
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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

- Children benefitted from warm, nurturing interactions. The childminder had built positive relationships with children and their families.
- Children were very well supported during daily routines such as mealtimes, sleep and personal care.
- Children had fun with a variety of age-appropriate activities.
- The childminder used observations of children's learning to identify and plan for next steps.
- Children benefitted from safe, welcoming surroundings.
- The childminder had developed quality assurance practices and involved children and parents in evaluating the service.
- The childminder attended training and used their professional knowledge to improve their 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?	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 evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children benefitted from warm, nurturing interactions. The childminder was patient, caring and supported children very well, offering cuddles and comfort when this was needed, helping children feel secure and cared for. Parents spoke positively of the childminder's relationship with their children. One commented, "It's a home from home, [the childminder] makes my child feel safe and they just love her like family."

Children's care was supported through effective information sharing. The childminder used personal plans to record important information about children's wellbeing needs. Parents told us they were involved in reviewing these regularly, to ensure information was up to date and relevant. The childminder used the GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) wellbeing indicators to help assess and plan support for children. This supported individualised care, which met children's needs.

Meal and snack time was an unhurried and relaxed experience for children, it supported opportunities for social interactions between children and the childminder. Children were supervised, ensuring they were safe whilst eating. Parents provided snack and lunches for the children in her care. Children were well supervised, and the childminder followed safe food preparation practices to minimise the risk of choking. Children had opportunities to be independent, with appropriate support and were encouraged to make choices about what they wanted to eat. These measures resulted in safe, enjoyable mealtime experiences for children.

Children's care routines met their wellbeing needs. When one child needed to sleep, the childminder comforted them and followed their preferences to make sure they were comfortable. Regular checks helped ensure a safe sleeping experience. During nappy changes, toileting and handwashing, the childminder offered appropriate support and respected children's privacy. No children were receiving medication at the time of the inspection, however historical records indicated that all procedures had been followed correctly in line with guidance.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children enjoyed a range of play experiences. The childminder promoted sharing and taking turns, offering explanations and alternatives. For example, when one child wanted a game another child was playing with, the childminder helped them choose something else while they waited. Children chose how they played, and the childminder skilfully supported them to access activities appropriate for their ages and stages of development. This resulted in sustained play, where children enjoyed their games. We discussed the benefits of keeping a record of planned activities, in a scrapbook and the childminder agreed to consider this. Children had opportunities to develop language, literacy and numeracy skills. The childminder played music and children sang as they played. One parent commented "I am so thankful for Kirsten, not only looking after my child but bringing her on with her social skills and confidence. She is thriving since starting here."

Children enjoyed looking at a selection of books, the childminder used these books as an opportunity to encourage children's curiosity. She adapted the way she spoke to children depending on their stage of development. She gave children time to process and respond to questions. Counting in songs, and as part of daily routines helped support children's understanding of colours.

Children's learning was promoted through the childminder's use of observations. She identified children's learning and next steps, offering activities to support these. These observations were shared with parents using an online platform. Parents appreciated this, with one telling us, "My child is always kept occupied and learning songs, rhymes and dances and can now recognise and say different colours."

Children's successes were recognised and celebrated. The childminder offered frequent praise and encouragement. Children benefitted from regular access to their local community. They enjoyed attending a weekly group and regularly met up with other childminders. At these times they would visit local parks, and woodland areas. This provided opportunities for children to explore and socialise.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in clean, well-maintained surroundings, one parent commented "She has a very clean environment for the children." They spent most of their time in the living room and dining room, which was comfortably furnished with a sofa, and well displayed resources. The dining kitchen was used for mealtimes, and children sat in seats appropriate for their ages and stages of development.

Children could choose from a range of play resources. During the inspection these included a toy kitchen, games, books and small world characters. One parent commented "My child adores going to his childminder- She has plenty of animals & dinosaurs to play with."

Further resources were stored in a large cupboard, and these included games and art supplies. The childminder was careful to make sure all resources were age-appropriate, providing a safe and enjoyable experience for children.

Children had regular access to outdoor play. The enclosed garden was very well resourced to meet children's needs and was well maintained.

Children benefitted from safe surroundings. The childminder had undertaken risk assessments to identify any potential hazards. She carried out daily environment checks, and parents were well aware of the dog who was part of the home. The childminder had developed very effective risk assessments in relation to the care of the dog and parents told us that they felt happy for their child in this type of environment.

The childminder spoke to children about safety in ways they would understand. When one child stood on a chair, she asked her if they thought this was safe, and encouraged them to think about what might happen. This helped children begin to understand safety and how to manage risk.

How good is our leadership?**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Children were cared for by a childminder with clear aims, which reflected her caring ethos. Parents were provided with information about the service before children started to support their understanding of what to expect. Families had opportunities to be involved in developing the service. Parents were asked to complete feedback questionnaires and, when asked, they told us they strongly agreed that their views were listened to. One commented that "[the childminder] is always open to any questions/requests we may have."

The childminder's practices helped children and families feel listened to and valued. The childminder had developed effective quality assurance practices. She used a self-evaluation tool to identify strengths in her service and these support her to plan areas for development. This had led to improvements, such as the childminder identifying how to develop chronologies to record important details about children's wellbeing. One parent commented "Nothing can be improved, I am very happy with the service." We suggested a simple way of prioritising, recording and assessing whether improvements had been effective. The childminder agreed to ensure that once an improvement had been made, that she records if it has had a positive impact on children's experiences.

We seen robust risk assessments in place for all aspects of the service. The childminder had ensured that these were all updated and checked in a timely manner. She understood the importance of ensuring that her home was as safe as possible for the children in her care and this resulted in parents being happy to leave their child there and not worry about them.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values

Children were cared for by a knowledgeable childminder. She had attended all required core training such as child protection, first aid, food hygiene and infection prevention and control. She had also undertaken reading and training about specific topics to help them understand how to support individual children's needs. She spoke competently about how the knowledge she had gained had supported her to develop very good practice such as individualised care routines for children. The childminder researched and studied current best practice examples in relation to supporting young children in a childcare setting. This has given her a deeper knowledge of how children learn and develop.

The childminder had a very good understanding of the importance of fostering positive relationships. During the inspection we spoke to a parent who was dropping off their child. She told us that the childminder ensured that she felt comfortable leaving her child in the service. Another parent commented "Kirsten goes above and beyond for the kids in her care and it shows."

When children were settling in the service, they were offered visits with their parents which were tailored to suit their needs. The childminder's flexible approach supported children to feel comfortable and confident in the setting.

Relationships with parents were positive and supportive. The childminder strived to promote an environment where parents felt confident in the care their children received. Parents told us they felt listened to, and that they could approach the childminder at any time. One commented, "The childminder is friendly and approachable and we feel reassured by this when trusting her to look after our child."

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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