

# Puddle Ducks Childminding Child Minding

Brechin

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
14 July 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Emma Birks

**Service provider number:**  
SP2023000164

**Service no:**  
CS2023000260

## About the service

Emma Birks provides a childminding service from her home in Brechin. The service is registered to provide care to a maximum of 6 children at any one time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than 6 are under 12 years; of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and; of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household. Minded children can only be cared for by persons named on the certificate. No overnight care will be provided.

The service is located within a residential area of Brechin and is close to local shops, parks, schools and nature trails. The children are cared for in two dedicated playrooms, and a downstairs bathroom. Children also have access to an enclosed garden space.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 14 July 2025 between 09:00 and 12:00. Feedback was shared during this visit. The inspection was carried out by an 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:

- spoke with four children using the service;
- spoke to the childminder;
- received ten completed questionnaires from parents;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- The childminder had developed positive relationships with children and families.
- Interactions were nurturing, warm and caring.
- Children led their own play and were supported through a balance of planned and spontaneous play and learning experiences.
- Children had access to a well-resourced outdoor play space.
- Parents were regularly asked for feedback to support ongoing improvement within the service.
- The childminder had taken part in a variety of training opportunities to support her professional development.

## 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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

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

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Positive relationships had been developed between the childminder, children, and families. Interactions were nurturing, warm and caring which supported children to feel safe and secure in the childminder's care. A parent shared, 'It feels like they are going to home from home, where Emma treats them like they are one of her own and have no worries about leaving them there and can fully relax at work.' Another parent shared, 'My child is always welcomed with love, warmth and a smile.' Parents were welcomed into the childminder's home, which supported them to be included in the life of the service. This resulted in positive outcomes for children.

Personal plans were in place for each child and included detailed information to support the childminder to meet children's needs. The childminder had a good knowledge of each child's needs and their routines from home. A parent commented, 'Personal plan is always kept up to date.' We discussed with the childminder that some plans had not been reviewed within the last six months, the childminder was responsive to this, and all plans will be reviewed with families. This will ensure all plans are current, up to date and in line with current legislation to ensure children's needs can be fully met.

Mealtimes provided an opportunity for children to develop their independence and life skills. Infection control measures were followed throughout. Children made choices and self-served their snack from a serving dish in the middle of the table. Parents shared, 'Always a nice variety of food available.' Children had their own water bottles which ensured they kept hydrated throughout the day. Mealtimes supported language development and social interaction, as children engaged in meaningful conversations with the childminder.

Medication processes were well managed, and regular discussions took place with parents. Consent forms were in place which provided the childminder with permission to administer medication which was stored safely and securely. It would be beneficial for the childminder to add signs and symptoms and how to manage emergency situations to the medication documentation. This would ensure that children's health and wellbeing needs could be fully met.

The childminder had undertaken relevant training and had a good knowledge of child protection and the processes to be followed to make a referral. This ensured that children were kept safe from harm or abuse.

Children were supported to express and talk about their feelings and emotions. Specific tools including colour monsters, mirrors, stories, and images supported children to identify and express their feelings and emotions within a safe environment.

A nurturing and cosy space was provided for children who slept during the day. Flat mats were provided, and sensory lighting and soft music provided a quiet and peaceful space for children to rest and relax. This ensured that children's wellbeing needs were met.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were leading their own play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous learning opportunities. A parent shared, 'Emma is fantastic at providing experiences which accommodate all needs and learning interests.' Children chose where to play and what to play with and were supported by the childminder to extend their play and learning. Children identified colours and were creative with playdough and natural resources. One child developed their imagination while mixing a potion in the kitchen area outdoors. Another child spoke about caring for and releasing butterflies last week, 'One went back inside, and one landed on the ground.' These opportunities provided a broad range of play and learning experiences which developed imagination, creativity, and curiosity.

Children explored the natural environment outdoors and took part in planting and growing. A tiered water table provided children with opportunities to problem solve and experiment. One child played with dinosaurs in the large tyre, and another was mark making on a wipe off transparent easel. One parent shared, 'The kids are always doing something fun and exciting.' Children also benefitted from fresh air and active play experiences during their time exploring outdoors.

The development of language, literacy and numeracy was naturally incorporated into play, through story sharing, singing, mark making, books, signs, and real-life resources. A Puddle Ducks library had been developed to encourage children to take books home. Story bags had been created to support family engagement and learning at home. These opportunities enhanced the early development of language, literacy, and numeracy skills for children.

The childminder was responsive to children's interests and reflected this in the resources on offer. Themed activities were planned to further develop children's play and learning opportunities. A parent commented, 'Emma is very good at communicating, she always answers any messages or queries promptly and provides daily updates after each session along with photographs.' Floorbooks were used to highlight a wide range of play and learning experiences that children took part in. The childminder recorded specific learning and identified next steps within developmental records within each child's personal plan. This ensured that the childminder had an overview of each child's stage of development and supported her to provide appropriate play experiences to support progression.

The childminder made effective use of the local community. Children were out daily and visited local parks, the woodland trail at the local garden centre, the railway, fire station and flower fields. Children also attended a weekly Bookbug session. A parent shared, 'Emma takes the children out a lot to different parks, the castle centre, library, and walks. This is great as it is so good for the kids to get outside and do different things.' As a result, children developed a sense of connection to their community and had frequent opportunities to be active, curious and explore.

## 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 provided a welcoming and inviting environment for children and families. Parents were welcomed into the childminder's home during drop off and pick up times, which provided a valuable opportunity for effective sharing of information. Children's artwork and photographs were displayed which provided them with a sense of belonging.

Children moved freely between two well-resourced playrooms where resources were easily accessible. One was dedicated to messy play experiences and mealtimes and the other provided a wide range of age and stage appropriate resources to support children's play, learning, and progression. These playrooms were well thought out and provided child sized furniture along with comfortable seating which included beanbags. A parent commented, 'Emma provides a variety of play. She has a great outdoor play area for them.' The outdoor play space at the far end of the garden, provided a rich environment for children to explore and learn. This resulted in children being confident, curious, and engaged in their play and learning.

Environments were safe and secure and risk assessments were in place to keep children safe. Safety gates secured the playrooms and prevented children from accessing stairs. Maintenance was well managed and recorded. These procedures kept children safe and minimised any potential risks.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place and being followed at all times. The environment was clean, and surfaces were wiped down before use. Handwashing took place at appropriate times throughout the day and personal protective equipment (PPE) was used when required. These processes minimised the possible risk of spread of infection.

**How good is our leadership?****4 - Good**

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths 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 had aims in place for her service which were reflected within her practice. We discussed the benefits of including children and families in the next review of these to provide a shared vision and aim for the service.

Parents were invited to share their views through questionnaires and informal discussions. Feedback was consistently positive. A parent shared, 'Daily updates of what my child has been doing along with loads of pictures. We get updates of new items that have been purchased for the children or for specific reasons such as helping with mobility.' The childminder actively involved children through daily conversations about their interests and preferences which supported them to feel valued and listened to. This approach resulted in families being included in the life of the service and children being confident and having a sense of belonging.

The childminder had carried out a self-evaluation of core assurances within her service. This provided evidence of what she was doing well, along with actions to take forward to support her to make improvements within the service. This process could be further developed to support reflection and evaluation of environments and practice.

The childminder confidently discussed areas of her service that she had recently developed. This included updating resources in the garden area and the introduction of the book sharing library and story bags. These changes improved outcomes and play and learning experiences for children.

The childminder had policies in place to support safe practice within the service. These were in line with current best practice and guidance. It would be beneficial for the childminder to develop a missing child policy and a sleep policy. This would provide the opportunity to develop procedures already in place to keep children safe and support their wellbeing needs.

## 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**

Trusting relationships had been developed between the childminder, children and families. This created a nurturing and responsive environment for children to have fun during their play and learning. A parent shared, 'My daughter loves going, she feels safe and secure.' The childminder had a good understanding of children's individual needs and was respectful and responsive when ensuring that emotional and developmental needs were fully met. This resulted in children feeling confident, secure and respected within their play environment.

The childminder was keen to develop professionally which had a positive impact on outcomes for children. They had a good understanding of child development and had taken part in a range of training opportunities which enhanced their knowledge and skills. The childminder recorded feedback following on from each training event which shared the impact of her learning on her practice. This resulted in children being well supported to play, learn and progress.

The childminder used a range of other approaches to develop her knowledge and skills. This included participating in Care Inspectorate webinars and accessing the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) website to keep up to date with current guidance and best practice. This supported the childminder to keep her knowledge and skills current and up to date to improve 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](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - 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?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

## To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

## Contact us

Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

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

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

## Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.